



## Fight Over Tony Dapolito Center Fuels Tensions

Recreation facility at center of debate over affordable housing project at 388 Hudson

BY AUDREY HILL



ON MARCH 29, 2026, Village Preservation, the Coalition to Save the Public Recreation Center Downtown, and other local leaders rallied to save from destruction the landmarked Tony Dapolito Recreation Center, a beloved community resource in Greenwich Village for generations. Photo credit: Village Preservation.

Newly released records have intensified ongoing debates about the intertwined fates of a beloved neighborhood recreation center and a proposed affordable housing development in Hudson Square. The development – nicknamed Hudson Mosaic – would include 280 units of affordable housing built atop a new public recreation center at 388 Hudson and is partly premised on the destruction of the nearby Tony Dapolito Recreation Center.

At a rally organized by Village Preservation and the Coalition to Save our Public Recreation Center Downtown (SPRCD) in

March, Sommer Omar, the founder of the latter organization, revealed the results of a public records request she had filed. Frustrated by the city's lack of transparency surrounding the center, she'd sought official evidence that it couldn't be saved.

"There is not a single file, document, or communication within this record that says that the building has to be demolished," Omar told supporters gathered outside the long-shuttered center. "Instead, there is extensive material produced by architects, engineers, and contractors, saying the exact opposite –

that the building can be repaired."

According to the Parks Department, it's not so simple. After initial attempts to renovate the center, multiple rounds of evaluations revealed increasingly serious structural damage. Although it could be repaired with enough funding, bringing it up to code would lead to significantly limited community space. These include a non-regulation basketball court with no room for seating and an indoor pool with only two lanes.

But the center as it once was – a haven of

*continued on page 3*

## Carl Wilson Declares Victory in City Council Special Election

BY ARTHUR SCHWARTZ

Carl Wilson has declared victory in the closely watched special election for Manhattan's District 3 City Council seat, which runs west of 6th Avenue, from Houston Street to 55th Street, defeating Lindsey Boylan, who was endorsed by Mayor Zohran Mamdani.

Unofficial election night results from the city's Board of Elections (BOE) showed Wilson with a commanding lead, securing nearly 43.08% of the vote with more than 6,129 ballots cast in his favor and 99% of scanners reporting. Boylan followed with 25.66% (3,650 votes).

For Wilson to reach the 50% threshold to officially win, the BOE will move to the ranked voting choice round, with tabulation expected to get underway after May 1.

"This is just the beginning. Winning an election is not the finish line, it is the starting point," Wilson told supporters gathered in VERS bar in Hell's Kitchen. "Now the real work begins, the work of showing up every single day, the work of listening, especially when it's difficult, the work of building coalitions and delivering real results for our communities."

Wilson will be sworn in to the City Council after the results are ratified, but will need to win the June 23 Democratic primary and the November general election in order to serve a full four-year term. Wilson was endorsed by all four of his immediate prede-

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(L-R) JULIE MENIN, ERIK BOTTCHEER, CARL WILSON AND MARK LEVINE celebrate the City Council election's first count. Photo courtesy of Julie Menin.

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# Carol Greitzer, Trailblazing NYC Political Reformer and Women's Advocate, Dies at 101

BY LINCOLN ANDERSON / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS  
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Carol Greitzer, a trailblazing City Council member who fought for women's rights and played a key role in dismantling the entrenched Tammany Hall political machine in New York, died on April 3. She was 101.

Greitzer died at her Greenwich Village home on W. 12th St., where she had lived for nearly 67 years. Her daughter Elizabeth Greitzer reported her mother's passing in an email to friends.

Greitzer was a co-founder in 1956 of the Village Independent Democrats, a Greenwich Village-based, Democratic political club bent on party reform. In 1961, running for female Democratic district leader, she teamed with James Lanigan, as her male co-district leader running mate, to defeat the entrenched Tammany Hall machine and its powerful leader, Carmine DeSapio, whose influence reached far beyond the Village as a kingmaker in national politics.

Two years later, Ed Koch, running for male district leader, replaced Lanigan on the ticket with Greitzer, and they defeated De Sapio's comeback bid in 1963 by a razor-thin margin. *The Daily News* reported on its Sept. 6, 1963, front page how the victorious duo had "thwarted" DeSapio's comeback, with the snappy headline: "De S Misses."

Greitzer went on to make history in 1969 when she became Manhattan's first female elected Council member, winning the downtown seat Koch had previously held after he was elected to Congress. She went on to represent the 2nd Council District for more than 20 years.

Greitzer played a key role in local affairs, saving the Village's Jefferson Market Courthouse from demolition and ensuring Washington Square Park was permanently closed to car and bus traffic. She battled Robert Moses' efforts to bulldoze highways through the Village.

Greitzer was a fierce advocate for women's rights. She was the first president of NARAL Pro-Choice America. She got involved with abortion rights after reading an article in the *Times Magazine* about a California woman involved with the issue.

Greitzer introduced the first bills in New York State banning sex discrimination in housing and places of public accommodation and intervened on girl students' behalf to allow them to use the gym at Stuyvesant High School.

On a lighter note, as district leader, Greitzer campaigned with Robert Kennedy in his 1964 Senate race and, according to her, "taught him how to eat a slice of pizza in front of the crowd." Long before Bill de Blasio's culinary blunder, RFK embarrassingly asked for a fork to eat a New York slice.



CAROL GREITZER AT 100. Photo courtesy of New York City Council.



AS A NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL MEMBER, Carol Greitzer stands outside City Hall in 1970. Photo credit: Jim Hughes / New York Daily News.



CAROL GREITZER election campaign posters. Photo courtesy of New York City Council.

RFK's aides denied it.

In later years, Greitzer remained active in the community.

An expert on Edgar Allan Poe, she fought to stop NYU from demolishing the Poe House, on Third St., where the master of the macabre wrote *The Cask of Amontillado* and revised and published *The Raven*. As a member of the Union Square Community Coalition, she advocated to keep the Union Square Pavilion from being converted into a high-end restaurant. Both efforts failed.

Greitzer was born in downtown Manhattan on Jan. 3, 1925, and grew up in the Bronx. She went to Hunter High School and Hunter College, where she received a B.A. in journalism, and to NYU, where she received her master's in English.

She married Herman Greitzer, an attorney, in 1949 and they had one daughter, Elizabeth. They divorced in 1965. She was then married to Joshua Vogel, also an attorney, from 1990 until his death in 2018.

On Jan. 3, 2025, in honor of Greitzer's 100th birthday, then-District 2 Councilmember Carlina Rivera presented her with a Council proclamation at her Village home.

"Manhattan, and all of New York City, is a better place because of Carol Greitzer," Rivera said. "A trailblazer, an advocate and a leader, Carol's work for women's rights, the LGBTQIA+ community, historic preservation and social justice continues to inspire generations of New Yorkers. We are incredibly proud to celebrate her 100th birthday, her service to the public and the lasting legacy she has created in our city."

Her daughter Elizabeth said in her last conversation with Carol, they talked about Naples and the ruins of Pompeii, which Carol had visited years ago, and also the painter Caravaggio. Carol had also recently enjoyed watching the Indian Wells tennis tournament and rooting for Coco Gauff.

And of course they also spoke about who Carol was planning to vote for in the upcoming Democratic primary elections.

Elizabeth said her own memories of her mother are not political but personal.

"Mom loved art, watching women's tennis, Fire Island, talking on the phone, bird-watching, movies and theater, and great comedies like *Seinfeld*, Larry David — these are the activities we shared," she said.

She is survived by her daughter, Elizabeth, and Elizabeth's husband, Jeffrey Durrell, along with grandchildren, Matthew and Katherine Durrell, plus three stepchildren from her marriage to Joshua Vogel, Laura, David and Robert Vogel, their five children and their four grandchildren.

A memorial will be held sometime in the spring.

Dapolito *continued from page 1*

**THE HUDSON MOSAIC DEVELOPMENT** would be built less than a block away from the Tony Dapolito center. Photo credit: NYC Parks Department.

community, a working class oasis, and a beacon of summertime in the city – is not so easily wrested from the hearts of its supporters.

Michelle Ray Cruz grew up going to the recreation center and now organizes reunions of alumni from the center's programs. "It's not just a building, it's a community that people travel to come back to," she said at the rally. Directing her inquiry at the decision makers involved in the project, she asked, "Are you going to invest in this community and its potential, or erase it?"

While the Hudson Mosaic complex would likely seal the fate of the beloved center, supporters of the project argue it will make room for a superior, if less sentimental, array of resources – including a regulation-sized pool and basketball courts. The project is part of a larger plan to revamp the area released by the Adams administration in August 2025 that includes public park spaces and art installations along Clarkson Street and preserves an iconic mural by Keith Haring.

Village Preservation has long fought for the preservation of the Tony Dapolito center and taken issue with various iterations of affordable developments at 388 Hudson. Andrew Berman, the group's executive director, said that while they support affordable housing, they are wary of lofty promises made by developers and the city and that their input has largely been ignored.

In Berman's view, Hudson Mosaic will not be "contextual" with the neighborhood and the new recreation center is too large because it's designed to entirely replace the Tony Dapolito center. "We wanted it to be fixed up and reopened," he said. "If they do that, a lot of the space that they're planning for the rec center won't be needed in the new building."

Berman also cast doubt on one of the developers for the project, Camber Property Group. Rick Gropper, Camber's founding principal, Berman said, was listed on the Public Advocate's list of "worst landlords."

"You want a developer with a good track record who doesn't have a thousand violations and isn't infamous for evicting his low income tenants," Berman said.

In an email, Camber spokesperson John DeSio said that the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) often turns to Camber to take over buildings

in distress, which temporarily inflates the number of violations that properties in their portfolio have. Once in charge of a building, they work quickly to decrease the number of violations. HPD confirmed both of these characterizations.

"Affordable housing opponents are grasping at straws in an effort to block a 100% affordable project," an HPD spokesperson said. "What they are really attacking here is the creation of new homes for lower incomes."

The project would include a mix of individual and family units and house people with incomes ranging from to 40 to 100% AMI (area median income). Fifteen percent of the units would specifically be set aside for formerly unhoused people and a floor of the building would be dedicated to onsite support services for residents.

Tobi Bergman, a neighborhood resident and Community Board 2 veteran, has lived in the area since he was five, when his family moved from uptown in 1952. He said the diverse, bohemian, and culturally rich Village of his boyhood is gone.

According to a neighborhood profile on *Niche*, more than two thirds of Greenwich Village is white and the average income is \$180,000. Bergman argued that the Hudson Mosaic complex is a rare opportunity to bring 100% affordable housing to an area that sorely needs it. "Our neighborhood needs people who need affordable housing," he said. "We are becoming more and more of a monolithic wealthy neighborhood – we used to be a mix of wealthy people, artists, middle class people, immigrants, everyone."

Bergman was chair of Community Board 2 in 2015, when the body first offered 388 Hudson as a potential site for affordable housing. He said that people say they want affordable housing, but their support is often premised on restrictive conditions – small buildings, the lowest AMI, and 100% affordable housing guaranteed forever – that would make building that housing almost impossible.

Still, the Tony Dapolito center remains a sticking point: at the end of the day, many simply aren't ready to let go of a place that has meant so much for so long. For now though, to the delight of some and ire of others, it seems that the city will be moving ahead with the Hudson Mosaic project.

# Public Records Reveal Coverup

*City's own experts say landmarked rec center can be saved*

BY PHYLLIS ECKHAUS

Condemning the city's "coverup" and "lies," activists rallied to save the shuttered Tony Dapolito Recreation Center, asserting the youth and adult sports hub at Clarkson Street and 7th Avenue South "can be fully repaired," as the city's own architect confirmed in newly-released public records.

These records seem directly to contradict the city's repeated claims that the landmarked, 115-year-old Parks Department building – closed since 2019 – can't be fixed and must be demolished.

The March 29 rally, sponsored by the Coalition to Save the Public Recreation Center Downtown (SPRCD—pronounced "Sparked") and Village Preservation, the local historic preservation group, spotlighted records released via multiple Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) requests. SPRCD founder Sommer Omar declared that the "trove of files undermine almost everything we've been told," observing "not a single file document ... says the building has to be demolished."

In fact, as the city stonewalled Community Board 2 and others seeking to reopen the facility, it apparently withheld from the public detailed plans for repairing and upgrading the rec center. These plans – now released via

FOIL – were prepared by architectural and engineering firms under contract with the city and address every issue that supposedly made Dapolito "beyond repair." This ranges from the condition of the sidewalk vaults to the need to make the building ADA-accessible to the desire for additional program space.

Previous research by Omar revealed that the city has already allocated \$120 million for the Dapolito Recreation Center. Although the Adams administration planned to use the funds for demolition, they could also be used for repairs.

Village Preservation Executive Director Andrew Berman condemned the city's deliberate neglect of a city-owned landmark – a building "this neighborhood fought for years to get protected." He noted, "Landmark designation is supposed to mean something. You don't landmark a building and then hand it a death sentence.... Demolition should never have been on the table."

As a candidate, Mayor Zohran Mamdani promised to preserve the recreation center; however, his administration is proceeding with plans to replace it with a tower at 388 Hudson Street that would include recreation facilities.

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# Panelists Ponder “How Can Big Change Happen in NYC?”

BY PHYLLIS ECKHAUS

In New York City, stuff happens. And sometimes — thanks to the concerted efforts of activists and policymakers — the stuff that happens is change for the better.

An array of wicked-smart, savvy panelists tackled the topic “From Affordable Housing to Bike Lanes: How Can Big Change Happen in NYC?” on April 15 at the Henry Street Settlement’s Abrons Arts Center, at their annual Lillian Wald Symposium.

The panelists weren’t Pollyannas. And the political scientist on board, Mason Williams of Williams College, was bluntly clear that the single biggest obstacle to change for working-class New Yorkers is entrenched — namely shrinking wages and the diminished clout of a shrinking labor movement.

Still, there were surprising glimmers of hope. Anne Williams-Isom, who served as Eric Adams’ deputy mayor for health and human services, said change happens from the bottom up: “The people have the power.”

She cited Black women who spoke up to spark dramatic change in New York City’s foster care system. “Why are you taking my kids, instead of giving me the support I need to raise my kids?” they had demanded — and since 1996, the child welfare system has become more parent-supportive. Thirty years ago, there were 47,000 kids in foster care and now there are 6,000.

She also pointed to a big shift in homeless services, given the “right to shelter” — 98% of New York City’s unhoused today have shelter, albeit temporary.

Manhattan District 1 City Council Member Chris Marte reminded the audience that change can come from surprising quarters. He pointed to Mayor Adams’ collaboration with the City Council to launch “New York City Reads,” an evidence-based shift to phonics. Piloted in Marte’s district, at PS 18 where a majority of students are unhoused, Marte recounted the excitement of parents whose children suddenly love books.

## Public Housing and Affordability

And Marte has his own ambitious dream — getting the 6,700 vacant and warehoused



SEVERAL ‘BIG CHANGE’ PANELISTS, L-R: Barika Williams, Executive Director, Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development; Chris Marte, New York City Council Member; and Norah Yahya, Chief Government Affairs Officer, Metropolitan Museum of Art. Photo credit: Jeremy Weine.

apartments within the New York City Housing Authority back online. It costs \$40,000-\$60,000 per unit to make repairs, and takes NYCHA close to 400 days to complete them. Yet with market rate housing, landlords make repairs in one or two months. Marte has brought the issue to the Council’s Progressive Caucus, Black and Latino Caucus, and Committee on Public Housing, and looks forward to fixing this problem pronto. “This can help thousands of families and we can do it right now. We have the political will,” he said.

Barika Williams, executive director of the Association for Neighborhood & Housing Development, noted that the biggest employer of NYCHA tenants is the NYC Department of Education. A New York City that serves only the rich, she suggested, “can’t operate.”

Ultimately, she said, the city will “have to pick up the [housing] tab.” Failing to do so, she argued, is ultimately more expensive than not — sending tenants to homeless shelters and spurring a whole array of unfortunate and costly long-term family outcomes.

Though sympathetic to small strapped landlords, she called out the landlords who object to rent regulation because they believe they should be entitled to maximize their profit: “Government should not be re-

sponsible for making sure you get a certain return for your investors.”

## The Budget Dance

Panelist Norah Yahya, the chief government affairs officer at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, highlighted another change for the better — the \$45 million baseline increase to the city Department of Cultural Affairs budget. That increase, she said, somewhat frees cultural institutions from “the budget dance,” where they are forced every year to fight for funding. For nonprofits in general, the budget dance keeps staff from fulfilling their organization’s mission and creates uncertainty about employment beyond June 30.

Marte praised a “transformative” budget decision by a public official. In 2022, Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso allocated his entire \$45 million discretionary budget to launching maternal health programs at Brooklyn’s three public hospitals. As a council member, Reynoso had learned that Black women in New York City — including his own wife, pregnant with their first child — were eight times more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes than their white counterparts.”

Mason Williams underscored the costs

of budget decisions that ignore long-term consequences: “It’s expensive not to have effective early childhood education. It’s extraordinarily expensive to use Rikers Island as your number one mental health system.” Not addressing housing insecurities is “hugely expensive in the long run.”

## Identity and Experience

Barika Williams observed that the “lived experience” of the policymaker at the table is key. “Someone who doesn’t have the lived experience” of how transformative and impactful art can be may be dismissive of arts programming, for example.

Yahna described launching a Met Museum internship program specifically for youth in NYCHA housing, as so competitive “it’s like applying at Harvard.” Concerned about the lack of diversity among art history majors, she’d wondered “how do we change that trajectory so that we can continue to have diversity in leadership?” The program grew out of her personal experience with similar outreach programs: “If I wasn’t in that room, that program wouldn’t exist.”

Mason Williams noted that big real estate was best understood as a power juggernaut comparable to big oil in Texas. Marte added that the vast power of the city’s real estate lobby isn’t invisible — in fact, one can often identify its support for candidates by researching the political action committee named on political mailers. The lobby is also conspicuous at community board meetings.

## Advice for Activists

Barika Williams urged a young audience member to ask questions and not to respect elder activists too much: “Sometimes you’re right and we’re wrong.” And she counseled patience, acknowledging that some victories won’t happen till we’re gone. For today, “The win is in the fight.”

The panel was moderated by Jessica Yager, senior director of housing justice initiatives at the Center for Justice Innovation. A video of the event will be posted to Henry Street Settlement’s YouTube channel.

# The Poorly Planned Planning Meeting

BY ED WOODAM

I have a decades-long relationship with 14th Street. In the 1980s, it was a bustling boulevard of electronics shops, wig stores, inexpensive clothing and luggage, and old-school mom-and-pop businesses. Fourteenth Street is the beginning of the Manhattan grid. Back in those days, everything below 14th Street was cool and hip; above it, passé and blasé. Every autumn for 21 years, I’ve produced an independent visual and performance arts festival, Art in Odd Places, along the full length of 14th Street — from Avenue C to the Hudson — without permits. The festival began after 9/11 when 14th Street became a barricade for weeks following the towers’ collapse.

Over time, the Meatpacking District

shifted dramatically as its industrial roots declined, giving way to high-end boutiques, fashion houses, and trendy nightlife. In the early days, I approached the Union Square Business Improvement District (BID) about the festival and was brushed off with what felt like disgust. We weren’t polished enough, and there was no official city sponsorship. Yet in 2024, while sitting at our eastside festival information table in front of the 14th Street Y near First Avenue, I was approached by a representative from the Union Square BID. She wanted to know who we were, why we hadn’t contacted them before producing the festival this year and — most pointedly — where our permits were.

Fast forward to March 25, 2026 when I, my friend (who has also spent decades producing public art events officially with permits in New York City), and many others arrived at the second-floor space at Pratt Manhattan for what we believed would be the first public presentation (with slideshow and talks) for the city’s 14th Street Plan. The event was scheduled to run from 4 to 7 p.m. I had filled out an online survey beforehand, answering questions about our relationship with 14th Street, what areas we frequented, our concerns, and suggestions for improvements. We came expecting a structured conversation about the corridor’s future.

What we found instead was chaos.

When we arrived, there was no one at the front entrance to direct attendees. A table had been set up away from the door, but the crowd that gathered around it felt off-putting, unwelcoming, and disorganized. Having mobility issues, I walked straight into the room and took a seat to the right of the entrance. Tables were scattered around the room. Each was surrounded by groups of people, many of whom appeared confused about what they were supposed to do. There were no maps of the space, no posted agenda, and no one to explain how the event would proceed.

From my vantage point, I could see the dis-

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# The Village Mobilizes Against ICE

BY ED YUTKOWITZ

In towns and cities across the country, concerned citizens have taken action to protect undocumented aliens — and indeed all residents — against rampaging Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents.

Here in the West Village, Village Independent Democrats (VID) is helping neighborhood residents to fight back against unwanted and unwarranted ICE visits. The club aims to educate business owners and managers on their rights — and those of their employees — and provide them with the information they need should ICE try to enter their premises.

Leading that effort is David Siffert, a former VID president and a candidate to succeed Deborah Glick as representative of New York State's 66th Assembly District. Siffert has worked for months to coordinate the efforts of VID volunteers. "We go door-to-door to local businesses to help prepare them for ICE raids," he says. "We do 'know-your-rights' training for business owners and managers and give out information for their employees."

Siffert and his volunteers coordinate their routes and strive to meet with about 15 businesses a day. "The response from businesses has been incredibly positive," Siffert notes. "Almost every business is excited to hear from us. New Yorkers want to protect each other."

Siffert points out that ICE has been known to show bogus warrants to obtain access to non-public areas of businesses and accost employees. In fact, they must have judicial warrants signed by a judge (not fake "administrative warrants" on DHS letterhead) that specify the date, time, and areas they are allowed to enter.

The same rules apply for residential buildings. Co-ops and other private residences can actually craft policies to deny ICE permission to enter without a warrant and make sure



**DAVID SIFFERT**, candidate to represent the 66th Assembly District, discusses how a store manager how can prepare for a visit from ICE. *Photo by Ed Yutkowitz.*

that staff knows how to recognize a legitimate warrant. Siffert is available to educate building management and personnel. "I am happy to come by to train staff and residents so they know what to do if ICE shows up," he says.

The VID volunteers provide businesses with written instructions, in both English and Spanish, on how to recognize and respond to legitimate warrants. Created by the Manhattan branch of Indivisible, the national organization dedicated to strengthening democracy in America, the material includes lists of rights and resources for business owners, managers, and employees. Hands Off, a coalition of groups dedicated to deterring ICE incursions in New York City, distributes the material to individual canvassing efforts.

Siffert's efforts on behalf of immigrants are not new. He explains, "I've been doing work defending immigrants for many years — from helping Haitians get TPS status back in 2008 to going down to the Texas border in 2018 to help free detained migrant fami-

lies. I've been a member of the New York Immigration Coalition Immigrant Leaders Council and have worked with the NYCLU, Bronx Defenders, and other organizations to try to make New York a sanctuary state. I'm not new to this fight, and I hope that voters and immigrant New Yorkers see that this is a long-term commitment for me."

Progressives have warned about ICE abuses for years. But the agency has been newly empowered in Donald Trump's second term. Many of its agents are poorly trained and lack the fundamental skills, common decency, and professional discipline to be effective in front-line law enforcement jobs. The agency's leadership, under the recently fired Kristi Noem, has been a national embarrassment. Its agents have virtually, if not literally, been given a license to arrest, deport, and even kill innocent people, including American citizens and legal residents.

ICE raids seem deliberately designed to evoke terror. They make mass arrests — bru-

talizing men, women, and children, handcuffing them, offering no explanation, and jailing them, and sometimes deporting them, without hearings, attorneys, or the due process guaranteed under the Constitution of the United States. Anyone can be caught up in their sweeps. Deportees have been sent to countries known for the brutal conditions of their jails. Some have been sent places where they don't even speak the language.

The courts have ruled against ICE countless times. But the administration seems unconcerned with the rule of law and continues to ignore judicial orders. Essentially, the agency has acted as a political police force for the Trump administration. It's no wonder that so many commentators have compared it to the "Brownshirts," the paramilitary force of the rising Nazi party in Germany in the 1930s.

For Siffert and his volunteers, resistance to ICE is a matter of conscience and commitment to the community and the country. "My grandparents were Holocaust survivors. When the secret police start rounding up my neighbors, it's hard for me to ignore it," he says.

The Village canvassing effort is but one of many taking place in the New York City metropolitan region and across America. In fact, it's just a part of national movement to fight back in the courts and in the streets against the police state tactics of the federal government. As Siffert puts it, "Our efforts to organize and resist are one way we prevent the growth of fascism in America."

*To learn how to join the fight to protect immigrant rights and resist the Trump administration's authoritarian agenda, concerned citizens can visit the VID website at [villagedemocrats.org](http://villagedemocrats.org).*

## A Towering Test for Mayor Mamdani in The Village

BY PHYLLIS ECKHAUS

Village Preservation Executive Director Andrew Berman and District 2 City Councilmember Harvey Epstein called on Mayor Mamdani to right a towering wrong — namely the 30 story, 538 foot tall building approved for 5 West 13th Street, just west of Fifth Avenue. The planned tower, on a low-rise residential block, would offer just 36 oversized, super-luxury units and no affordable housing — and the city says that's okay, thanks to "City of Yes" rezoning.

Yet back when the Adams administration was lobbying for "City of Yes," it pointed to exactly that development site, and assured advocates and policymakers that the rezoning would produce "nice low bulky buildings, like the ones you see on this block and they would likely include affordable housing," Berman said at the April 23 press conference.

Indeed, Village Preservation initially hoped the city's approval of the tower was a mistake and asked the Department of Build-

ings and the Planning Department to review the approval and fix the regulations as necessary. The city said, "Sorry, this is exactly what our new zoning rules allow."

As the city now interprets the rules, luxury towers are not merely allowed but "incentivized," Berman contended — an alarming omen of more of what's to come, if the mayor doesn't step in. "Super-tall, super-luxury condo towers, not on Billionaires' Row in Midtown, but here in a residential neighborhood. And with just a tiny number of huge, outrageously expensive apartments that are rarely if ever lived in," he noted, referring to the likelihood the units will be bought as investments, not as homes.

"Mayor Mamdani, you came into office as a change-maker and a status quo breaker," Berman declared. "Here's a chance to live up to those ideals...Don't accept the rules of your predecessor and his supporters in big real estate...Fix our zoning, so this 'City of

Yes' tower does not become the face of our future."

Councilmember Epstein concurred, decrying the tower as a mockery of the affordable housing crisis, offering "zero affordability, but lots of penthouses for people who don't even live in New York City." Describing the plight of the average New York City renter, confronting a 1.5 percent vacancy rate, the councilmember observed that there's far greater availability of market rate and luxury apartments. The potential buyers of super-luxury housing — "the one percent of the one percent of the one percent" — have neither an affordable housing problem nor a scarcity problem," he noted.

Also urging the mayor to intervene were Val Orselli, from This Land Is Ours Community Land Trust, who spoke at the press conference, and Assemblymember Deborah Glick, who issued a statement calling the tower "unacceptable."

**Wilson** *continued from page 1*

cessors, including former Council speakers Christine Quinn and Corey Johnson, and several of the district's political clubs.

A political action committee tied to Andrew Cuomo allies poured six-figure sums into ads attacking Boylan and supporting Wilson, her main opponent, *New York Focus* reported. Boylan was the first woman to accuse her then boss, Cuomo, of sexual harassment.

That group, Westside Progress, reported spending \$144,500 starting mid-April on ads, texts and phone calls supporting Wilson. This was more than Boylan spent on her own campaign. "Don't rank socialist Lindsey Boylan," read one of the online ads, an apparent nod to her status as a dues-paying member of the Democratic Socialists of America, which did not endorse her.

Approximately 15,000 voters in the 3rd Council District cast their ballots, about half the amount that cast their ballots in the June 2025 mayoral primary. Still, turnout was high for a special election, where the number of ballots cast generally hovers below 10,000.

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## OPINION

# New Deals

BY TOM LAMIA



CHURCHILL, ROOSEVELT AND STALIN at Yalta in February 1945. Photo credit: Army Signal Corps Collection in the U.S. National Archives via Wikipedia.

Soon after he was elected president in 1932, Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) unveiled his New Deal program to save the nation from the Great Depression. The Wall Street stock and bond markets had collapsed in the 1929 crash. Bank failures, unemployment, drought and crop failures had destroyed traditional sources of capital. To fund a recovery, President Herbert Hoover, who preceded FDR, looked to private capital, volunteerism, state projects and American resolve to put matters right. Hoover thought that using federal money to stimulate the economy would lead to socialism, a radical departure from American traditions.

By 1932 it was clear that Hoover's policies had failed. Roosevelt was elected in November and took office four months later. He charged out of the gate with a program of unparalleled legislation that became known as the New Deal. His long-time associate, New York State Industrial Commissioner Frances Perkins, had developed a program of labor initiatives to help workers. Perkins agreed to be FDR's labor secretary on the condition that her program be adopted. The list included Social Security and federal minimum wage laws among other pioneering legislation. That list became FDR's New Deal. Perkins was the first woman to serve in a presidential cabinet and did so throughout FDR's four elected terms in office from 1933 to 1945.

The New Deal was revolutionary, creating an array of federal programs that would put Americans back to work and federalize activities from agriculture to zoology. Using the Constitution's interstate commerce clause Congress invoked federal jurisdiction over a vast array of American life. Not everyone was happy about that. In 1938 cases seeking to restrict the federal government from asserting its power reached a Supreme Court that had six Republican appointees — a majority — and most were resistant to the New Deal. There were wins and losses. In 1937 FDR tried "packing" the Court to add justices favorable to his New Deal. By January 1938 retirements had created two vacancies that were filled by Roosevelt nominees ending the need for hardball tactics.

Roosevelt's New Deal was an aggressive form of governance that was radical and transforming. It is still controversial. The sum of its effects is now viewed as having saved lives, built institutions and a middle class and made rural life decent, if not comfortable, and prevented starvation and revolution.

The United States was not alone in suffering the disaster of falling prices, unemployment and lost investment. As Roosevelt's New Deal was pulling America up by its bootstraps, Hitler, Stalin and Tojo were following different, authoritarian paths to recovery in their parts of the world. They, too, launched their own New Deals. For Russia: communism. For Germany: National Socialism. For Italy: Mussolini's fascism. For Japan: absolute monarchy under a divine emperor.

Any New Deal carries the immediate allure of change. Au-

thoritarian political leadership can exploit this allure by conquest (adding territory, people and assets) or by suppression (property appropriation, corruption, confiscatory taxation). Both their own people and foreigners can be sources of profit. But authoritarian control contains the seeds of its own demise. The exploited will, in time, organize and confront their oppressors and gain their freedom.

In the worldwide economic and political collapse of the 1930s, authoritarian governments directed their attentions to geographical conquest. For every annexation of land and peoples there was a price. Resources, physical and human, were appropriated to serve the invaders. Slave labor was implemented in Germany and elsewhere to maintain or increase production. All that ended in 1945 with the defeat of the authoritarian powers, who had their inefficient, persecution-centered authoritarian political systems to blame for their defeat.

In 1945 in San Francisco, the U.N. Charter was signed by 51 countries. In October the U.N. came into existence. This, too, was a New Deal — one, perhaps, without precedent in its ambition, but one that falls short of world government. It is not authoritarian; it is too dispersed and ethnically amorphous for that. Its lack of a cockpit from which to reliably steer its course makes it beyond the control of any one nation or group. The United States has led world economic recovery since 1945: Bretton Woods, the Marshall Plan, UNRRA (enabling WWII displaced persons to return home or find new ones). Its record of maintaining peace and security for itself and its allies reflects its moral and military strength: NATO, SEATO, ANZUS, bilateral mutual defense treaties, the Western Hemisphere Rio Treaty, and more.

But now our country has embarked on an unprecedented, harmful and immoral New Deal. We have elected a president whose charter is Project 2025, a program for authoritarian government. This New Deal would sublimate our rule of law, our election processes and our system of justice into a corrupt leadership that would reject our history and expose us to a hostile world of enemies and scorned allies. Trump may be immune from prosecution for now, but not immune from a legacy of opprobrium and disgrace. The Constitution he swore to preserve, protect and defend may be unintelligible or antithetical to him but ignorance provides no license for him to violate his oath. He says he knows nothing about Project 2025. He often claims ignorance of facts as a shield against responsibility. These claims are not credible. He works hard to avoid evidence of being informed. Does he know that ignorance of the law is no excuse? His New Deal is authoritarian and a license for illegality. The dictators of the 1930s are gone, but there are present day models that Trump praises and seeks to emulate. His model would be a fiefdom: England before Magna Carta. We did not vote for this. It is tyranny and it is evil.

## LETTERS

**Restore Dapolito,  
Don't Demolish It**

Thank you for the excellent articles covering the plans for city-owned properties at 388 Hudson Street and the existing Tony Dapolito Recreation Center on Clarkson Street.

I have known Tobi Bergman, the writer of the article *Just Imagine—A Wide Open Park Space From Varick to Hudson*, since I started going to Community Board 2 meetings with Doris Diether in 2015, when Tobi was the Chair of CB2. I deeply respect his service to the CB2 and to park space in general; he has been a champion for sports fields and Hudson River Park.

Unfortunately, Tobi seems to be blinded by his devotion to parks, to the point that he is advocating the destruction of a cherished and viable historic structure, for no better reason than it would provide more park space.

The fallacy of such an argument is apparent. If the goal is to add more park space, then design the vacant 388 Hudson site for parks; no demolition necessary! If recreation spaces are needed, repair the Dapolito Center, already dedicated to recreation use! Of course, the community has correctly declared that a restored Dapolito Center and

additional recreation space in 388 Hudson are both badly needed and wanted.

Now that city records have been revealed that include the 2022 complete working drawings for the city Parks Department, by the esteemed firms of WXY Architects, Silman Structural Engineers, and Li-Saltzman, there is no doubt that the building is viable for restoration. The city has also allotted \$100 million for the work to be done. Let it be done!

Brian J Pape, AIA

**Child Protective Services**

Too often, Child Protective Services (CPS) improperly intervenes in struggling families' lives by removing children instead of actually addressing the root causes of the family's hardship. Poverty, a lack of universal child-care, unstable and expensive housing, and limited access to healthcare are frequently mistaken for neglect when a parent is trying to do the best they can with the limited resources they have. When agencies respond with separation rather than support, families are traumatized and communities are weakened.

This, of course, does not apply in cases of true abuse and neglect. But many parents

involved in the CPS system are not abusive, just overwhelmed and underfunded. We need a push in resources in areas such as mental health, substance abuse, childcare, and more healthy nourishment programs for families in need. I would love to see more support and funding for these kinds of programs (e.g. CARES, Rainbow Room, etc.)

Kaitlyn Weinerman

**Emily Roebling's Fierce Voice**

What a pleasure to read Emily Anderson's piece on Brooklyn Bridge builder Emily Roebling in your April issue! Roebling was astonishing, not least because she recognized and spoke out about misogyny. Anderson references the prize-winning essay, *A Wife's Disabilities*, which Roebling read at her 1899 graduation from NYU's Women's Law Class, a non-degree program attended by rich society women, covered with patronizing contempt by newspaper society pages. One paper wrote about Roebling's essay under the heading, *Tea Table Gossip*.

Anderson quotes Emily's husband John as saying he did not agree with Emily's essay about how wives were utterly without legal rights. I think your readers might also appreciate language from the essay itself.

Emily Roebling was fierce and sarcastic, condemning "the sacred rite of marriage" as conferring upon the married woman "the ranking in legal responsibility with idiots and slaves." I marvel at her anger and bluntness.

I wrote about NYU's Women's Law Class and the amazing, radical Village women who graduated from the law school in the early 20th century in a law review article, *Restless Women: The Pioneering Alumnae of New York University Law School*. Interested folks can find the piece online—the prose is not legalese, and there's no paywall.

Phyllis Eckhaus

**Get the Dapolito Facts Straight**

Reading the article by Tobi Bergman about Dapolito, I wondered has he ever been inside? He states that the indoor pool is in a "dank and dark basement." The indoor pool is located on the same street level site as the outdoor pool. One must walk through the indoor pool area to get to the outside pool. There is no basement, Tobi.

There are two gyms, side by side, that seem to be regulation size gyms and definitely always suitable for basketball. Plenty big.

Local neighbor

## Congressman Dan Goldman — A Tycoon as Phony as a \$3,000 Bill

BY ARTHUR SCHWARTZ

We have several interesting races coming up in June's Democratic primary. Within the Village View readership area, there will be a new City Council member (which looks like it will be Carl Wilson), a new Assembly member (replacing Deborah Glick) and a new state senator (replacing Brian Kavanaugh). But no race will be more consequential than the congressional race between current Congressman Dan Goldman, and former Comptroller Brad Lander. Goldman was elected in the 2022 Democratic primary with 24% of the vote, spending \$7 million (!!!) and getting over \$1 million in attack mailings against his closest opponent from a group associated with the American Israel Political Action Committee (AIPAC). Goldman's 10th Congressional District stretches from 14th Street, across Manhattan, to Brooklyn Heights, Park Slope and northern Sunset Park. Lander represented Park Slope and Brooklyn Heights for eight years on the City Council.

Goldman, who essentially bought his seat four years ago, is the heir to the Levi Strauss fortune, and presently, with a net value of over \$350 million, he is by far the richest member of Congress. He is smart, telegenic, appears often on MS NOW, and has been a leading supporter of funding weapon gifts to Israel over the last four years.

But if you have been watching your mailbox, or if you use TikTok or Instagram, you would never know this. According to his

mail, Goldman is leading the fight against "billionaires." The first card he sent out said, "Wealth inequality is suffocating our nation, and it's getting worse." (Sounds like Bernie Sanders.) Then he asks, "How? Since most of their money is in assets, not wages, they avoid paying income tax." He touts a bill he has introduced which would tax the use of corporate assets to pay for things which benefit "billionaires."

His next mailing talks about the rich buying elections! He complains about the impact that his country club buddies have on elections through political action committees (PACs). Of course, he doesn't mention anything about folks worth hundreds of millions of dollars just buying elections, like his friend Michael Bloomberg did when he ran for mayor and outspent opponents 20-1.

Now we are talking about serious money here. Let's look at the numbers right from Goldman's Federal Election Commission filings.

For this race, as of March 31, against Brad Lander:

- Goldman has raised \$4,537,962 (16% more than he raised in 2022).
- Goldman has spent \$3,815,451.
- Brad Lander has raised \$1,374,757.

Let's look further at these interesting numbers:

- Goldman's large individual contributors (more than \$7,000) have contributed \$3,051,930 (70% of his funds).

- Goldman's small contributors (under \$2,000) have contributed \$1,260,238, which is 5.97% of his funds.
- Hedge funds have donated \$126,000.
- PACs have contributed \$382,750. The biggest, AIPAC, has contributed \$188,000 of that.

Doesn't sound like Robin Hood to me.

And Goldman's latest announcement? He will match any donation of \$250 or more with his own money. He is well on his way to surpassing his \$7 million in expenditures in 2022.

And just wait until we start getting mailings about how Brad Lander, who is proudly Jewish, is an antisemite. I guarantee you that that will come.

His most recent postcard accuses Benjamin Netanyahu of leading the U.S. into an immoral, illegal, and costly war in Iran — and pledges that he won't "vote for a single cent for this reckless war." He says money for bombs should be spent on health care, child care and affordable housing, "not death and destruction abroad."

But a "no" vote now would be the first one he would have cast. The United States has provided at least \$21.7 billion in military aid to Israel since the war in Gaza began on Oct. 7, 2023 — and Goldman voted "yes" for every cent. He said nothing about Israel's overkill in Gaza, actions opposed by most American Jews. And then there was this: In a stunning betrayal of international jus-

tice and human rights and the prerogative of his own party and President Biden, Dan Goldman aligned with Republicans in passing a bill to sanction International Criminal Court (ICC) officials. This move came in response to the ICC's decision to seek arrest warrants for Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and over allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity related to Oct. 7, and the subsequent conflict in Gaza. The bill, which passed 247 to 155, called for the imposition of severe sanctions on the entire ICC, from the judges on down, who were involved in investigating, arresting, detaining, or prosecuting "protected persons of the United States and its allies." In essence, it aimed to end U.S. participation and support for the ICC any time it sought to prosecute "protected persons of the United States," including Netanyahu. Now he calls what Netanyahu is doing "immoral and illegal."

You know why I called this article "as phony as a \$3,000 bill?" Because when a super-rich guy, who bought his way into Congress, pretends that he is Robin Hood (yes, those are his words in his mail), the phoniness is so large that I couldn't say \$3 bill.

*Next month: We will look at Brad Lander's record and life. We shouldn't just reject Goldman because he is a hypocrite. We actually have an amazingly wonderful alternative.*

# My View of the Village

BY ROGER PARADISO

## Integral Yoga Institute - New York



**INTEGRAL YOGA INSTITUTE ON WEST 13TH STREET** is being renovated. Photos: Roger Paradiso.

A new Integral Yoga Institute is rising like a phoenix under the direction of Sosie Hublitz, the new CFO and general manager. I had a wonderful conversation with Hublitz who is running this reboot. The six story building on 227 West 13th Street is here to stay as they work through a building renovation. The location remains home to one of the best yoga centers in Manhattan.

Hublitz says Integral Yoga is in good financial shape and looking forward to being around another 50 years. She is reaching out to the community and looking to hold events and perhaps sharing some spaces for like-minded organizations.

Classes will continue during renovations. Please check [iyiny.org](http://iyiny.org) for the schedule.

## NYU Protest Protocol

Protesters outside Bobst Library, the Paulson Center and other NYU buildings could soon be facing off with the New York Police Department if Mayor Zohran Mamdani signs legislation that would increase police control over protests around schools.

“There’s this fear for potential repression — people are afraid to attend protests on campus, or to get involved at all politically,” Ebtesham Ahmed, a Tandon senior who frequently leads demonstrations at NYU, told *Washington Square News*. He worries that increased NYPD involvement in campus protests could further discourage student activism.

The New York City Council passed two bills last month that would require the NYPD to establish and publish its response plans to protests held outside schools and places of worship, detailing its use of security perimeters around entrances and its plans to communicate with the public. Now, Mamdani faces mounting pressure to ratify the policy from organizations advocating for protest regulations.

The Schools and Houses of Worship Access and Safety Act constitutes a watered-down version of proposals first presented in January, which called for 100-foot buffer zones at the entrances of educational and religious sites. After free speech activists and the NYPD raised concerns about the bill’s infringement on First Amendment rights, council members amended the proposals — making the buffer zones optional, but explicitly encouraged.

*Reprinted from Washington Square News, written by Alex Woodworth, the multimedia editor.*



## Record Store Day

April 18 was a beautiful spring day in the Village. When I got to Jamal Alnasr’s record store on Bleecker I saw the lines go up the street to the far corner. Last month he told me he was hoping for nice weather for Record Store Day.



**ANNA IN LINE** looking for vinyl at Village Revival Records on Record Store Day.

cord Store Day. He also said, “There’s a lot of vacancies again.” I hope Record Store Day gave him some time to forget about rent.

I interviewed two young people who were excited to be there.

Aidan: “This is my go to store for vinyl records. I come down once a month to check it out. There’s a Pink Floyd that I’m looking for and a Van Halen and a Masayoshi Takana vinyl record I am praying for.”

Anna: “It’s Record Store Day ... the best day of the year. This is my third Record Store Day. I’m looking for Joni Mitchell and Charli xcx. I love vinyl. I saw there was a Bruce Springsteen vinyl release so in the spur of the moment I might make a rash decision. My dad collects vinyl so he gave me a whole professional set up in my apartment. He collects record players too.”

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## Meeting *continued from page 4*

order unfolding. People milled about in small groups or alone, asking what the meeting was for, when presentations would begin, and what they were supposed to do. I approached a representative from the Meatpacking District Management Association (MDMA) — a young woman I assumed would know something. She was the social media strategist. I asked, “What’s going on?” She shrugged and said, “I’m not really sure. I think people at the different tables are talking about 14th Street things.” I then asked, “Is anyone going to speak?” She replied, “I’m not sure.”

Nearby, I saw a man wearing a Union Square Partnership (USP) badge. I asked him, “What time does this end?” He replied, “I’m not sure...I’m here working until 8 p.m.” It was difficult to watch. Confused couples, groups, and solo residents wandered in, paused for a few minutes, scratched their heads, and left. Some stayed longer, trying to engage at tables or with staff, only to give up when no one could provide a clear answer. Over the course of an hour, I watched more than 40 people enter, glance around, and then exit, bewildered. The

sense of miscommunication and lack of organization was palpable.

Eventually, I met Soledad from the Department of Transportation (DOT). She was kind and delightful, and when I asked who was in charge, she pointed to Emily Weidenhof, assistant commissioner of public realm at NYC DOT, previously director of public space. Weidenhof plays a key role in transforming NYC streets into pedestrian-focused, sustainable spaces, managing Open Streets, pedestrian plazas, and other initiatives. When Soledad brought Weidenhof over to meet me, I mentioned Art in Odd Places. She had never heard of it. Still, she kindly shared her contact information and later Soledad returned with Weidenhof’s business card.

Despite finally meeting a person in authority, my friend and I ultimately decided to leave. There were no printed materials, no clear explanation of the process, no maps, no schedule, and no guidance on what the city hoped to accomplish. The so-called “community workshop” felt like a loosely organized fair with no agenda or purpose, leav-

ing residents and stakeholders to navigate the chaos on their own.

This experience reflects a familiar pattern. Institutions, city agencies, and others host public meetings to involve the community, ostensibly inviting residents to contribute to planning and policy. But in reality, these exercises are superficial. Plans are made behind closed doors, and the public is left to observe powerlessly. The city’s 14th Street Plan, which promises “permanent transit, streetscape enhancements, and public space improvements” to link parks, transit hubs, and institutions, risks alienating the very people it claims to engage if its workshops continue to be this disorganized.

Community engagement requires more than surveys, tables, and goodwill. It demands thoughtful organization, clear communication, and respect for the lived experiences of those who have long called 14th Street home. Residents, business owners, and artists who have invested decades in the corridor deserve transparency, clarity, and an opportunity to meaningfully contribute — not a spectacle of confusion.



UTOPIAS will be the 21st edition of Art in Odd Places (AiOP), curated by Arantxa Araujo & Pancho López, September 26 & 27, 12-5pm on 14th Street. The production seeks to present the city not as it is, but as it could be—transforming 14th Street into a living laboratory for collective dreams, radical care, and shared futures, as this festival has been doing for over two decades. Individual artists and collectives produce projects that use installations, performance, actions, gestures, sound, and participatory practices to activate public space and spark imagination, seeking to create situations where audiences can listen, participate, and reflect.

# Living at the Docks: A Real West Side Story

BY BRIAN J. PAPE, AIA

## PART 1

*Sometimes we meet 'real' New Yorkers, born and raised here. Some of them have stories of ancestors who moved here to start their families. This is one such story of those living near the docks along the West Side of Manhattan, as told by Eric, who prefers to be anonymous.*

## EARLY YEARS — 1960S

### Where are your ancestors from and how did they ended up in Manhattan?

My maternal grandparents came from Austria before WWII. Grandma was the daughter of a mayor in Austria. She bought four buildings in Chelsea to house longshoremen and merchant marines. She bought the buildings to pass them along to family members. She had eight children but two passed away early. None of her remaining sons and daughters wanted the buildings. Too much responsibility, I guess. She did OK and had a TV and washing machine when they first came out.

My grandfather, on my mother's side, passed away. Grandma got remarried to Mr. M., who was a longshoreman and merchant marine. His foot was crushed by a crate when he was 40 years old and he was on disability from then on. Grandma had a lot of plates to juggle. Then they moved to Jersey, out in the sticks. I loved going there. They started selling the buildings to take care of themselves in their old age.

### Tell us more memories of your father.

Dad lived in Jersey, in Hoboken. His mother and father were Dutch. (I remember Dutch shoes in the living room cabinet.) My parents met at a dance at PS 11 which was arranged so the dock workers, longshoremen, and others could socialize. They were married in 1957 at Guardian Angel Roman Catholic Church at 193 10th Ave. I was born in St. Vincent's in 1959.

My parents came from Catholic families and my mother took me to church every Sunday. I got christened there, I got communion there and I was confirmed there. I tried to understand what I was being taught about the religious principles: Heaven and Earth, good and bad, reward and punishment.

We went to Catholic nursery and elementary schools in the neighborhood. My cousin and I were always the rowdy ones, so the nuns would put us out in the hallway at nap time so we wouldn't disturb the others.

We had a very good life. I think that a longshoreman was one of the highest paid trade jobs in the city. My mother was a housewife and my younger sister; she was an angel.

I remember our apartment. Grandma kept two buildings — one that I grew up in, from age one to six — we had the top floor. My Uncle Bob and his wife and four kids had the basement and the first floor.

I remember walking up the marble steps



**THE LONGSHOREMAN UNION HALL** on 13th Street and 7th Avenue was designed by Bronx-born but New Orleans-based Architect Albert C. Ledner, built in 1964 as the Joseph Curran Building. It was sold as the shipping industry changed, and has been renovated as the Northwell GV Hospital. *Credit: Brian J. Pape, AIA.*

to the four-story apartment. They were very slippery when it was wet and rainy. Dad never carried me since he wanted me to use my legs. We would walk all the way down to the Village, Washington Square Park and back. He would hold my hand.

I remember when he bought me my first bike and I learned to ride with training wheels. He brought me everywhere because he was a proud father. I remember the smell of his Old Spice lotion. I remember when he brought me to work with him at the docks. The pier scared the hell out of me because we were on a wooden deck which only seemed three feet wide and I was walking next to the water.

Dad loved the water. We were at the beach every time we could get there. We had an umbrella and an inner tube. When he put me on that inner tube, I was sitting in the middle so I just folded and went right to the bottom. He got me up real fast. Dad was also an amateur photographer who took lots of photos and had albums full of pictures.

Mom and Dad were disciplinarians. It seemed all the families believed that children

should be seen, not heard. I guess that's why they got along so well or loved each other so much. I grew up in a real strict household. We were protective — I didn't get to leave the house by myself until I was seven or eight.

When Dad came home, first thing he did was take off his jacket, then his boots, and shower before he sat down to dinner with us. He was big on family dinner and big on seafood, especially scallops, which weren't my favorite.

Every weekend he dressed up in a suit. That's what these guys did. When they weren't working, they didn't wear their work clothes, or sneakers, or sports gear. Men wore hats, even those gangsta newsboy cabbage wool caps. He was a very spiffy dresser, with his fedora hat. I have friends who still wear fedora hats at funerals.

I remember the neighborhood bars he brought me to. I had my Coca Cola, he had his drinks and hung out with his friends. I remember the smell and the pool balls clinking. I remember the booths. Most of the time, we sat at the bar on one of those adjustable stools. Sometimes I sat on big phone books

while we watched a football game. All these brand new fathers were showing off their sons or daughters. There were quite a few right next to you — talking to their buddies — always talking about boxing.

This whole neighborhood was German and Irish. Another bar we went to was Joe's Tavern on 25th Street. They would set out beach chairs on the sidewalk. If you look at that building today, you wouldn't want to live there — but people still live on the upper floors. The bar is empty even though the Joe's Tavern sign is still outside. I'm talking at least 40 years that it's been sitting there — not able to rent it — or whatever the case may be? That's a mystery for New York City real estate.

I remember going to the Longshoreman Union Hall with dad on 13th Street and Seventh Avenue. Everybody's father was in the union. When I was a kid, I had aspirations to do what daddy did.

Dad passed away in August 1965 at 36 years old. Though built like a brick shit-house, he had an operation for an ulcer and had a heart attack on the operating table. Ma took it hard, widowed at 34 with two kids. Ma didn't want to talk about Dad, not because she didn't love him, but it brought up too many memories. From what I heard, Dad was a damn good pool player, honest as the day is long, and very respectful of women. He had a high moral standard and he was a Korean War army vet.

Unfortunately, the Longshoreman Union did not do what they were supposed to do, so. Ma didn't get any financial help from them. She lost trust in the union after that.



**THE PIERS AND DOCKS** along the Chelsea shore from the 1930s to the 1970s was a pretty rough-and-tumble industrial place, with lots of places to explore. *Photo credit: NYPL archive.*

*This concludes part 1 of a 3-part series, which continues in our June issue.*

## CHARACTERS OF THE VILLAGE

## The Bernstein Boys of Westbeth

BY BRIAN AND JOY PAPE



**THE BERNSTEIN BOYS 10 YEARS AGO.** Dewey and Bruno on the day they moved into Westbeth. Photos: Erin Quinn Purcell.



**THE BERNSTEIN BOYS NOW.** Dewey and Bruno in front of Westbeth.

We would like to thank our readers who often suggest people who would be good subjects for *Characters of the Village*.

We met *The Bernstein Boys* at Hudson Hound Restaurant for our interview.

**Tell us about yourselves — what are your favorite things to do?**

I'm Dewey Bernstein (D) and I'm 13 years old.

I'm Bruno Bernstein (B) and I'm 18 years old.

**D:** We like making movies together. We like to go to Hudson Hound with our family friends, the Gropper and Rogers family, on Friday evenings, and we go to Sofia's Bagels on Sunday mornings. I personally prefer Murray's. It's kind of a chain, but... they always ask you if you want your bagel scooped out.

**B:** I like grocery shopping at D'Agostino's where the people are nice. A shout out to the employees at D'Agostino's — but work on the prices. Yeah.

**Anything else that you'd like the community know about you?**

**B:** We are part of a loving family. That's nice.  
**D:** We were born in Washington Heights, but we grew up at Westbeth mostly. We moved here in 2016 when I was three and Bruno was eight. My mom and dad are artists. They were on the Westbeth waiting list for a pretty long time, but we finally got in and it's nice.

**B:** We have four pets (See *Pet Pages* on page 20).

**D:** Two dogs and two cats. One dog's name is Lulu; she's black and white. The other

dog is Rupert (named after Rupert Pupkin, played by Robert De Niro, in the movie *King of Comedy*). One cat is named Clyde and our oldest cat is Mitchie. They all get along.

We like the neighborhood — all the parks and stores. West Village in the summer is one of the most beautiful times you could be here, but the winter is nice too.

**B:** I like the people in the neighborhood. They're artists, too.

**What do your parents do?**

**B:** My dad, Peter Bernstein, is a jazz guitarist and my mom, Erin Quinn Purcell, is a playwright.

**What schools do you go to?**

**B:** My school is Henry Viscardi School on Long Island. Their specialty is helping kids with physical disabilities. I'm in the 12th grade. By bus, it takes 45 minutes to an hour and 15 minutes each way.

**D:** Lower Manhattan Community School is downtown, way downtown. I'm in seventh grade. I go by the One train with my buddy, Lou, from Christopher/Sheridan Square to Rector Street. It's got better hot lunch than a lot of other public schools.

**B:** My school really doesn't have great lunch.

**What are your favorite things about school?**

**B:** My favorite things are the people and reading. I like English because I'm reading books that I really enjoy, like, *Of Mice and Men*, *Lord of the Flies* and *The Great Gatsby*. As for friends, I can say I like all the kids in their own way.

**D:** My favorite subject is probably music class because I get to play the electric guitar. I only have an acoustic guitar at home, so that's pretty cool. I also love art.

**What is your least favorite thing about school?**

**D:** Probably math, because it's never been my thing, you know?

**B:** I don't like that I'm tired from a long commute. Getting up at 5:45 a.m. — I'm like, 'no, let me sleep!'

**What was the pandemic like for you?**

**D:** Well, it was kind of sad that you had to be at home all the time. I was going to PS 3 at the time. I liked PS 3 and I was missing it.

**B:** It was okay. I had a lot of fun staying inside. I watched a lot of great movies.

**What is different now?**

**D:** I like it a lot more because I get to go outside and to the park, specifically, Horatio Park. I'm waiting for Bleecker Park to re-open; they're redoing it now.

**B:** I'm not on Zoom as much.

**Tell us about your passions.**

**B:** My passion is watching great movies. I'm so invested when I watch a movie. And I like painting.

**D:** Yeah, Bruno really likes to paint. We have some of his artwork on our walls. Me and Bruno both love movies. My passion is making films with Bruno. I like making horror movies, slasher movies, cop movies, all kinds of movies.

**B:** I want to write your first five movies.

**D:** You could totally, you're a great writer, you've got good attention to detail, so with my camera instincts and your writing abilities, we could be an unstoppable duo, like Batman and Robin. My biggest dream is to go out west and shoot a big, epic, western movie in the desert with my friends, with nothing but a couple of cap guns and a camera, and a good compelling story.

**B:** I'd love to travel to far-off places, although it's hard because there's not much accessibility for people who use wheelchairs.

**What is your best memory?**

**B:** My best memory is Dewey as a baby. And the dogs.

**D:** My best memory is going to Bleecker Park as a young kid and drinking the crazy milkshakes at Black Tap that was on 14th Street. It is closed now but there is still one in SoHo.

**What is your favorite accomplishment?**

**B:** My greatest accomplishment is that I've had many surgeries and I've really come through with optimism. I have Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy, so some things are hard, but I am still happy.

**D:** I finished my latest screenplay that I've been working on for over three years; it's called *Hit Bot*.

**Parting words?**

**D:** Just do what makes you happy. Go outside a lot. Listen to music. Live your life. And eat good food.

**B:** Eat bacon.

**D:** Unless you're vegetarian, then you should eat vegetables.

# Writer's Guild Kicks the Can to DGA and SAG on AI Negotiations

BY ROGER PARADISO

*The Writers Guild of America recently surprised the industry with a new tentative minimum bargaining agreement with the studios, or the AMPTP. As of April 8, the guild detailed its full MBA tentative deal with the studios that writers will work under for the next three... er, scratch that, four years! - Indie News*

The WGA entered this negotiation with an 800-pound gorilla on its back. The writers' health and pension plans were going broke. They had no choice but to accept the streamers and producers generous offer of \$321 million funding the plans over the course of this contract. Here's the catch — the writers wanted to keep the standard three-year contract and the streamers wanted five years. They settled on four which sent a warning out to the rest of the film world. Christopher Nolan, head of the DGA, had said that a deal longer than three years would never happen. "If we had agreed to a five-year contract in March of 2020, where would we be now? We are living in an industry where things are shifting very, very fast in terms of how they choose to run their businesses, and there are no assurances they'd be able to give us on ... what that path would be," the *Oppenheimer* director told *Deadline*.

It's time now to move off the WGA's surrender and gather the troops for a contentious DGA negotiating period beginning May 11. SAG has likely positioned itself to ally with the DGA but they have not announced when they would restart talks. The contract expires on June 30 for both DGA and SAG.

The writers did not tackle much of AI and accepted standard pay increases. Elon Musk thinks that AI will take over everything in five years. That is a bold statement — I hate to admit this — but he may be correct.

"I warned you guys," says Hollywood director James Cameron. More than 40 years since the first *Terminator* film was released, Cameron says the future it depicted is now here. "We are literally living out the precipice of what was science fiction back when I did it in the eighties," he told ABC.net.

There is a well-known quote that "Journalists don't go to the noise. They go to the silence" for their stories. Me, I have gone to Instagram where I have seen AI porn beginning its hideous attempted takeover of... us.

Did you see the beautiful robot speaking to a rugged male at some sort of AI robot convention? He feels her face and she indicates that she is a robot before they move close together for a kiss. I almost threw up my lunch. Similar Instagrams show sexual behavior linking human males with female robots who look gorgeous until you see the metal and plastic body. There is also the cable ad with cheap AI muzak and lyrics

that effectively say, "We are humans and we help each other." I'm sorry but the bot is not human and the song is a Class D Barry Manilow rip.

As a DGA member, I am happy with Chris Nolan who is leading a sharp negotiating team. The battle for the DGA is always about creative control for the director, a safe working environment, and standard rate hikes. But the streamers will try to seduce the directors about control and then flip the script by continuing to do what they are doing now — flooding the U.S. market with global films that are non-union and generally violent and sexual.

There are terrific foreign films that manage to get done with union labor, however, the streamers cannot be allowed to bring productions to foreign lands where the DGA director is not in control. These offshore productions will hire a non-union director and crew in some country with no respect for copyright and creative control. The game will be for all the unions, especially the labor unions, to push the Congress and states for increased subsidies to keep productions in the U.S. — and to keep union labor working. That is what Nolan and the DGA members are fighting against.

*And then there's the "Tilly tax." It is a proposed fee that studios would be required to pay the union whenever they use an AI actor instead of a human performer. This demand is a direct response to Tilly Norman, the industry's first "AI or synthetic actor." She has yet to book any real roles, but SAG is prepared for that eventuality. - nofilmschool news*

I have no doubt that Tilly or another synthetic actor is already working in bad foreign movies — mostly science fiction flicks. The SAG team is trying to save their image and likeness clause for their actors. They will be fighting against people who don't care about copyright or creative rights. They care about money.

As James Cameron says in an Instagram post, "I think we need to put massive guardrails on this new technology. I think it needs to be done by Hollywood internally. I think government regulation would be just too much of a blunt instrument."

"You can create characters right now that are photographically plausible. So where are we going to be in four years, five years, 10 years? It may be possible to make finished shots for a movie without sets, without camera people, basically without artists."

America will be a place with massive union unemployment. And with an economic system or political system which we didn't ask for or vote for. We need to fight back.

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## Living in the Upside Down

BY SIGGY RAIBLE

I'm a fan of the Netflix series *Stranger Things*. In this sci-fi coming-of-age thriller set in a 1980s small-town America, teenagers face their fears of growing up and transitioning to an adult world with all of its peculiarities. The existential threat to their world is illegal aliens living in the Upside Down. Who are these aliens — visitors from another world or Frankenstein-like monsters of our own creation? Boy, can I relate to the inhabitants of the imaginary town of Hawkins, Indiana, because, as I see it, we are living in our own very real Upside Down.

In America's 2026 Upside Down, federal Darth Vader-like troops have been deployed to cities throughout our nation to round up our "illegal aliens." In this upside-down nation, the masked enforcers (federal employees) are the ones hunting down their neighbors because, presumably, these aliens are to blame for all that's gone awry in the nation — they have taken jobs away from citizens, they are murderous criminals, they eat pets, they are the wrong shade of white, etc. In this truly strange world, the so-called aliens are not to be feared; it is the state actors who arrest, shoot at, kill and terrorize the citizenry. The aliens are the government.

As if that were not enough, the leaders of America have imposed tariffs on trading partners and competitors alike, only to find out that it is against the Constitution. But never you mind, there's always another tariff that can be imposed, the law be damned. In the Upside Down economic chaos prevails.

And, just to top that, America's military has been used to attack ships in international waters killing anyone on the boats, invading a sovereign country and abducting the president of that country (Venezuela — in case you haven't been paying attention). This was done, so say the leaders of America, to stop drug trafficking, to capture an accused drug trafficker, to stop the immigration of narco-terrorists into the U.S. — you pick a rationale. But, never mind, our dear leader told us it was to take over the oil fields. This was, of course, after the abduction.

But the best was yet to come. On February 28, 2026, the United States (and Israel) declared what it has variously called an operation "Epic Fury," an excursion, a preventive/preemptive strike (anything but a war) on Iran. The reasons for this not-war are: for 47 years the Ayatollah has threatened the West

with death; the country is in possession of fissionable material and will destroy western civilization (even though the ability to produce a nuclear bomb was "obliterated" in a prior 12-day attack by Israel and America); Iran has intercontinental missiles; a preventive strike was needed to thwart Iran from striking us first and last but not least, this action is merely an excursion. Now, I used to think that an excursion was a sort of short vacation. So I decided to check with Google. Here's what she said: "a short, usually pleasure-focused trip." (I'm not sure the Navy servicemen and women think of their deployments as excursions.) I'm betting that additional reasons will be identified in the future. You pick a rationale and they'll make it fit the situation.

All this is to say that in the American Upside Down nothing makes sense. In a world where stranger things happen every day it is unsettling and disturbing. We find ourselves questioning what is happening and struggling to find our footing. But like the youngsters in fictional Hawkins, Indiana, we must fight to right-size the country.

The teens in Hawkins figured out what to do; they gathered together to fight the menace threatening their lives. In our everything-everywhere-all-at-once world where the only thing that is constant is change, we must do what the kids in Hawkins did: find where our strengths and interests lie and get engaged.

In my opinion, when the adults in charge are acting badly, we must stand up and point out where they have gone wrong. We are taught that actions have consequences. Well, the consequences of the actions of our present day leaders have led to disastrous outcomes. An increase in the cost of living for everyone — with the middle and poorer classes hit the worst. The invasion of our cities by our own federal forces has brought fear and death to our communities. And, the acts of war perpetrated by our military, without our consent, on sovereign nations have led to destruction, dislocation of hundreds of thousands of people and the deaths of many, many innocent individuals like you and me. This is inhumane! This is amoral! This is unacceptable.

GET INVOLVED and VOTE THE POWER-HUNGRY BARBAROUS BILLIONAIRE BUMS OUT!!

# Let the Games Begin

BY KEITH MICHAEL

People tell me about the day-to-day city games that they play: walking at a fixed pace to a destination while trying to not get stopped by a traffic light, compulsively counting steps, besting a routine door-to-door travel time, recalling all of the businesses that graced a favorite street corner location, and on and on. Spring brings other games to be played. Bird watching games.

One of the most popular games for bird watchers is known as First of Season: the first bird of a species that arrives during spring migration. This is a natural extension of the ongoing game many birders play of keeping lists of the bird species that they have seen. Listing can be a benign amusement or it can be a competitive (blood) sport where bird watchers try to “out list” each other. The prize being, generally, only bragging rights! This counting obsession may take the global form of a Life List—all of the different bird species one has seen, a Year List—this is a fun one because one gets to reboot the tallying on January 1 each year, state lists, city lists, borough lists, neighborhood lists, “patch lists,” yard lists, month lists, trip lists, or any other kind of list that one fancies.

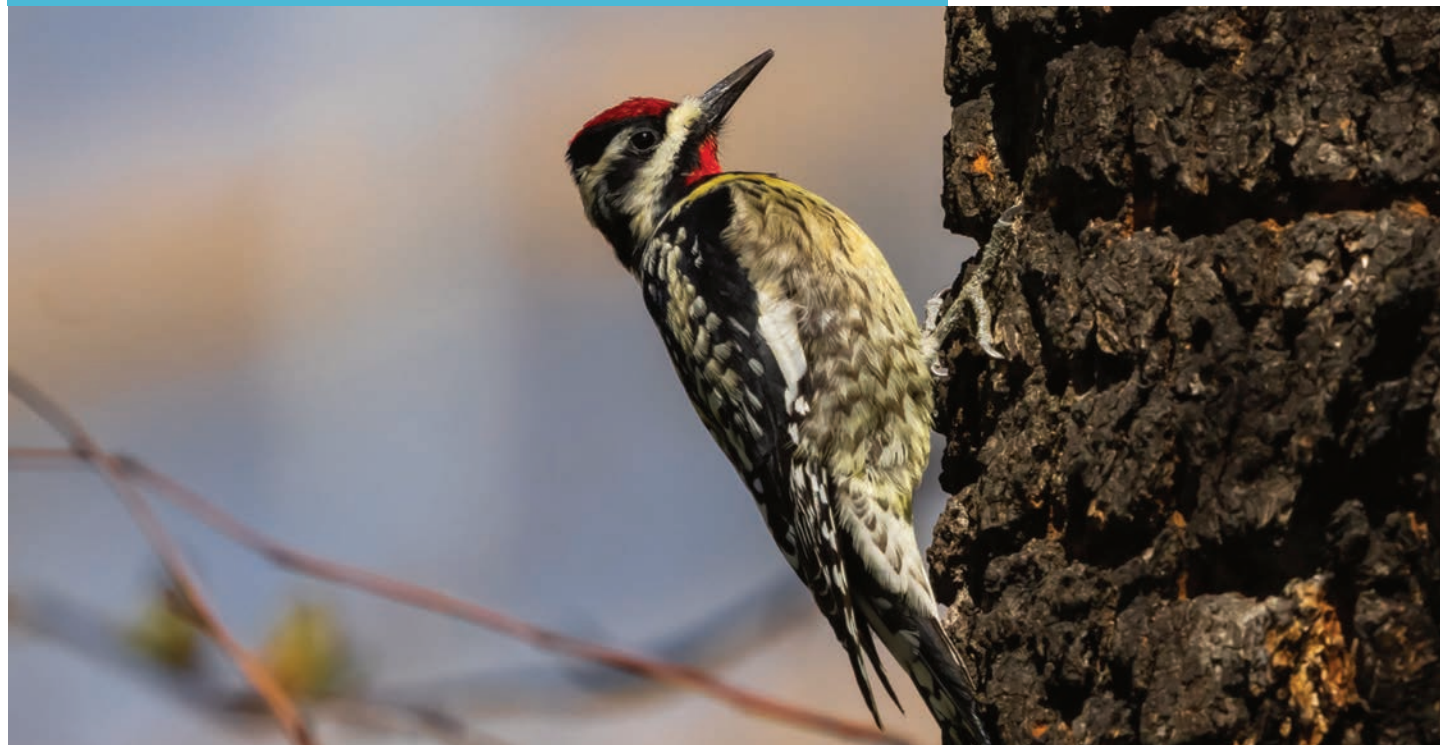
Spring migration is a refreshing jump-start as the myriad migratory birds that left in the fall to warmer climates parade back through on their long journeys northward for the summer breeding season. One of the first birds to return after the winter is the Eastern Phoebe. Seeing one of these tail-bobbing, peripatetic flycatchers feels like a promise that spring is on the way even when the fickleness of the weather is far from reassuring. This year, my First of Season Phoebe showed up on March 24 out at Fort Tilden, Queens among the beach grass, and my first for the West Village, appeared later that same day. Its squarish head, yellow wash on its breast, sprinkling of “whiskers” around its bill, and that metronomic pumping of its tail, all broadcast spring cheerfulness.

Usually, not too far behind is the first Palm Warbler, a yellow bird with a russet cap. This is another tail-bobber, but you’ll more often see this one lollygagging about lawns or edges rather than sallying from tree branches. There’s often a wave of Kinglets, both Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets, that suddenly appears. These are one of our smallest birds and are the definition of hyperactive. The Golden-crowned has a snappy, yellow-edged-in-red-and-black racing stripe on the top of its head. You will be lucky to see the Ruby-crowned’s ruby crown which they deploy only when they’re super-fraught. Blink and you’ll miss it.

I look forward to seeing the first Yellow-rumped Warblers flitting en masse through the Zelkova trees along the river in Hudson River Park, catching the first fiery chases of the Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers guarding their freshly drilled sap wells in the elms, and hearing the first tzee-zee-zee-tzeer-UP of a rainbow-hued Northern Parula from



Join me for a Birding Walk on Saturday, May 9, 8:00 a.m. in Hudson River Park to kick off World Migratory Bird Day. Meet at the Christopher Street fountain, just inside the park at West Street. It will be an easy, one hour walk looking for birds in the West Village. No experience needed. Bring binoculars if you have them. Having more eyes looking for birds means that we will SEE more birds!



the honey locust treetops over Perry Street. Then, one day, it seems like everywhere you look there’s a Hermit Thrush. At first glance, these stylish birds have the silhouette and behavior of our resident American Robins, but catch them in good light and they’re a warm café au lait brown with a cinnamon tail, and a sprinkling of chocolate drops on their chests. Maybe I need breakfast. How do they work it out to all arrive on the same day? I fantasize about their maddeningly endless group text threads to synchronize their travel plans. As hard as it is to set up a lunch date with a friend, how do dozens/hundreds of them plan a Meet Up, “That park we went to last year? A month from Tuesday’s good?”

While these tourists are passing through, there are still a few winter birds who haven’t solidified their departure dates. A small group of black and white Buffleheads still plies the river pile fields and a raft of chattering Brant Geese keeps growing in size until they’ll finally agree on when to head north. Each “Oh, sweet Canada Canada Canada” from a White-throated Sparrow that I hear from under a shrub might be the last until they return in the fall.

Meanwhile, on a street lamp, a cocky resident Northern Mockingbird has taken up his post, flashing his tail and shouting out his entire repertoire of songster hits. I’m keeping track of his playlist as he’s sampling the arriving birds, the birds about to head on their way, as well as the locals, with the understood warning to them, “This block’s taken, so don’t even think about making your nest here!”

Start counting. This is just the beginning of spring migration season!

**TOP PHOTO: EASTERN PHOEBE.** The hands down winner of First of Season.

**BOTTOM PHOTO: Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.** All Photos by Keith Michael.

# Record Store Day Enthusiasts Explain the Appeal of Vinyl

BY ANTHONY PARADISO



CUSTOMERS CHECK OUT JOHN PITA'S VINYL RECORDS inside Record Runner at 5 Jones Street in Greenwich Village on Record Store Day 2026. Photo credit: Anthony Paradiso.

For the last 19 years, Record Store Day has been a day where staff, artists and customers come together once-a-year to celebrate the unique culture of independent record stores.

Part of that culture is the buzz word 'vinyl' which refers to the plastic-like material that most records are made out of. Vinyl has made a comeback in the 21st century. According to an article written by Felix Richter on *Statista*, "46.8 million vinyl EPs and LPs were sold in the U.S. last year, up from less than a million in 2006, when the vinyl comeback began."

Both casual fans and record enthusiasts flocked to the independent record stores on Bleecker and Jones streets in Greenwich Village on April 18 to experience Record Store Day. There were lines outside of Village Revival Records owned by Jamal Alnasr and Record Runner owned by John Pita starting at 9 and 10 a.m.

Pita, who has owned Record Runner since 1979, is a seasoned veteran when it comes to Record Store Day. Pita knows how to treat his customers and his customers repay him in kind. "I hate it when someone waits in line only to find out I don't have what they're looking for," he said. To remedy this, Pita goes out to the line and asks each customer what they're looking for and he knows right away if he has it or not.

Record Runner is the place to go for Madonna, among many other records, but historically he has always had all the rare and most popular records released by the British

singer. This year's special release was Madonna's *The Confessions Tour - Live from London*. Recorded live at London's Wembley Arena in 2006, 5,700 vinyl records were released on Record Store Day. It contains 13 tracks with such hits as *Hung up*, *I'm Sorry*, *Lucky Star* and *Like a Virgin*.

"It's always fun and it's always a lot of work. In fact, this year they sent us the list early," Pita said. He added that the rarest records he ordered for his customers this year were two by the Japanese former member of Yellow Magic Orchestra, Masayoshi Takanaka. The records by Takanaka that were announced on record-storeday.com were *All of Me* and *On Guitar*.

One of Pita's customers on Record Store Day was Kevin. Taking part in his ninth Record Store Day, Kevin expressed where his passion for vinyl comes from, "I grew up with my dad having a lot of vinyl. Even back in the islands where I'm from, my dad would collect vinyl and I grew up with vinyl. When I moved out, I basically was able to take some of the vinyl that he had as a collection and I started my own collection."

From one generation to another, vinyl has been a tradition in Kevin's family. He added that he was searching for a St. Germain album as he is currently interested in electronic music. Kevin also said he was looking for a couple of records for a friend of his, who, at the same time, was looking for records for him at another store. Record Store Day is truly about cooperation as well as celebration.

Another customer named Brian walked out of Record Runner onto Jones Street carrying a tote bag filled with several records. Brian said he has been "coming to Record Store Day for some time now," and that he was looking for the Madonna *Confessions* release, *Elizabeth Taylor 7-inch Vinyl Single* by Taylor Swift, and *Read My Lips* (25th Anniversary Edition) by Sophie Ellis-Bextor.

Brian ended up getting everything he wanted, which "doesn't always happen" according to him and he described his overall experience with Record Store Day, "It's a nice event. I wish it wasn't so crowded and the vinyl so sought-after. Most of them end up with second-hand sellers, which is not the point of Record Store Day. It's hard when you really want an album because you really like the artist, but five people are ahead of you who want to sell it. The chase is interesting, but it also can be frustrating when it's so hard, if a release is so limited. But it's nice to have special things being offered, that's really cool."

While Brian had his eyes set on three records, another Record Runner customer named Leslie had 16 records in mind. Leslie, who is a "big Record Store Day fan," mentioned she was looking for both of The Cure releases (*Acoustic Hits* and *Greatest Hits*), as well as *Mutemath* by the band of the same name and *Raw Power: Live at the Spectrum, Philadelphia* by The Power Station.

Leslie went in and out of Record Runner

twice and after her second trip inside was eager to describe what she likes about vinyl, "I don't listen to digital music, except for CDs — I put them in the player. I'm very tactile, like I like to hold the record, I like to look at the artwork on the record, put it on the turntable. I like the hiss and the pop. I'm just old school. I like to lay down, listen to the music and look at the artwork in the jacket."

There's something to be said about having a record as opposed to taking the easier path and streaming. Playing a vinyl record on a turntable and absorbing the detail inside or on the back cover of the record lets you feel the music a bit more as it plays and the lyrics and liner notes included in most records help you understand the songs and the artists who made them a bit more.

Just like anything in life you get what you put into it. Vinyl is here to stay because it allows people to truly experience the music they are listening to. People who listen to vinyl truly set aside time in their day to stop what they are doing, relax and listen to the record. This way, they can hear every lyric sung and every melody.

Cesar, who didn't know it was Record Store Day when he walked into Record Runner is a case in point, "I like the ritual of stopping everything that you're doing and finding something that you'd like to hear that particular day, that particular hour. I try to find something old and relaxing and just be in the moment."

# Springtime is a Great Time to Dive into Village History

BY ANDREW BERMAN

Village Preservation recently released a raft of wonderful new resources that highlight and bring to life the Village's rich history. They join a robust collection we maintain of historic images, interactive maps, oral histories, historic markers, and much more.



**One Hundred Years of Jazz in the Village.** Our new interactive Jazz Map of Greenwich Village, the East Village, and NoHo shows a century of groundbreaking performance venues, celebrated artists' residences, and influential recording studios that helped profoundly shape this most American of art forms. With over 100 entries showing locations from the 1920s to today, you'll be able to explore the rise of swing, Bebop, hard jazz, and every style in between. You can search by decade, type of music, type of location, and more. Billie Holiday's first performances, Charlie Parker and Charles Mingus' residences, legendary venues and insider holes-in-the-wall can all be found here, and you can create your own local jazz tour to share with others.



Photo credit: Scott Laperruque.

**Historic Image Collections: Village Halloween Parade and the East Village in the 1980s.** Village Preservation maintains an online archive of over 5,600 historic images in over 70 collections, covering the history of our neighborhoods and other New York City landmarks from the late 18th to the early 21st centuries. Our two latest additions focus on the 1980s and two facets of neighborhood history as they teetered on the edge of momentous change.

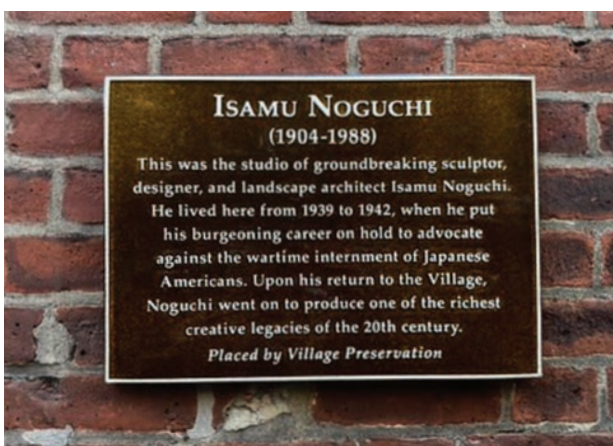
Our new Scott Laperruque collection shows his images of the Village Halloween parade from 1983-1987, just after it moved from the more informal affair that wound its way through West Village streets to the larger stage of Sixth Avenue — but before it became the internationally recognized largest Halloween parade in the world. The images, taken by the 10th Street resident, show the joys as well as anxieties of the era, with costumes referencing Ronald Reagan, the threat of nuclear war, and the specter of AIDS.

Our new Peter Bennett collection was taken by the long-time resident who lived in the East Village from 1979 through 1988. He bartended by night and photographed the punks, street performers, vacant lots, abandoned buildings, artists, eclectic local businesses, and vibrant street life of the neighborhood. Emerging from an era of intense disinvestment and abandonment, the East Village in the 1980s was on a razor's edge of creativity and chaos, artistry and anarchy.



Photo credit: Peter Bennett

Bennett captured all this and more — including the Rolling Stones recording their *Waiting on a Friend* video and some of Keith Haring's earliest street art works — from a deeply personal perspective reflecting his profound connection to the neighborhood and its colorful characters.



**Plaque Honoring Sculptor Isamu Noguchi.** Our 28th historic plaque marking the places where history was made in our neighborhood was unveiled in April at 52 West 10th Street, the former home of the groundbreaking sculptor, landscape architect, and furniture and set designer. We were joined by the Isamu Noguchi Museum to highlight the artist's incredible work contributing to the landscape of New York as well as cities across the globe with prominent public art installations. His many collaborations over the years, with other artists such as Greenwich Village based "Picasso of Dance" Martha Graham, added to his legacy. Our other plaques have marked the homes of Jane Jacobs, James Baldwin, Lorraine Hansberry, Allen Ginsberg, the former NAACP Headquarters and the Fillmore East, among other locations.

**Oral Histories Cover 80 Years of Village Politics.** Our latest oral histories feature two giants of the neighborhood with a collective 150 years of Village experience.

Carol Greitzer (1925-2026) moved to Greenwich Village in the 1950s. Inspired by the Adlai Stevenson presidential campaign, she was involved with what would become one of the most impactful local political organizations in New York City, Village Independent Democrats (VID). VID was founded to translate the Village's spirit of progressive ideals and political reform into the local political landscape. In doing so, they ended Tammany Hall domination of local politics and ushered in a new era of more open and democratic local politics. Greitzer played a key role, winning a district leader position alongside fellow VIDer Ed Koch, dislodging the Tammany Hall machine, and eventually becoming the City Council representative for Greenwich Village from 1969-1991. She fought against Robert Moses. She fought to save Jefferson Market Library and the Public Theatre and to expand women's rights and to remove traffic from Washington Square. Her oral history discussed all this and more as

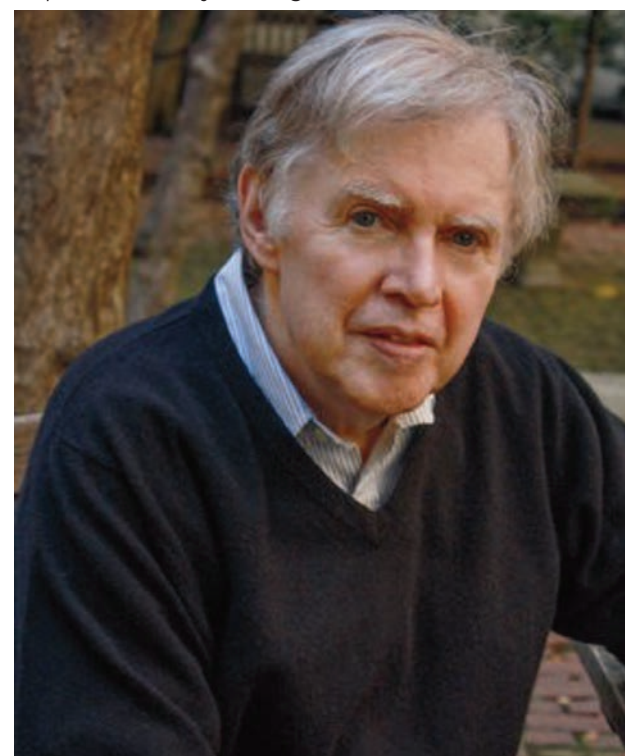
well as her personal recollections of campaigning for president with Bobby Kennedy.

Tony Hiss' (b. 1941) memories of Greenwich Village go back 80 years, having lived in the same apartment on West 8th Street since 1947. Hiss is the author of 15 books, most recently *Rescuing the Planet: Protecting Half the Land to Heal the Earth*, and the award-winning *The Experience of Place: A New Way of Looking at and Dealing With our Radically Changing Cities and Countryside*. He was a staff writer at *The New Yorker* magazine for 30 years and has been a visiting scholar at New York University for over 25 years. Hiss has lectured around the world, consults on planning, place, biodiversity, and conservation issues, and is now at work on a new book, *The Biosphere: A Biography*.

Highlights from his oral history include memories of corresponding with his father, Alger Hiss — a government official accused of spying for the Soviet Union during the McCarthy-era Red Scare — during Alger's incarceration, reflections on watching the Village change from his apartment window, and thoughts on how to tell the story of a neighborhood while looking both to the future and the past.



CAROL GREITZER (TOP), TONY HISS (BOTTOM).  
All photos courtesy of Village Preservation.



To access all of these, visit [villagepreservation.org/newresources](http://villagepreservation.org/newresources)

Andrew Berman is executive director of Village Preservation.



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## My Mother's Hands

BY MICHAEL ANASTASIO

My mother had beautiful hands. “A pianist’s hands” is how she’d have described them on someone else. And though she had played the piano as a young woman, as an adult, her fingers were more likely to be working the keys of a typewriter. I would sit in rapt amazement watching her deftly strike the keys with such authority. Without ever looking at them. How did they know which key was which, those wise fingers of hers? The keys weren’t even in alphabetical order, so I decided that my mother’s hands weren’t only beautiful, they were magical.

They were elegant hands, with a modest diamond engagement-wedding ring circa 1945 on her left hand and on her right, a passed-down diamond ring she’d received for her high school graduation. She had highly-arched fingernails, each with a perfect “moon” and always meticulously manicured. The manicure was a Saturday night ritual. Seated at our dinette table in front of our big turquoise not-so-portable portable TV, mom would surround herself with her manicure paraphernalia, while watching one of the Saturday night black and white offerings and in turn would be fervently watched by me.

First there was the cotton ball removal of last week’s polish; the part I didn’t enjoy, as the strong chemical odor made me hold my nose, scrunching up my face and leaning

way back. When that smelly business was over, I would pull myself up close to watch the filing and shaping, a sound — more of a feeling — that sent shivers through my body. She performed this spine tingling task with the sureness and dexterity of a concert violinist. After the soaking and cuticle push back, came the color application in varying shades of pink, red or sometimes clear, showing those perfect moons. This was my favorite part — a task at which mom was a real pro. Swift and sure, working from the pinky to the thumb, she colored each nail in three steady, perfectly applied strokes. Always three. One up each side of the nail and the last one right up the middle. With ten perfectly painted nails gleaming wet with the light from the milk-glass early American fixture above us, all that was left was the drying. She’d hold her hands up, fingers fluttering, while *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* (or some other “Saturday Night at the Movies” movie) played out or the June Taylor Dancers made black and white kaleidoscopic patterns on the floor of the Jackie Gleason stage. It was a Saturday night ritual in preparation for a Sunday morning ritual — mass.

Those were the days when families went to church in their “Sunday best.” For her own wardrobe choices, mom would often consult me, her “soon-to-be-gay” son. Hearing

*continued on page 21*

## Village Trivia

I came across this innocuous padlock on the guardrail of a pedestrian bridge in the Village, but it seemed strangely out of place. Why is it there? Who would put it there? Do you know what it is, and where it is? Answer on page 18.



Photo by Brian J. Pape, AIA.

# The Mayor of West 4th Street

BY EDWARD ROCHE

What makes a neighborhood a neighborhood? People seeing each other. What makes a community? Supporting each other. The pure treat of living in the West Village? All the unique, special places right at our fingertips: Murray's Cheese, Magnolia Bakery, John's Pizza, global cuisine, and our bodegas, of course. A healthy community supports small businesses and entrepreneurs, especially brick-and-mortar in NYC, where bureaucracy and sky-high real estate put their survival on the "edge of the empire," a far cry from stability.

Since my arrival to the West Village in 2021, I have felt the vibrational reality of historical moments from decades past we've all heard, moments that are seemingly lost forever, yet still echo here.

One thing that sucks the life force out of this energetic sweet spot is the line of humongous Amazon box trucks parked for most of the day, occupying space on the side streets and sidewalks; utilizing, while not contributing to, our precious neighborhood. Yes, it's public space. No, the law is not broken. But seeing this operation reminds me of an ant colony, except the queen doesn't live here. He's either on a yacht in Saint-Tropez or with his wife on *Page Six*.

We saw this trend with Starbucks years ago. It was the cool place to get coffee for many, until agricultural wages and bean quality came to light and mom-and-pop cafes came back in vogue. Why shouldn't this cycle translate to other brick-and-mortar spots?

I get it. Convenience and price points make Amazon tempting, especially for what you genuinely can't find locally. For the simple staples, though, walking to your bodega or grocery store lets us connect to our food source in a human way. The disconnectivity generated by technology, sold to us as personal efficiency, makes an easy excuse to outsource our errands. But biologically we're social pack creatures, hardwired for close connection. Phones feed laziness and isolation. Amazon, this headless remote entity, underprices local spots, erodes what they offer, and funnels money outward. We don't have to buy everything locally, but choosing



ALI, the mayor of West 4th Street, at Sam's Deli. Photo courtesy of Ali.

little bits and pieces (toiletries, eggs, a sandwich) strengthens the neighborhood fabric. I'm as guilty as anyone of the occasional last-minute order, but I notice what gets lost when we default to the app.

Sam's Deli at 275 West 4th Street is a family-owned establishment since the 1980s that has outlasted waves of change. It's not the cheapest (real estate pressures make survival tough) but that's exactly why I choose certain items here: to support a neighborhood anchor and pop in for the human connection. Within a month of my arrival, Sam's already had a spare key to my apartment.

Ali, the smile-beaming mayor of West 4th Street, has been behind the counter since 2007. He knows everyone's stories and treats the deli like an extension of the living room. Here are my favorite parts of our conversation:

## Where are you from originally?

I'm from Jerusalem, Palestine. I came to the United States in 2003, in August. I moved here seeking a better life.

## You've been behind that counter longer than a lot of us have lived in the Village. What's the biggest change you've seen?

The neighborhood changed big time. Normal people, let's call them normal people, were driven away, and more influencers and CEOs of internet companies moved in. They turned huge buildings into townhomes. They created noise. A lot of them are nice people, but they destroyed the neighborhood in some ways.

## If someone new moves to the West Village, what's one piece of advice you'd give them?

To be very friendly and talk to everyone. Consider themselves as family with the rest of the Village.

## What's one thing about this corner of the West Village that still makes you smile every day?

It's a good question; I never thought of it. But ever since I started working here, I didn't leave it because the Village itself makes me want to come to it. It's grabbing me into it. The community, the people... We know each other, we know our lives, our stories. We're into each other's lives. I think that's unique, specific to this neighborhood.

## What do you think we as a community can do to preserve what we have?

We should have more meetings, once every three months, with someone representing each block, just to stay close, stay together, keep up with the news. That will make the community stronger. The meetings will lead to block parties, events... We've talked about blocking off one block in the summer, everyone bringing something for dinner or lunch. It's a really good idea.

Sam's doesn't always have what I need or what I'm willing to pay, but the smiles, spare keys, and real relationships are what make the West Village feel like home. They echo its bohemian, Beatnik history of the 1960s and 1970s, when artists, writers, and free spirits gathered in coffeehouses because the neighborhood invited it.

Yes, many creators have been priced out. But many of us still live hand-to-mouth here, and that hunger can be liberating. It keeps you in the vortex, the same gravitational pull Ali described when he said the Village "grabs" him. In a way, the West Village has long been that kind of vortex for so many who have arrived seeking something more: a place where serendipitous collisions happen, friendships spark on the sidewalk, and dreams still feel possible.

We don't have to fight every modern convenience. But by choosing to step out, support spots like Sam's, smile at the counter, and even organize those block meetings, we keep the life force flowing right here, where it belongs. That's how this neighborhood stays magnetic. That's how it stays ours.



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## THE PINT-SIZED PALATE — A KID'S TAKE ON FOOD

## Ramen Get It

BY CHURCHILL STONE

**Jeju Noodle Bar**  
**679 Greenwich Street**  
**(at Christopher)**

If you walk past Jeju Noodle Bar, you might not notice it on the northeast corner of Christopher and Greenwich streets. Also, the shades are always down, and it looks very private. My dad told me that people think this space might have been an inspiration for the painting *Nighthawks* by Edward Hopper because it is on a sharp corner with windows on both sides. If you imagine the shades up, it does sort of feel like it could turn into that painting.

It was a Wednesday when my mom took me there after acting camp during spring break (where I was playing Akela in *The Jungle Book*). At first they tried to seat us near the staircase, which we didn't want. But then they moved us to a better table next to all of their Michelin plaques from 2019 to 2025 which made it feel more important. This Korean restaurant is small, maybe around 16 tables, and most of them are tiny and for two people. It felt like a place where people go on dates or to Instagram, not really a place for kids. It's pretty dark inside but there are a lot of hanging lights and glowing bulbs. Each table has a small golden lamp, and the plates have tentacle designs on them (their logo is an octopus). They give you chopsticks and a big spoon for the ramen, not a knife and fork.

One thing that confused me right away: this was a Michelin one-star restaurant, but we had to pour our own Coke? I tried to do it in a fancy way, but it did not go well. Also, they don't really have kid drinks, just Coke and Diet Coke, which is not very kid-friendly since a lot of parents do not allow their children to drink Coke at all.

We started with the fried chicken, and it was really good. It came in a bucket like KFC, but much fancier. It was crispy and juicy and maybe my favorite thing we had. They served it with yogurt, olive oil, pepper, and Golden



**WHAT IS THIS?** I'm not exactly sure, but it was good! Photo courtesy of Webster Stone.

Osetra Caviar. I had never had caviar before, so this felt like a big moment. My mom said you're supposed to put it on the chicken, but I wasn't so sure about that, so I tried everything separately. Caviar (even if it's "golden")

is just fish eggs that taste mostly slimy and salty. I liked the chicken best.

Our next appetizer was Gochujang Bokum. It had tiny crunchy potato strands on top that almost looked like pasta. It also had

vegetables and some sweet and spicy meat, with rice at the bottom. It was good, but more for grownups.

The menu is small, which I liked because it made it easier to decide. The dishes are meant for sharing, which is good because they are expensive. For example, the fried chicken is three pieces for \$35, but you can add one more piece for \$5, which actually makes sense if you're sharing with another person.

Then we got the Gochu Ramyun, which is pork belly ramen. This was my first time having real ramen, not from a package. It was so good. The broth was rich and a little spicy, but not too spicy. There was pork belly, vegetables, and noodles that I could actually eat with chopsticks, which made it more fun. Also, the portion was perfect for two people. Now, I'm a little worried because I loved it so much — but at \$25 I don't know if I can go back for ramen. I was full, but not too full, which I think is the best kind of full.

For dessert, they only have one thing: chocolate soft serve with shaved black truffles on top. Not chocolate truffles, but truffles that grow deep in the ground like mushrooms. They shave them at the table, which is kind of cool, but also a little intense. I tried it — the ice cream was a lot better without the truffles. Maybe it's fun to eat if you're an adult, but it's not a kid-friendly dessert and a little strange.

At Jeju, there were other things that didn't make sense. We had to ask twice for lime wedges. Then they took away our caviar before we were done with it. And they rushed us in and out, even though there were so many empty tables. At least, the woman who actually served us was very nice.

While we were there, I realized I kind of missed having my sister along, but honestly, this was probably not the best place for her. Still, it was a very interesting place, and if the shades were up, I think it might even feel like you're sitting inside that painting.

I might go back. But probably still only with a grown up.



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# Good-Bye to Japonica

BY NANCY DAVIDOFF KELTON



**THE LOSS OF A FAVORITE RESTAURANT** is not as hard as the loss of a favorite friend, but there is a moving on and closing a door, and it is difficult. Photo credit: Jonathan Zich.

I was sad enough last summer when Elephant and Castle on Greenwich Avenue closed. For five decades, I regularly ate brunch and dinner there, sometimes with family and friends, sometimes alone. I was acquainted with a few waiters with whom I would chat. Only in the last several years, after talking to a person at the next table who was eating a hamburger, did I start ordering their burgers. Yum!

Now upon finding out a few weeks ago from Jeffrey, the owner of Japonica, that my favorite Japanese restaurant was closing at the end of April, I am sadder still. Japonica on University Place, like Elephant and Castle, has been a go-to restaurant since it opened 48 years ago.

I have loved good sushi since I discovered it. When Japonica opened, my daughter tasted my salmon roll... in between sips from her bottle. She loved it too.

Neighbors and celebrities were also regulars. I would see Ed Koch and Miguel Baryshnikov there. One evening Julianne Moore and her husband, Bart Freundlich, were sitting at the next table. I had just seen the movie *The Hours* a few nights before. I told her I loved her as Laura Brown. I was having miso soup. She was eating the salad. We talked about our meals and about the sushi we ordered. Their children and Bart had gone to the same school as my daughter. His favorite English teacher and I were good friends. She and I sometimes ate dinner at Japonica's sushi bar and I would write or help her with the school's parenting column.

On Wednesdays, before teaching my afternoon writing class, I made a habit of eating lunch at Japonica alone, sometimes with a book or a newspaper. If I was hungry, I would order a Bento Box that included miso soup, a salad, edamame, fruit, a California roll, udon, or chicken teriyaki.

Rob, a man I dated a few decades ago, had invited me to his daughter's wedding. Then, at Japonica one evening after we ordered, he uninvited me. I already bought a dress. He said he'd pay for it. I said I thought his uninviting me for reasons that had to do with his children and ex-wife were not nice. He got angry and spilled soy sauce on his polo shirt right by

the little polo mallet. He started to wipe it off, got more exasperated, and left. The Japonica owner at the time was nearby, and seeing what happened, came to the table and said she would not charge me for what he ordered. The next time I was there alone for lunch, she gave me a silk kimono. It occurred to me that when I got divorced, I told family and close friends. Now the owner of Japonica was in the act.

"I can't believe you like this raw fish," my mother said when I took my parents to Japonica. I then ordered beef negami for her which worked a little better, but clearly my Japanese restaurant did not turn my mother on as much as her brisket and overcooked salmon did.

A close friend from New England wanted to try lunch at Japonica. She liked it. Her husband loves sushi and rarely comes into the city. We went back with our husbands, ordered a spider roll and a huge platter of sashimi and sushi. It was super fun and satisfying.

There are other sushi restaurants where I will be eating, but they do not have the history nor the quality nor the welcoming spirit that Japonica had. The English teacher who went there with me recently died. So did my college roommate who moved to Texas and always wanted to eat at Japonica when she was in New York.

The loss of a favorite restaurant is not as hard as the loss of a favorite friend, but there is a moving on and closing a door, and it is difficult.

Breads Bakery, a block from my apartment building, has become a regular place for breakfast, egg salad, babkas, and warmth. I put babkas in my freezer so I only have a sliver at a time, but that doesn't work. Frozen babka is delicious. And the kindness of the Breads owner is great. He offers me samples of new soups. He always stops at my table and chats with his customers. He is very welcoming.

I asked him if he created the foods the Breads staff cook. He said yes. He loves to cook. I asked him if he planned to close soon. He laughed and said he doubted it. "Don't leave," I said. "Okay," he replied.

It's sad missing people and places to which I am attached. The times they are a changin'.

## Answer to Village Trivia (from page 15)

Finding abandoned padlocks on public bridges has a long history. The lock in the first Village Trivia photo on page 15 is located near Pier 45 near Christopher Street. When I spoke to the Hudson River Park staff about how they handle them, I was informed that their maintenance crew regularly cuts them off. But why do people put them there in the first place? Just to confirm their ubiquity, I went over to the Manhattan Bridge and got the second photo, with three locks in one area of railings.

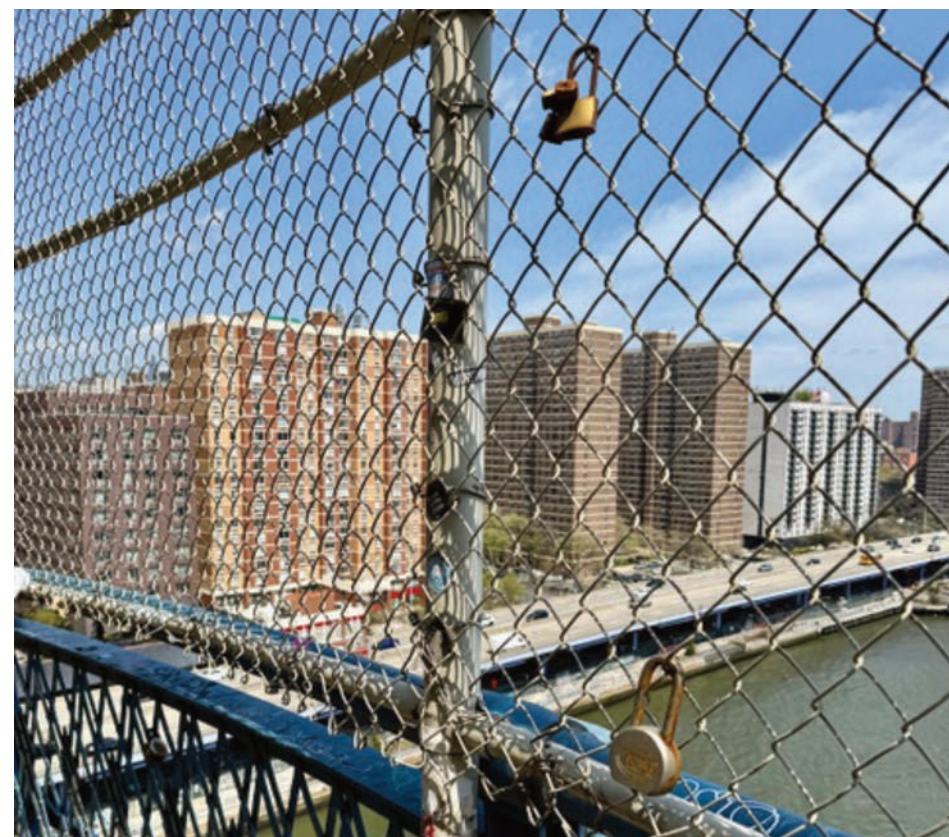
The history of so-called "Love Locks" and the superstitions behind them were easily found in Wikipedia. A love lock or love padlock is a padlock that a couple locks to a bridge, fence, gate, monument, or similar public fixture to symbolize their love. Typically the sweethearts' names or initials are inscribed on the padlock, and its key is thrown away (often into the river) to symbolize unbreakable love.

A 2014 *New York Times* item reported that the history of love padlocks dates back

at least 100 years to a melancholic Serbian tale of World War I, with an attribution for the bridge in the spa town of Vrnjačka Banja. A local schoolmistress named Nada fell in love with a Serbian officer named Relja. After they committed to each other, Relja went to war in Greece, where he fell in love with a local woman from Corfu. Nada never recovered from that devastating blow and she died due to heartbreak from her unfortunate love. Young women from Vrnjačka Banja wanted to protect their own loves, so they started affixing padlocks to the railings of the bridge where Nada and Relja used to meet.

In the rest of Europe, love padlocks started appearing in the early 2000s (that's almost a century later!) as a ritual. But the locks are heavy and there is a potential of damage to the bridge. I personally witnessed love padlocks proliferating on the Pont des Arts in Paris. On June 1, 2015, the locks were taken down due to the collapsing of the bridge.

The message is clear: this is a damaging, ineffective superstition- DON'T DO IT!



**LOCKS ATTACHED** to the Manhattan Bridge. Photo credit: Brian J. Pape, AIA.



**LOVE PADLOCKS** proliferating on the Pont des Arts in Paris. Photo credit: Disdero via Wikimedia Commons CC BY-SA 3.0.

# Forgetting to Be Yourself

BY JAN CRAWFORD



JAN CRAWFORD. Photo credit: Laura Lao.

Have you ever had the pleasure of singing or chanting with a large group? If so, I'm wondering if at some point you noticed that your voice had blended into the other voices in such a way that you could no longer distinguish it from that one sound. If you've had that experience, you may have noticed that as you rested into that overall sound, there was a feeling of being of one mind with the group. And maybe you felt relief and perhaps even joy.

That blending-into-one might have occurred for you within a choir at a school, house of worship or a Taylor Swift concert, a rock rave, a football game or singing the *Hallelujah Chorus* with hundreds at Carnegie Hall. Or maybe that blending might have happened when you were standing on the summit of a mountain with a vista so astonishingly wide that your sense of separateness was absorbed in its grandeur and you felt freed from the bounds of yourself.

Such a moment of freedom may have occurred as you gazed into the eyes of a contented infant, especially (but not only) if that infant was yours. Assisting in the birth of his child, a client in therapy with me recently described the experience as "divine" and that he felt a direct connection to the life-force in those moments. If you're an animal lover, you may know how the bond with a beloved pet can let you step past your familiar self. Or you may have experienced such connection in a moment of beginning to trust that you were truly loved by someone whose love you deeply desired.

Though we might not recognize it, in these and many other moments in daily life we relax into our true nature and are freed from the exhausting job of defending or promoting our conditioned self. One might even call this falling effortlessly into the reality of one expansive mind a form of "everyday enlightenment."

And aspects of this everyday enlightenment may not be exclusively a human capacity. I am, for example, fascinated by bird murmurations. If you have never seen one, you might want to look up a video of murmuration flight. This mesmerizing motion occurs when very large numbers of birds, often starlings, rise and swoop and blanket the sky. The birds move together in seemingly unchoreographed undulating waves, apparently without leaders. If we are curious and

open to it, we can participate in that kind of movement in graceful union with each other and with the wind, echoing inside us as an ancient memory of something we know in our own bodies.

Yet we can find it hard in our culture to recognize that union. We have been taught that the iron-cocooned self is the only thing we can trust. We have been conditioned into believing that losing control of the identification with that individual contained self, even for a moment, is a danger to be avoided. We assume that forgetting ourselves would throw us into a lonely emptiness rather than into an expansion of being that we can barely even imagine.

The most recent issue of *National Geographic*, *Your Brain*, reinforces that conditioning. "The brain should need no introduction," it begins, "After all, the brain is what makes you you." However, based on many years of studying my mind in meditation, I believe *National Geographic's* declaration is probably true on one level and sadly reductive on another. What has become clearer to me over time is that we are not our minds. However, our relationship to our minds is our most important relationship.

If we observe them over time, compassion toward our minds can naturally arise in us, as we begin to appreciate that our minds sincerely want to help us. However, they have had to adopt coping mechanisms developed when we were very young and possessed of few resources, often while facing overwhelming events or conditions. While those coping mechanisms may have even helped at the time, the automatic reactions now are inadequate or even barriers to our happiness. Most significantly, since early childhood our minds have been societally conditioned to believe their job is to promote and defend the separate self — no matter the cost.

The good news is that the quieter and less conflicted our minds become, the more at ease and present we will be to the life-force within and outside us. For example, I was recently watching a flock of pigeons fly over Carmine Street. I noticed I was subtly experiencing the flock's movements in my body. I felt the effort of their flight as a subtle contraction in my shoulders and arms. Soaring and diving as they surrendered to the wind, I then noticed both sensations, a deep breath and relaxation of my whole body. I feel that the loosening of my identification with the concept of being human allowed this lovely connection to occur.

Practices like meditation, prayer or some somatic approaches can help quiet the mind so that we can increasingly enjoy many more of the beautiful, ordinary and perhaps even extraordinary experiences of daily life. Those experiences connect us, allowing us to sing a song with others yet in a single voice, and give us moments of being one inclusive flock. And it is within that deepening silence of the mind that what we are becomes clearer and clearer.



JAPANESE CHERRY BLOSSOM TREES, whose April bloom is sadly brief, spring to life in the Sasaki Garden. Photo by Susan M. Silver.

## A HANDFUL OF HAIKU

Japanese cherry  
Blossoms blown to the pavement:  
Rain-battered beauty

Bomb-cyclone draws near—  
On the windowsill  
Warmth of deepest winter sun

Coffee slow-dripping:  
Dawn seeps into the room,  
Safe after another night

Snow cracks an oak limb—  
A forever-lost young friend  
With tears remembered

Groundhog gives renewal hope--  
How like the start  
Of the ordinary days

Latte lover flips  
A single newspaper page --  
Spring forward this night

March: persistent waves  
Of green will soon overwhelm  
Stubborn snow mountains

Orphan glove atop  
An empty outdoor table--  
Alone in the rain

Ice-bitter coldness,  
A rose pushes through frozen earth--  
Spring cannot be far

Yellow afternoon--  
Your absence like paper-cut  
Blood drops on daisies

Sun today, evening rain --  
Gambler's heart holds a foolish  
Grip on hope's umbrella

Piece by piece, summer  
Shelter builds, only to be dismantled  
By determined fall

Pelting drops, then mist--  
How like our own strange storm:  
Now intense, now tepid

Gray lots give way to  
Sudden gushing green spots:  
City staccato

@ 2026, Susan M. Silver

## VILLAGE PET PAGES

BY JOY PAPE AND BRIAN PAPE

# The Story of Rupert & Lulu

BY ERIN QUINN PURCELL



RUPERT AND LULU sitting pretty. Photo: Erin Quinn Purcell.

Rupert Pupkin and Lulu Bean both hail from the great state of Texas, arriving one year apart via a rescue group called Peyton's Safe Haven. They're Heelers born to herd, manage, supervise, and occasionally micro-manage — and they take this responsibility very, very seriously.

We adopted Rupert first. His origin story reads like a country song: found on the side of a dusty road in the hot Texas sun with his littermates and no mama in sight. We picked him out online in early 2020, blissfully unaware that the world was about to hit the pause button. By the time we brought him home, everything had shut down. Rupert, therefore, is what you might call a “non-traditionally socialized” gentle-pup.

His early days featured empty streets, eerily quiet walks, and a shocking lack of dropped chicken bones because it was the pandemic and there was very little garbage on the streets to sniff and no people to carelessly litter. There were few dogs to greet, no houseguests to charm, and yet, against all odds, he grew into a confident, happy pup. A pandemic miracle, really.

At five months old, Rupert revealed his true talents: an Olympic-caliber vertical leap, a passion for dog parkour, and a need for speed. He was the fastest runner, the highest jumper, and the most dedicated skateboard chaser in the Leroy Street Dog Run.

At home, he devoted much of his time to trying — heroically, tirelessly, and unsuccessfully — to convince our two cats that they were, in fact, dogs who simply hadn't realized it yet. The cats disagreed. Strongly. Rupert began to understand that he might benefit from a companion who spoke his language.

### Enter Lulu

We found Lulu through the same rescue, but her story had a bit more wilderness in it. She had spent about five months living out in the world before being rescued, which meant that when she arrived in the big city, everything — from car noises to sidewalks — was brand new. In fact, her little paws had never even touched pavement before.

She was shy, cautious, and understandably overwhelmed. We found out later she even had a broken leg! But with Rupert as her enthusiastic (if slightly chaotic) big brother, she found her footing, literally and figuratively. He showed her the ropes, the sidewalks, and the proper way to patrol a living room for kids' food scraps.

Lulu also revealed a quieter, more extraordinary talent: she knows when someone is hurting. Whether it's a scraped knee, a tough day, or just a moment of sadness, Lulu appears almost instantly, pressing close, offering a steady, gentle presence. No training required — just instinct. She doesn't herd in those moments; she heals, like the Heeler she is.

Today, Rupert and Lulu preside over their domain: a flock consisting of two adults, two kids, and two cats (still not dogs, according to the cats). They monitor all activity with unwavering dedication. No suspicious movement goes un-investigated. No hallway activity goes un-barked at. And when they're off duty? They relax the only way they know how — by systematically destroying “indestructible” toys and dog beds, and stealing socks from their human brothers, Bruno and Dewey Bernstein (See the Characters article on page 10).

It's a full life. A silly life. And a very well-managed life.



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# Dog Run Resurfacing Project at Washington Square Park

BY JOY AND BRIAN PAPE

Dog runs are rarely easy. There's often not quite enough space and finding a surface that works for everyone is a genuine challenge. It's a dilemma familiar to dog owners and NYC Parks alike.

Washington Square Park has long welcomed dogs and their people. As the Washington Square Park Conservancy notes on their website: "Canine culture has a home in Greenwich Village at Washington Square Park. During the park's open hours, all leashed dogs and their owners are welcome anywhere in the park, except fenced garden beds. Washington Square Park also is home to two well-loved dog runs for the community's furriest visitors to socialize off-leash."

Despite that warm welcome, many owners have quietly drifted to other parks, particularly those with hard surfaces, to avoid coming home muddy. Every dog run in Hudson River Park has a hard surface, though these types of runs have their own critics, with some owners calling them unnatural and difficult for dogs to play on. Natural grass is not a realistic option given the maintenance demands of a high-traffic urban park. At the same time, the small grassy areas in other Greenwich Village parks are heavily worn and typically restricted from animal use due to sanitation concerns.

These concerns prompted a conversation at the Community Board 2 Parks & Waterfront Committee, where Will Morrison, administrator of Washington Square Park



**A PLANNED UPGRADE TO WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK'S DOG RUNS** replaces the existing gravel surface (left) with synthetic turf, as shown in the rendering (right). Credit: Washington Square Park Conservancy.

for NYC Parks and executive director of the Washington Square Park Conservancy, presented on the topic at the March 2026 meeting. The centerpiece of the presentation was a proposal to replace the gravel surfaces in both dog runs with synthetic turf. The combined area is 4,952 square feet, the same footprint as today. Existing water features, furnishings, concrete pads, and drainage infrastructure would remain in place. The change responds to persistent complaints that gravel is difficult to clean, expensive to maintain, and leaves dogs noticeably dirty.

Synthetic turf would allow spot cleaning and scheduled professional cleaning in place of the current biannual gravel tilling.

The chosen material is a pet-friendly synthetic turf by SYNLAWN, produced using a "stitch and backing" method that contains no rubber pellets, an important distinction given documented health concerns around surfacing products that use synthetic or rubber infill. The same SYNLAWN product is already installed on the play mounds adjacent to the large dog run, where children have played on it for

years. Several other city parks use it as well, including Madison Square Park, the Tompkins Square Park small dog run, and Domino Park in Brooklyn.

The CB2 committee agreed to produce a resolution in support of the initiative. Because the project modifies park surface infrastructure within a historic district, it will also require approval from the Landmarks Preservation Commission. Funding is currently being raised by the Conservancy to help bring these cleaner, more comfortable runs in Washington Square Park to life.

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## Hands *continued from page 15*

"Mikey, come in here," I knew an opinion was needed. Turning this way and that, with her disapproving eyes focused on the mirror, she'd ask, "What do you think? Belt or no belt?" "Belt," I'd answer resolutely. "Oh, I don't know," she'd sigh as she snapped the belt in place, "I look like a pillow tied in the middle." Having already given my solicited opinion I could only add, "Well, what's worse, to look like a pillow tied in the middle or to look like a pillow?" She'd shoot me "a look," that'd bounce right off the mirror hitting its mark, but she'd wear it belted. With bag and shoes to match.

And gloves. My mother came from a generation of women who always wore gloves. Mom had an array of soft kid gloves for each season and occasion in grey, black, navy, tan, bone and white and in varying lengths. Her gloves fit so tightly that putting them on was something of a ritual. She'd smooth the supple kid, working it down her little finger toward the palm. She'd do this with each finger then finally, smoothing the glove over her hand and wrist and up her forearm. Seeing she'd been observed at

this, Mom would dependably say, "There's nothing worse than baggy gloves," in a prim, high-pitched voice.

Arriving at church, Mom would reverse the glove ritual. She would pull at each finger so that, by the time she'd reach the doorway, her right glove would be off, ready to dip her hand into the holy water font and make the sign of the cross. Crossing ourselves, less elegantly, we would proceed as a family to our front row pew, my dad pulling up the rear. Kneeling, Mom would deposit her purse and right glove on the pew behind her. The rest of us would follow and kneel. That's the way it was. When you found your seat in a Catholic church you couldn't just sit down but were required to kneel and silently pray. I usually faked it. No one could tell if you were actually praying and I was too busy with all the treats the place had to offer. I did love all the embellishments — every pretty thing to capture the imagination of a young visual gay boy. With a background of lilting organ music, there were lavish flower arrangements, embroidered linens, crystal cruets, gold chalices and gold candelabras with tall gold-capped ivory candles being

lit by altar boys in their long black cassocks and starched white surplices — Catholic drag I found so appealing. Someday I'd be old enough to wear a long black dress in church and get away with it. There were colorful statues including a pretty Blessed Virgin Mary and a handsome, blond-haired St. Stephen, my favorite. There was also a well-muscled, nearly-naked, decidedly hunky, unfortunately crucified Jesus that attracted much of my attention. His body was so lean and muscular and his alabaster skin so smooth and shiny you could almost overlook the blood, the nails through his hands and feet and the agony on his face.

Most memorable, though, were my mother's hands. I'd shift my gaze to find those two elegant hands devoutly pressed together in prayer. One gloved. One bare. Long beautiful fingers of her perfectly manicured right hand with that single sparkling diamond, silhouetted against her other, kid-gloved hand. It was an indelible image of pure elegance, hand pressed against hand, a perfect pair, one gloved, one bare that would burnish itself onto my mind's eye. Surely I thought, God must have also appreciated

the beauty and grace of those hands, the effort that had gone into their perfect presentation. Most certainly the prayers her hands were so fervently offering would be heard, and their requests granted.

That's how I will always remember my mother's hands. The hands that fed me, bathed me, changed my diapers, administered my cough medicine, parted and combed my hair, happily signed my birthday cards and not so happily, my report cards. The hands that made our dinners, laundered and pressed our clothes, cleaned our house and provided so much motherly care. The hands that would someday pen a letter accepting my lifestyle, one she couldn't understand but would try so hard to support. Lovely, elegant, hands that grew the finest roses and would create those abundant flower arrangements on the altar. Praying hands, full of grace, that made their way through a thousand rosaries and that I am quite certain, will welcome me when I cross over from this life to the next, the same hands I watched in church, elegantly pressed together in prayer, one gloved, one bare.

# Music Without Borders

## The Enduring Vision of Leonard Bernstein

BY MICHAEL JACOBSON

*Bernstein's Wall* is a documentary directed by Douglas Tirola. The timely film gets its name from the fact that legendary conductor, Leonard Bernstein, witnessed both the somber creation of the Berlin Wall in 1961 and the jubilant celebration of its fall in 1989, which reunified East and West Berlin after nearly three decades of division.

Tirola, an accomplished filmmaker, tells his smartly crafted documentary through Bernstein's eyes exclusively. Unlike most documentaries on heroic figures of the 20th century, *Bernstein's Wall* is refreshingly free of sound bites from well-known personalities vouching for Bernstein's brilliance. In his research, Tirola discovered a State Department on-camera interview in which Bernstein candidly reflected on his life. With that remarkable find as his foundation, Tirola weaves an unfiltered portrait of the major chapters, the highs and lows, of Bernstein's intimate and episodic life.

After seeing the film, I had the opportunity to speak with Nina Simmons, Bernstein's youngest daughter, who has lived for many years in SoHo. She generously shed light on the making of the documentary. A central appeal of the project for Simmons and her family was the filmmaker's commitment to telling Bernstein's story entirely through his own words, a concept that felt especially meaningful as fewer and fewer people who knew him personally are still alive to be interviewed. Rather than relying on outside voices, the film draws on an extraordinary wealth of material in which Bernstein speaks for himself, creating what feels like a deeply personal autobiography on screen. The family contributed generous archival materials, including personal photographs and footage, much of which had been carefully digitized and transferred to the Library of Congress, itself a monumental undertaking that coincided with the dawn of the digital age.

The film also captures Bernstein's deeply held belief in the universal power of music to transcend nationalism and unite humanity, sentiments he expressed as early as 1948, writing passionately about his longing to see borders, flags, and divisions abolished in favor of a shared human identity. Despite being proudly Jewish, Bernstein maintained deep and lasting connections to Germany and Austria throughout his career, performing there frequently and forming close friendships with musicians and singers. Simmons was clear that her father simply refused to punish an entire nation for its history, recognizing that good and talented people existed there. She noted that, perhaps surprisingly, he was not widely criticized for maintaining those relationships.

### The Family and Maestro

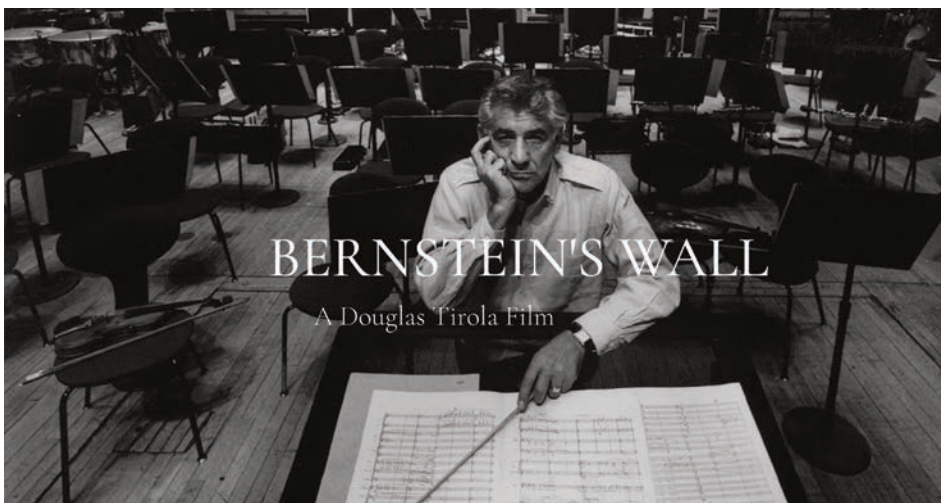
Simmons also spoke about her family's involvement with Bradley Cooper's *Maestro*. The Bernstein family's collaboration with



THE BERNSTEIN FAMILY. Photo credit: John Jonas Gruen, reprinted with permission from Nina Bernstein Simmons (far left, above).



BERNSTEIN'S WALL promotional images.



Cooper was notably close. He consulted heavily with them throughout the making of the film, something Simmons emphasized he was under no obligation to do. He could have simply made whatever film he chose regardless of their feelings. But his willingness to involve them made a meaningful difference, and the family was grateful for it. The timing was also significant, as *Maestro* and *Bernstein's Wall* were both coming into focus simultaneously, leaving the family, as Simmons put it, with their "brains full of Bernstein, either the real one or the pretend one."

When *Maestro* was completed, an unexpected obstacle arose. Both the writers'

strike and the SAG strike meant that Cooper and none of the film's actors or production team were able to publicly promote it upon release. As a result, Simmons and her family stepped into that vacuum, attending red carpets and film festivals as the film's unlikely ambassadors. Simmons recalled this with characteristic dry humor, describing it as "a big booby prize for the public," since audiences at these glamorous events were naturally expecting movie stars rather than the Bernstein family. Nevertheless, they fulfilled that promotional role with grace, ensuring the film received the attention it deserved under extraordinary circumstances.

### The Distribution Challenge

Despite being a richly crafted portrait of one of America's most celebrated musicians, *Bernstein's Wall* has faced frustrating obstacles in finding a theatrical distributor. Its wall-to-wall archival footage, drawn from decades of rare and historically significant material, made it an expensive production. The ongoing costs associated with licensing that footage appear to be a contributing factor in the difficulty of securing wider distribution. The film opened in very limited release and has screened at New York's Film Forum, but without a proper distributor behind it, its reach remains painfully restricted. A documentary that so powerfully captures Bernstein's message of peace, human unity, and the transcendent power of music — sentiments that feel remarkably timely today — deserves a far wider audience.

The struggle *Bernstein's Wall* faces is far from unique. It reflects a harsh reality that independent filmmakers confront every day. Even the most critically praised documentaries can spend years in limbo, searching for a distributor willing to take a chance on them. The landscape has grown increasingly difficult as major theater chains prioritize big-budget studio releases, leaving independent films competing for a shrinking number of screens. Television outlets like PBS, once a reliable home for serious documentary work, face their own funding pressures and programming constraints. Meanwhile, the growth of streaming platforms, which initially seemed like a lifeline for independent film, has proven to be a double-edged sword. Netflix, Amazon, and HBO Max have grown increasingly selective, favoring content with true crime narratives over more nuanced, specialized work. For every documentary that breaks through, countless others, equally worthy, remain frustratingly beyond the reach of the general public.

*Bernstein's Wall* deserves better; so does its audience. Fortunately, in the immediate future *Bernstein's Wall* can be seen at the Film Forum. Take advantage of that opportunity. *Bernstein's Wall* initially premiered at the Tribeca Festival. This year's film festival will be marking its 25th anniversary, from June 3–14, a milestone born from the ashes of September 11, when the festival was founded to breathe life back into a wounded city.

Michael Jacobson is an independent New York City filmmaker. Last year he completed "*The Cornelia Street Café in Exile*," a full-length documentary on the, greatly missed, *Cornelia Street Café*. He curates and hosts a bi-monthly screening of short films by New York Metropolitan filmmakers, at New Plaza Cinema, which will be starting its fourth season on Friday, May 29 at 7:00 p.m.

# Carolyn Hester, A Village Folk Legend of the 60s

BY ROGER PARADISO



CAROLYN HESTER, above, performing in the Village in 1964. Photo by John Keeler, courtesy of his widow.

Carolyn Hester was in the Village when the folkies took over the clubs and streets. And, she put a young harmonica player named Bob Dylan into her band. She doesn't get much press for this but she introduced Dylan to John Hammond as she made her first recording for Columbia Records. Dylan then did a demo, Columbia signed him and the rest is history.

How did this all start?

"My mother wanted me to come back home to Texas, but I had already run away to become a folk singer," said Hester. "She got me to a Clovis, New Mexico recording studio to make a demo. As I walked into the studio to meet the producer, Mr. Petty, I noticed a young man sitting there. We were introduced. His name was Buddy Holly."

In the summer of 1957 Petty told Hester's mother that he had a successful artist in Holly and thought he could get her daughter on a label, too. Hester had already been in New York since the fall of 1955 when she arrived with a friend who wanted to be a ballet dancer. They found an apartment on West 86th Street. Hester enrolled in the American Theater Wing on West 48th Street in the Broadway district because

her mother wanted her to have some structure. The budding singer was not into show business and withdrew after her first year at the school. Instead, she wanted to focus on her childhood love of music and found a singing coach.

Hester said, "I started to hang around the Village and carry my guitar to small gigs. All these clubs had poetry readings and then slowly, we folk singers took over with our guitars. This would be around 1956 to 1960. I was hanging out in Washington Square Park like everyone else because the park was full of people playing folk music." At that time, she lived on 12th Street near Greenwich Avenue not too far from the clubs and the park.

"I was invited to sing in nearby clubs because I had albums out. I really liked Gerde's Folk City. I ended up doing my first album on Coral Records because Norman Petty sold my tapes to them and that was the start of my recording career," Hester recalled. "In 1960, the Clancy Brothers had a big following in the Village, and they had a record label, Tradition Records. They recorded me next which became my second album in 1960."

The Village was now a hot spot for young folk singers. There were so many clubs like Gerde's Folk City, The Gaslight and The Village Gate. University radio stations became outlets. New York University and Columbia University both played folk songs all day long. Soon many colleges around the country had their own radio shows with hosts like Oscar Brand who played folk music including Hester's *Scarlett Ribbons* and the eponymous *Tradition* album. It made sense to ride this surge of popularity by bringing live music to campuses around the country.

Back home in the Village, talent scouts and TV shows like Steve Allen's *Tonight Show* and Joe Franklin's talk show were putting folk singers on the air. "John Hammond from Columbia Records wanted to record folk singers. He had already added Pete Seeger to his roster," Hester said, "Charlie Rothchild from Hammond's office called me to report to Columbia Records in July of 1960. I took the bus up with my guitar and they put me in the studio and asked me to play a song. I remember Al Grossman was there, too. When I finished my song Hammond jumped up and said, 'Sold!'"

"They wanted me to record for their label. I had already been recording with Bruce Langhorne so I asked Hammond if I could add Bill Lee, who had recorded with Odetta. Around this time I met Bob Dylan who came to Gerde's to see me. He approached me with all kinds of questions about Buddy Holly. I added him to the band to play harmonica, an instrument my dad had played on my very first album. I introduced Dylan to Hammond who signed him after my session with him on Sept. 18, 1961."

The whole period from 1956 to 1961 was exciting for Hester. With her third album, also self-titled, Hester recorded at Columbia and became a star in the Village. She was one of the early break-out folk singers of the period, culminating in being featured on the cover of the *Saturday Evening Post*.

When the folk music boom was cooling off, Hester kept performing. She married music composer David Blume in New York in 1969. Blume was well known for writing the 1966 hit song *Turn Down Day* by the Cyrkle. Together, they ran a folk music club for nearly 35 years in Los Angeles. Their two daughters, Amy and Karla Blume, have been touring with Hester since Blume's passing in 2006. Hester has used her famous soprano voice to sing and support causes like voter registration. She performed at Bob Dylan's 30th Anniversary Concert in 1992. Colloquially referred to as the Texas Songbird, Hester's career was honored by the World Folk Music Association's Lifetime Achievement Award in January 2003.

*Hester and daughters will perform at the Peoples Voice Café on May 30 at the Judson Church assembly hall. You can get tickets online at [peoplesvoicecafe.org](http://peoplesvoicecafe.org)*

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# Beyond the Keys: Kimball Gallagher's Night of Music, Meaning, and Connection

BY KAJU ROBERTO



KIMBALL GALLAGHER, master concert pianist and founder of 88 International, performs at Zankel Hall on April 13, 2026. Photo by Kaju Roberto.

I covered 88 International's founder, Juilliard master pianist Kimball Gallagher, in a different role: the musical artist himself, commanding the stage in a masterful program at Zankel Hall on April 13.

In the past, my reporting has focused on Gallagher's humanitarian work through his NGO, 88 International — a non-profit organization that has created meaningful opportunities for young musicians, bringing together high school performers from countries such as Tunisia, the Gambia, Myanmar, and Afghanistan. This time, however, the focus shifted from mission to musician, from organizer to performer — though, as the evening revealed, the two are inseparable.

After the concert, I had a chance to speak to Kimball about how he prepares his mindset to translate into such brilliant performances from Jefferson Library.

## A Performance Rooted in Connection

From the outset, Gallagher established that this would not be a conventional recital. Before playing a single note, he addressed the audience directly, speaking with an ease that felt both thoughtful and unguarded. His remarks avoided dense technicalities and instead invited listeners into a broader reflection on connection — how music can bridge distances not only between nations, but between individuals sharing the same room.

That idea shaped the entire evening. Gallagher's introductions transformed each piece into part of a larger narrative, one grounded in cultural exchange and human experience rather than isolated performance.

One early highlight was his introduction of *Ette*, a work by composer Maurice Ravel constructed from the name "Haida," spelled out musically. Gallagher's explanation was concise but evocative, emphasizing how even a name can become a vessel for identity when translated into sound. It set the tone for a program that continually returned to the idea of music as a deeply personal expression with universal resonance.

Gallagher then turned to a Burmese lullaby by composer Simon Fink, offering one of the evening's most detailed introductions. The piece, *Lule*, was chosen deliberately to reflect the work of 88 International, which collaborates with young musicians across Africa, Myanmar, and beyond.

Based on a classical Burmese poem intended to comfort a child drifting to sleep, *Lule* interweaves the original Burmese text with its English translation. Gallagher described the effect as two voices gradually finding each other — less a translation than a conversation set to music.

The work carries its own history. It premiered in 2017 at the National Theatre in Yangon as part of the 88 International Myanmar Music Festival. At Zankel Hall, the audience experienced its U.S. premiere. Gallagher introduced the performers — Abigail Fischer, Papa Te Ura on the Burmese harp, and Ruth In, who stepped in due to a colleague's visa complications — with a tone of genuine appreciation. He noted that Ruth In belongs to the same generation as many musicians in 88 International's programs, reinforcing the evening's emphasis on emerging voices.

## Portraits of Place: Kabul and Beyond

The program continued with a series of musical "portraits," each rooted in a specific place. One of the most poignant brought listeners back to Kabul, Afghanistan, in a piece dedicated to the Afghanistan National Institute of Music. Gallagher explained that the school, once based in Kabul, has relocated to Portugal amid ongoing upheaval.

The composition itself embodied cultural convergence. Written in a 7/8 rhythmic pattern characteristic of Afghan tradition, it also drew on American minimalism. Gallagher described this blending as a "meeting point," a reflection of the evening's central theme: that music can carry multiple identities at once.

Between performances, Gallagher returned to the microphone, reflecting on the act of listening as an intentional practice. In a time often defined by distraction, he suggested, music demands presence. He also spoke candidly about performance as an act of risk, where the possibility of imperfection is inseparable from the potential for transcendence.

That philosophy was evident in his playing. Gallagher's interpretations were fluid and responsive, marked by moments of delicacy alongside passages of bold intensity. There was a sense of discovery in his approach, as though each phrase was unfolding in real time.

## Brahms and the Power of Youth

The evening concluded with Johannes Brahms' *Third Piano Sonata*, composed

when he was just 21 years old. Gallagher introduced the piece with a mixture of reverence and humility, noting its remarkable emotional range — from majestic, sweeping passages to intimate, introspective moments. He admitted, with a touch of understatement, that it might not be possible to fully prepare an audience for such a work.

Yet the choice felt deliberate. Gallagher drew a subtle parallel between Brahms' age at the time of composition and the young musicians supported by 88 International. The message was clear: talent is universal, but opportunity is not.

## A Unified Vision

By the final notes, it was evident that the evening was about more than technical mastery. Gallagher had created a space where music functioned as dialogue — between cultures, generations, and individuals.

In returning to the stage as a performer, he did not leave behind his humanitarian work. Instead, he integrated it seamlessly into the program, shaping not only what was played, but how it was presented and understood.

The result was an experience that lingered beyond the concert hall — an evening in which music served as both expression and bridge, connecting lives and stories that might otherwise remain distant.

*Kaju Roberto is an accomplished musician, singer/songwriter, journalist, and an award-winning producer. He is the artist Rad Jet.*

## BOOK REVIEW

## Celebrating Big Dreams and The Second Avenue Subway

BY PHYLLIS ECKHAUS

“Big-league” (pronounced “bigly”), “huge,” “great,” “giant.” Our president’s superlative-laden size obsession, coupled with his seemingly humongous hatred, make me shrink with wariness — I imagine him pushing the nuclear button just because it would make the biggest, most catastrophic KABOOM.

And as Trump seeks to disassemble checks-and-balances, the rules of war, civil rights, the welcome mat for immigrants and refugees, the East Wing, the federal government itself, I feel my pride in America crumble. Our prez has kneecapped my capacity to dream big dreams, not least because he’s turned graft into an Olympic sport and transformed his whole cadre of billionaires into supervillains so openly malevolent they make comic book bad guys look like amateurs.

**The Big, Beautiful New York City Subway**

All this is to say that I found the innocent boosterism of Dan McNichol’s big, beautiful book on the Second Avenue subway weirdly restorative. This lushly-illustrated coffee table tome, *Second Avenue Subway: Building New York City’s Most Famous Thing Never Built*, is a paean to big dreams and big infrastructure, a welcome reminder that big isn’t necessarily bad.

And, indeed, much of what makes New York City uniquely wonderful is directly tied to its size and scale. McNichol begins by evoking the city’s incontrovertible bigness, which as a Villager, I sometimes forget. If New York City were a country, he says, its wealth generation would surpass Canada’s.

He attributes our city’s vitality directly to “one of the world’s engineering marvels,” our subway system. With 472 stations — the most of any subway system on the planet — it is “democracy on steel wheels ... the most neighborhood access.”

McNichol’s breezy text provides plenty of context, but it’s his engineering details that really sing. His co-author, Bill Goodrich, is the infrastructure engineer and ex-MTA honcho who oversaw Phase 1 of the Second Avenue subway — the 2016 completion of the four-station Q line spur from 63rd Street to 96th Street. That nine-year effort is the core of this book and it’s thrilling — even to a near-Luddite like me, who can appreciate the massive complexity, challenge, and suspense that coursed through this megaproject like electricity.

Beyond the scale, what’s startling food for thought is the sense of decency, teamwork, and civic responsibility by the people in charge of Phase 1. One can’t help but obsess over what it might take to reproduce these leadership qualities.

**Delay, Delay, Delay**

First some history. Former Civil War surgeon Rufus Gilbert conceived the Second Avenue El (elevated) in 1870, hoping to relieve the awful overcrowding on the Lower



**TWO TRADESMEN WALKING INTO THE LAUNCH BOX** from the west side tunnel. The tunnel is twenty two feet in diameter, 1/21/2011.



**A SANDHOG CREW** alongside a TBM, 1/21/2011. Photos by Patrick J. Cashin.

East Side. But grand civic visions are routinely thwarted by problems of money and politics. Gilbert’s idea didn’t come to fruition till 1880.

In 1904 the city got its first subway line. It extended from the gorgeous and now defunct City Hall station — where Mayor Mamdani chose to be sworn in — to the Upper West Side. This fast and classy mass transit was clearly superior to the coal-burning, soot-spewing elevated trains, at eye level with second story apartment dwellers. The Second Avenue El was torn down in 1942. The Third Avenue El was demolished in 1956. The Upper East Side and East Harlem became transit deserts, relying on the wildly overcrowded Lexington Avenue Line.

Promised but never delivered, the Second Avenue subway began to resemble the punchline to a bad joke. The Depression put the kibosh on 1928 plans to build underground from Houston to the Harlem River.

Robert Moses — a highway fan and mass transit foe — further backburned those plans. Not until Moses lost power, his empire subsumed into the new Metropolitan Transit Authority, did blueprints for a Second Avenue subway reemerge in 1968.

Supported by the first federal grant to provide sustaining support for mass transit, in 1972 the Second Avenue subway broke ceremonial ground at 102nd Street in East Harlem, with then-Governor Nelson Rockefeller and then-Mayor John Lindsay wielding a pickaxe and shovel respectively. By the late seventies, with the city facing bankruptcy, the project — which had caused chaos and destruction throughout 28 city blocks — had been abandoned. An East Village tunnel was backfilled; tunnels in Chinatown and East Harlem were entombed.

The two companies that had jointly won the bid to build the tunnel in East Harlem — one of them founded in 1848 — went belly up

thanks to geology. What was supposed to be bedrock was discovered to be “bull’s liver,” a silty liquifying soil too soft to be easily excavated.

**An Adventure Story**

Decades later, during Phase 1, engineers devised a way out, with an elaborate system of underground pipes and street level refrigeration systems that circulated salt brine chilled to minus 13 degrees Fahrenheit to freeze the bull’s liver. This freed them to deploy “The Beast,” their rocket-like tunnel boring machine (TBM). The Beast, 22 feet wide and 675 feet long, comparable in power to an F15 jet, was built to bore through bedrock. Reading about it — and seeing photos — is great fun.

McNichol quotes Goodrich to describe the challenge and excitement of deep rock tunneling, with all the unknowns underground and his awareness — like a space explorer — that he was witness to an environment almost no one else will see. The torque of The Beast is another adventure: “Starting up the TBM feels like an earthquake,” a tunneler observed.

The megaproject was mega noisy, sometimes spurring engineering improv and stunning sensitivity. For example, a project manager came up with a solution when faced with 200 irate elderly residents of a Second Avenue nursing home, fearful they would never sleep again. To tamp down the booming noise of cars bouncing concrete deck panels against steel girders, he improvised rubber gaskets under each panel.

McNichol tells of project phone calls to especially sensitive community members, alerting them in advance to dynamite blasts. Recipients included the parents of a child receiving chemo and the mom of a neurodivergent adult prone to violence. In the hospital-heavy Upper East Side, blasts were scheduled not to interfere with surgeries.

Impressively, the head honcho, MTA Capital Construction President Michael Horodniceanu, appears to have approached his role as community liaison with genuine imagination, inviting community members to Saturday underground tours he and Goodrich would lead. The tours allowed beleaguered Second Avenue residents perhaps to become construction fans, newly aware of the engineering intricacies and intense planning that accompanied all that noise and inconvenience.

**Policy Choices**

This is not a policy book but it may provoke questions. It seems the biggest question is how do we get our mojo back, our will to tackle big civic projects worth doing? This book made me wistful until I remembered that New Yorkers remain receptive to ambitious visions — it’s why some of us elected Zohran Mamdani. Perhaps there’s hope.

# Jefferson Market Library

BY CORINNE NEARY

Jefferson Market Library history buffs and long-time residents will know that our building exists today due to the hard work of neighborhood activists who fought to have the old, abandoned courthouse saved from demolition and converted to a library. What some of you may not know is that the fight for the building really began with the fight for the clock in our tower, also known to old-timers as “Old Jeff.”

In the late 1950s, a group of dedicated neighbors, including some very big names like Margot Gayle and Ruth Wittenberg, had an idea to raise funds to get the clock hands, stopped for some years, ticking again. What made this idea really genius was that they used it as a litmus test to see if they might be able to rally for a new use for the building itself. When they succeeded in their efforts to repair and revitalize the clock, they did indeed do just that and began the longer and harder fight to convert the building into a library.

For a group of neighbors to succeed in this uphill battle, and for us all to still be reaping the rewards today, speaks volumes about the degree of activism that existed at that time in the Village. Walking through the doors of this library is to be reminded of the spirit of this neighborhood every day. The fight for the clock that began three quarters of a century ago is something that changed the landscape of the Village, and the fight did not end there, even after we were well established as a library, and our old House of Detention had long been replaced with our neighborhood oasis, the Jefferson Market Garden.

In the 1990s, after the bell’s chiming had been long wiped out by an electrical storm, another generation of Village advocates undertook a fight to get it ringing again. Two of the most instrumental women in this fight were Cynthia Crane and Marilyn Dorato, as they formed the Friends of the Jefferson Market Library Bell. The bell finally rang again at the beginning of 1997, but their fight did not

end there. For years, they fought another, much smaller, neighborhood coalition, led by former Patchin Place resident Charles Platt. Platt fought against the bell with as much energy as you can imagine: blanketing the neighborhood with mailers and flyers, urging others to sign a petition, attending community board meetings, and speaking with the press. The bell that we take for granted today was not at all a given thing.

We are exploring this history and highlighting our library archive with a new exhibit this month in our Little Underground Gallery. We have dozens of original documents: fundraising invitations, correspondence, articles, photographs, and more. On May 6 at 6 p.m., we will host an opening of the exhibit, including a brief talk on what we have on display. If you can’t make it on the 6th, the exhibit will remain up for the month of May. We hope to see you there.

As always, check our website for the most complete listing of our programs for all ages.



“OLD JEFF”. Image credit: Ric Howard for the Village Neighborhood Committee for the Clock, 1962.

## IT’S ALL MY FAULT

# Theater Etiquette (or Death of a Smartphone Salesman)

BY DUANE SCOTT CERNY

Recent performances of Adam Brody’s brilliant *The Fear of 13* have faced another real fear: poorly behaved Broadway audiences.

Clocking in at one hour 50 minutes without an intermission, this armrest-gripping drama demands a silent audience, a skill some individuals are incapable of mastering. Smartly, the play begins with a sizable guard sternly and repeatedly stating the all-too-familiar rules of the theater — turn off your cell phones, no photos, no talking, no candy wrapper crinkling. In my 40-plus years of theatergoing I have never heard a more seriously inflected demand for the sound of silence.

In *Sexual Misconduct of the Middle Classes*, Hugh Jackman’s professorial persona kickstarts the play by lecturing the audience, now his students, with a similar demand.

On- and off-Broadway theaters are navigating the waters of today’s phone-addicted audiences and their phone withdrawal behavior. It’s a malady requiring no audible lyrics. I applaud all attempts at controlling the sound and light shows of some audience members, though I feel the need to go further.

### I Can’t Believe It’s Not Luggage

If you are wearing a backpack, accept the fact it is a sizeable extension of the space above your ass. Think Quasimodo. Or Igor’s iconic question from *Young Frankenstein*: “What hump?” Yes, every turn of your body pushes your backpack into someone’s else’s body, perhaps knocking them in the head, or worse yet, “ass over tea kettle” as the saying goes. Speaking of expressions, does the phrase “an equal and opposite reaction” ring a bell that isn’t your smartphone?

And an aside: one should not have to climb over someone’s actual luggage during *Come from Away*.

### Gentlemen: Everything Is Big in Texas

There may be small cowboys but there are no small cowboy hats. Shaped like enormous chip and dip sets, cowboy hats must be removed and placed between the legs of your over-compensating self. Sitting behind someone wearing a cow-

boy hat will only encourage a view-blocked Annie to get her gun. Yes, such anger can get out of hand, but until *Brokeback Mountain: The Musical* is mounted, do recall the only spitting allowed in the theater is on stage.

### Ladies: Fashion Tips Are Taxable

This is not a slippery haberdashery slope. Berets, green or otherwise, may remain. Caps are not generally feminine but still permissible — that is, unless your visor is a miser to someone else’s sight line. Anything that rises multiple inches above your head that isn’t religiously based or a lifesaving medical device, must be removed. Fashion can be fabulous but not if those seated behind you are allergic to your feathers, fins, fox tails or other follies.

### I Can Sit on Whatever I Choose!

This was the phrase tossed over a fellow theater-goer’s shoulder to me at the hit show *Oh Mary!* Was this woman reminiscing about a long-ago evening at Plato’s Retreat? Had she once possessed her own country and throne but now finds herself not so flush? No, the put-upon mistress seated before me has wadded up her heavy winter coat and placed it on her seat, thereby lifting her posterior many inches in the air without the assistance of Brazilians. Those seated behind her watched a play as if it were a confusing ping pong match held between two abnormally sized ears. Until *Eraserhead: The Other Side of Pencil Lead* opens in fall 2027, someone needs to be defrocked.

### I Can Read My Texts Whenever I Want!

Ma’am, no, no you can’t. Please put your phone away. You checked your messages three times during the first act of *Death of a Salesman*. This play was written for only one death. If Arthur Miller were alive and witnessed your behavior, perhaps he’d consider a rewrite. Act 2 will find Willie Lohman desperately attempting to stay financially afloat while you attempt to cover your phone with your theater program as a light beam hits the eyes of dozens behind you. Ma’am, they didn’t buy tickets to see a disco cat’s Jellicle



BROADWAY THEATERS, both on and off, are navigating the waters of today’s phone addicted audience and their phone withdrawal behavior. Photo by Duane Cerny.

Ball; however, they are having you spayed at intermission.

### I Drink, Therefore I Drunk

Before, during, and after a performance? I’m speaking easily of the loud talkers and the over-served, those tone-deaf drunks who think AA is the garage level where they parked their car. The only 100-proof solution I offer is that they be thrown overboard, notably during Broadway’s *Titanique* run where the jokes wash over the hilarity of a scene-stealing Celine Dion impersonator. Near. Far. Wherever you are. You’re in the drink!

*Update:* My ever-vigilant theater-going companion informs me that *The Fear of 13* now places a sticker over the lens of every smart phone and mouth of every smart aleck. (Those last five words weren’t true, only hopeful.) And both *Fear* and *Salesman* are the must-sees of the season!

Drop me a note about your experiences and solutions. Anything short of slapping a fellow theatergoer will be read without judgment.

*Follow on Substack! Duane Scott Cerny takes the blame for most everything in his monthly satirical column, It’s All My Fault. Best-selling author of “Selling Dead People’s Things” and “Vintage Confidential, he is the co-owner of Chicago’s Broadway Antique Market. Send podcast invites to ThanklessGreetings@yahoo.com*

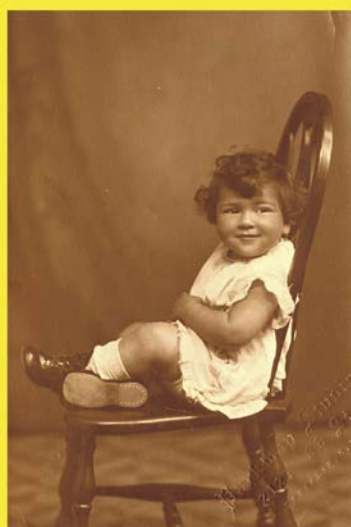
May 2026

## EVENTS

in and  
around the  
West  
Village

## LIFE LESSONS FROM MY MOM

The Jewish Dalai Lama



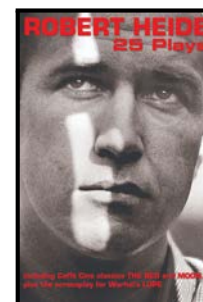
Randee Mia Berman

**RANDEE MIA BERMAN'S BOOK TALK**  
on **MOTHER'S DAY**  
**LIFE LESSONS FROM MY MOM,**  
**THE JEWISH DALAI LAMA**  
**Sunday, May 10 | 2:00 pm**  
**Jefferson Market Library**  
**425 6th Avenue**

"Everyone is looking for gurus on mountaintops and in monasteries. I found mine at the kitchen table. It was my mother. The book is filled with morsels of wisdom from my elegant, savvy mom—about everything from laughter, dancing and age to manners and music. Her grandchildren called her "bubala"—but maybe they should have called her "Buddha-la"! There are lots of nostalgic, vintage photos from the 50s and 60s. My mom played mandolin; my father was a court reporter and jazz pianist. My parents, born in Brooklyn, moved to Bayside in 1947, where I grew up. I then moved to Greenwich Village and lived there for four and a half decades! The book is a master class in approaching life with humor, logic and passion." —*Randee Mia Berman*

**THE HEIDE-HI HEIDE-HO SHOW**  
**Unbirthday Bash Play/Party for**  
**playwright Robert Heide**  
**Friday, May 8 | 6:00 pm**  
**St. John's Lutheran Church**  
**81 Christopher Street**

- Launch of the Robert Heide Emerging Playwright Award\*
- A staged reading of Heide's newly discovered play *Remember* with Jacquie Lynn Colton and Harvey Perr.
- Film Screening of Andy Warhol and Darryl Williams' stunning 1965 B&W silent art film of Robert's play *The Bed*
- Musical Tribute - Legendary pianists Peter Minton and Steve Ross pounding the



- ivories with their versions of *Happy Days Are Here Again*
- Additional Staged Readings of plays and excerpts from *Robert Heide - 25 Plays*
- *Much more!*

**SCREENING OF THE VOICES**  
**PROJECT: A CITY CHURCH**  
**Saturday, May 16 | 11:30 am**  
**The First Presbyterian Church in the**  
**City of New York**  
**Cinema Village, 22 East 12th Street**  
**cinemavillage.com**

This 80-minute documentary, directed by Steve Umberger, is an oral history of

the church told through the voices of some of the older and oldest members. Through interviews, group conversations, and archival material, the film reflects on moments that have shaped our shared life, including the Civil Rights era, LGBTQI advocacy, and September 11. The screening will be followed by a talkback with participants and the production team, and a reception at the church.

## Greenwich House Programs

**TASTE, TOAST, & TRANSFORM LIVES**  
**Monday, May 11**

Join us for an unforgettable evening at Taste of Greenwich Village 2026! Experience the very best of our neighborhood's culinary scene with signature tastings from NYC's top chefs and acclaimed restaurants. Enjoy an open bar, a specialty mocktail, and a live DJ, all while supporting Greenwich House's vital work in arts, education, and social services.

*The Experience:* Signature dishes from renowned local chefs, curated drinks, and high-energy music.

*The Impact:* Every ticket helps sustain our arts, wellness programs and social services for tens of thousands of New Yorkers.

*The Vibe:* A celebration of community, flavor, and Greenwich House programming.  
<https://greenwichhouse.org/about/get-involved/events/taste-of-greenwich-village/>

## Greenwich House Pottery

**EXHIBITION: A FORM OF REVERENCE**  
**Opening Reception**  
**Thursday, May 7, 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.**  
**Exhibit: May 7 – June 20**  
**16 Jones Street**

## Starting May 8:

Tue–Sun, 9:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

**Cost: Free and open to the public**  
**[greenwichhouse.org/event/a-form-of-reverence-opening-reception/](https://greenwichhouse.org/event/a-form-of-reverence-opening-reception/)**

Join us at the Jane Hartsook Gallery for A Form of Reverence, a group exhibition curated by Derek Weisberg. Featuring ten acclaimed artists, this show explores clay's unique ability to bridge the material and spiritual worlds. From the body-centered abstractions of Stephen De Staebler to nature-inspired works by Paul S. Briggs and Kentaro Kawabata, the exhibition invites us to rediscover a sense of awe through the alchemy of earth and fire.

**SUMMER TEEN WHEEL INTENSIVE**  
**(Ages 14–17)**

August 18 – August 28

**(Mon–Fri Week 1; Mon–Thu Week 2)**  
**2:30 – 4:30 p.m. (Includes open studio**  
**access from 2:00 – 6:00 p.m.)**

**GHP Chelsea Studio (80 Eighth Avenue)**  
**No prior experience required.**

Located at Greenwich House Pottery's Chelsea Studio, this two-week intensive (Ages 14–17) is a deep dive into the world of ceramics. Whether they are total beginners or looking to refine their craft, students will

master wheel throwing, handbuilding, and glazing in a professional studio environment. It's more than an art class, it's a space for mindfulness, creative risk-taking, and building confidence before the new school year begins. This is also a great way for students to build their arts portfolio.

## Greenwich House Music School

**UNCHARTED '26: THE STORYTELLERS**  
**Wednesday, May 6 @ 8:00 p.m.**

Tickets: \$20

**46 Barrow Street**  
**[greenwichhouse.org/event/uncharted-erika-ji-miriam-elhajli](https://greenwichhouse.org/event/uncharted-erika-ji-miriam-elhajli)**

Join us for the grand finale of the Uncharted series featuring Erika Ji and Miriam Elhajli. Erika Ji debuts four; interwoven, a genre-blurring quartet that merges folk, theater, and choral song to explore the power of choosing love. Then, song-improviser Miriam Elhajli takes the stage with pianist Victor Campbell and special guests for a soulful exploration of Cuban and South American musical lineages. Both world premieres are the culmination of months of development during the Elebash Artist

Residency.

Don't miss this final night of the series, a powerful celebration of the voices, rhythms, and stories that define the modern New York immigrant experience.

**SUMMER ADVENTURES 2026 (AGES 3–5)**  
**July 6 – July 30, Mon–Thu**

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Give your little ones a summer of wonder in the Greenwich House Music School's private backyard garden! Led by teaching artists Leslie and Brenna, Summer Adventures is an outdoor-first program where toddlers explore art, music, and movement through a gentle, child-led approach. From building animal homes to water play under the sun, every day is designed to nurture curiosity and creative expression in a safe, inclusive environment. Weather permitting, all activities take place outdoors.

*The Experience:* Small class sizes (max 12), daily music and storytelling, and weekly photo/video recaps for parents.

*Special Offer:* \$500/week (Save \$100 when you register for the full 4-week season!)  
Note: All children must be potty-trained.  
Nut-free snacks provided.

# 8 Questions Sellers Should Ask Brokers..... Before they Hire One!

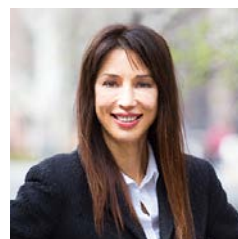
COMPASS

The difference between a successful sale and a stressful one starts with selecting an agent you can trust.



Price and commission are important considerations. But, is that all?

1. What is your marketing strategy? What steps will you take so I receive the maximum market exposure, hence the maximum price?
2. What is your valuation and pricing strategy for my property? How will you help me price my property so I get the top dollar for it and do not leave money on the table? But in the same time we do not scare most of the buyers away.
3. How will you protect me from the risks of sale not closing with buyers with mortgage contingency in the sales contract?
4. How will you protect me from losing all buyers in the multiple bids situation?
5. Is now the best time to place my property on the market? Why? If not, when is it and why?
6. Please explain in detail the difference in the range and quality of services I should expect from you and your firm? And how is that different if I hire a discount broker?
7. Why do you think you are the best person for this assignment?
8. Is there anything else I should be asking you?



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Compass is a licensed real estate broker, licensed to do business as Compass RE in Delaware, Idaho, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Tennessee, Compass Realty Group in Kansas and Missouri, Compass Carolinas, LLC in South Carolina, and Compass Real Estate in New Hampshire, Maine, Vermont, Washington, DC., Idaho and Wyoming and abides by Equal Housing Opportunity laws.