

WE HAVE A NEW ASSEMBLY MEMBER

David Siffert Wins By 15 Votes!

BY ARTHUR SCHWARTZ



LEFT TO RIGHT: Lindsey Boylan, Yuh-Line Niou, Arthur Schwartz, David Siffert and Brad Lander. Photo courtesy of Arthur Schwartz.

After 35 years of Deborah Glick holding the Assembly District seat which covers Greenwich Village (west of First Avenue), Noho, Soho, Hudson Square and Tribeca, we have a new nominee in the State Assembly — David Siffert. (Note: Siffert has to win in the November election to be formally crowned. Right now their only opponent is pro-developer candidate Ryder Kessler, who came in third in the Democratic Primary).

I have to admit a deeply personal connection with David. In 2023 I was lead counsel in a lawsuit to keep Beth Israel Hospital from closing. Its parent, Mt. Sinai Hospital,

was represented by Paul Weiss, a top notch white shoe super-firm, now allied with Donald Trump. Sometimes Paul Weiss would come to court with eight lawyers. I always had one co-counsel at my side — David Siffert — who worked tirelessly to keep us on track and to take on the dozens of filings Paul Weiss dropped. Together we kept the hospital open for 13 extra months. Only when Governor Hochul blessed the closure did we lose. Siffert, who self describes as gender non-binary, kept going even when they had their first child.

I never thought Siffert could win. I tried

to talk them out of it. I thought that they and Jeanine Kiely (the top expert in the Beth Israel litigation and a marvelous community leader) would split the vote and let Ryder Kessler slip in. But Siffert insisted — working, it seemed like 20 hours a day — knocking on doors with volunteers, making phone calls, and they did it.

It is interesting that our community, considered one of the most left-leaning in the U.S.A., elected three progressives to office — Siffert, Brad Lander (Congress), and Grace Lee (NY State Senate), and none had the

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DAVID SIFFERT ON THE ISSUES

Here's an excerpt from a recent article by Rebecca C. Lewis of *City & State* that provides insight into David Siffert's take on the issues facing New York.

"Attorney David Siffert is set to make history next year as the first out nonbinary member of the state Legislature. But their race, and plans for Albany, go beyond

just their trailblazing identity. After finally winning following a lengthy post-election process of counting mail-in ballots, affidavits and curing ballots, Siffert is now set to head to Albany to represent the district including historic gay bar the Stonewall Inn as the first nonbinary state legislator. The title means a lot to Siffert, as well as keeping the seat's representa-

tion within the LGBTQ+ community. But they also bring a long track record of advocacy and experience in drafting legislation at the state level."

Read the full article at cityandstatenyc.com/personality/2026/07/david-siffert-talks-nonbinary-identity-and-bill-drafting/414883

Kindness Is Everywhere. Accessibility Isn't.

BY KEEN BERGER

As the ferry approached Bay Shore, dozens of passengers stood and crowded around the exit, wanting to be off the boat so they could be on their way to the city. I stayed in my seat, near the door. Since breaking my pelvis in April, I stand as little as possible. I planned to disembark when the rush was over.

Instead the ticket collector, who opens the door when the ferry is docked, turned to me and asked, "Do you want to be first?" I replied, "Yes, thank you," scrambling up as she guided me and my rollator. All the other passengers moved aside.

I had ordered a book from the independent bookstore, PT Knitwear, on Orchard Street. I walked there only to find out that it was closed. Walking with my rollator is good exercise for me; standing is not. I spied a clerk sitting inside the empty store and in my frustration, I banged on the glass door. She shook her head. I looked sad. Then she

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KEEN BERGER, above. Photo by Lincoln Anderson.

The Village Trip
is Back!

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Phil Hartman's
Lost East Village

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August Events

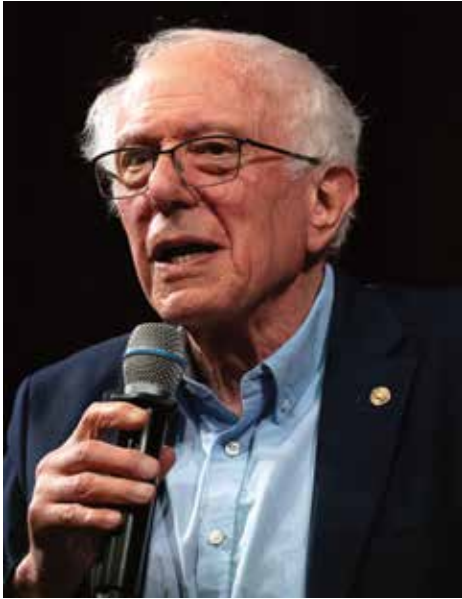
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Democratic Party Leaders – Time to Wake Up

BY ARTHUR SCHWARTZ



BERNIE SANDERS. Photo credit: Anderseides-vik via Wikimedia Commons CC BY-SA 4.0.

I cut my teeth in politics in the 1960s. That's when the Democratic Party, led by President Lyndon Johnson was, to my young cohorts, the epitome of evil. Even after passing the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act, he sent hundreds of thousands of young men to Vietnam and a war which made no sense to many. In 1968 people began to rally around the anti-Johnson figure from Minnesota, Senator Eugene McCarthy who almost won the New Hampshire primary. Johnson withdrew and in rode Bobby Kennedy, whose speeches sounded much like Bernie Sanders of today. He took on the oligarchic structure of politics, called for an end to the war, and expanded health care and a higher minimum wage.

Then Kennedy was gunned down and leaders of the Democratic Party, who he was railing against, embraced Johnson's VP, Hubert Humphrey. Much like Kamala

Harris, he had no answer for inflation, was uncritical of the war, and had no answer to the riots happening in Black communities. At the Democratic Convention, thousands of protestors were beaten by police as tear gas drifted onto the convention floor. The party leaders had their man, and he was crushed by someone even more awful than Donald Trump — a washed up political hack named Richard Nixon.

But the New Left — the post-McCarthy red scare radicals of the day — didn't give up. Following the violent 1968 convention, the party created the McGovern-Fraser Commission to reform delegate selection. The new rules banned secret boss-controlled selections, mandated primaries or state conventions with elected delegates and mandated that delegations include fair proportions of women, youth, and racial minorities. This effectively dismantled the old-guard

party machinery that previously handpicked nominees. McGovern ran a disciplined campaign built on the new primary rules. His team mobilized thousands of young, anti-Vietnam War activists to dominate local caucuses and state convention processes, even in non-primary states. They outmaneuvered the party bosses and treated the nomination as a bottom-up grassroots war. McGovern was nominated and he was the first presidential candidate I got to vote for. But he was crushed.

Why? First because he ran a one-issue campaign. Nixon had tamed inflation with price controls. He made a big issue of crime and the continuing riots, he gave labor the Occupational Safety and Health Act, and started winding down the war. But perhaps most importantly, the Democratic leadership decided to make an example of Mc-

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My View of the Village

BY ROGER PARADISO

THE AMMA POP UP SHOP: Supporting Global Humanitarian Aid at Integral Yoga

Sosie Hublitz, executive director of Integral Yoga Institute in New York, and I talked about an important event taking place this month at their location on West 13th Street. IYINY is proud to host a very special Mom and Pop-up shop supporting Ammas' Global humanitarian initiatives through their Embracing the World charity.

You can discover a thoughtfully curated collection featuring artisan jewelry, wellness and body care products, books, hand-crafted treasures from around the world, vintage deities, exquisite chocolates and many other unique gifts. One hundred percent of proceeds support Amma's Global Charitable Network, helping provide food, shelter, healthcare, education, disaster relief and other essential service to people in need around the world. For more information, please call 212-929-0585 or visit iyiny.org.

NYPD RELEASES IMAGE OF GREENWICH VILLAGE RAPE SUSPECT As reported by CBS New York, July 8, 2026

The NYPD has released new pictures of a suspect wanted in a sexual assault in Lower Manhattan. Police said the man pulled a knife on a 21-year-old woman before raping her near West 10th Street and Fifth Avenue in Greenwich Village on June 27. The suspect later fled. The victim was transported to a local area hospital in stable condition.

Anyone with any information is asked to call the NYPD's Crime Stoppers hotline at 1-800-577-TIPS (8477), or for Spanish, 1-888-57-PISTA (74782). You can also submit a tip via their website or via DM on Twitter, @NYPDTips. All calls are kept confidential.



POLICE SAY THIS MAN pulled a knife on a 21-year-old woman before raping her on June 27 in Greenwich Village. NYPD.

The *Village View* thanks the police for handling this with care and we extend our love to the victim.

NYU'S 2026 COMMENCEMENT AT YANKEE STADIUM. As reported by MEHR KOTVAL for Washington Square News.

Washington Square News printed an opinion piece on suppressing free speech during a recent graduation. Here are some excerpts. The shift to prerecorded remarks is part of NYU's larger strategy of limiting political expression from students, and it demands pushback before it becomes permanent.

The end of the NYU experience for the class of 2026 felt more like a controlled exit than a graduation celebration. As higher education faces escalating attacks from the federal administration — norms of academic freedoms erode, students are politically targeted for deportation and schools with diversity initiatives face threats of funding

losses — NYU's priorities lie not in responding to controversy, but in sanitizing speech and minimizing dissent at its largest and most public event...

Commencement is the only time the university is fully gathered in one space. It is supposed to be a celebration of students and what makes their class special — not a curated performance, carefully stylized to reflect the university's preferred image of the graduating class. By getting affinity graduations more or less restored, students have shown that voicing their disapproval loudly can force the university's hand. It was only when students started a campaign to fight the cancellation of affinity graduation, which threatened the brewing of another PR nightmare, that NYU reinstated them — albeit using a new name to save face. This is the first year of prerecorded graduation

speeches, and every year this custom continues, it will become more normalized and harder to reverse...

Students must demand the restoration of live student speeches before prerecorded ones become a precedent.Vocalize your support and dissent loudly in your cheers. Or, as students did the last two years in protest of President Linda Mills' leadership, simply walk out — during the prerecorded speeches.... This is one of the only moments the university is watching, fully attentive to its public image and therefore most responsive to collective student pressure. Our visibility creates a rare point of leverage, so it is important to make that attention count.

Read the entire article online. Opinion: Defend student speech at graduation before it disappears - Washington Square News.



NYU'S 2026 COMMENCEMENT AT YANKEE STADIUM. Photo by Jason Alpert-Wisnia for WSN.

Music School Building on the Chopping Block?!

BY MELINDA HOLM

It was stunning to learn that the Greenwich House Music School building on Barrow Street is up for sale. Founded in 1905 by Mary Kingsbury Simkhovitch, the school offers classes in a variety of instruments including piano, guitar and violin; classes in voice and composition; as well as rehearsal and performance space and grants to emerging musical artists. It has provided the community a venue for holiday parties, readings, block association meetings, weddings, memorials and children's summer camps. It has enriched the local soundscape with music. In short, it has played a vital place in community life for 121 years.

New York's not-for-profit law, N-PCL, was put in place to protect assets from mismanagement or insider dealing and to ensure proceeds are reinvested in the nonprofit's mission, requires the New York State Attorney General's approval for the sale and a detailed explanation of how the sale will benefit the organization.

Various reasons are cited for the sale:

- millions in upgrades
- expand facilities and improve functionality
- create a music school of the future that is fully accessible and custom built with modern classrooms, practice rooms, and a concert space.

Over 20 alternate locations have been explored and have not worked out. During the June 17 town hall Zoom meeting about the Music School, management seemed to be confident that a New York City building — or a building foreclosure — can become available. Management also believes that more government money is available to gut and rebuild rather than renovate an existing building. It is unclear if any effort has been made to raise money to renovate the existing building. It is equally unclear what the quoted \$20 million in renovations would cover and whether there were competing bids. However, a call to the Department of Buildings (DOB) on July 1 revealed that nothing is currently required of the Music School.

Installing an elevator and a new heating and cooling system are part of the quote. However, there is ample classroom and program space on the ground floor of the double brownstone for those who have difficulty climbing stairs. Moreover, a recent memorial for the beloved director of 25 years, BC Vermeersch, brought an overflow crowd to the second floor concert room on June 30, a very hot day. The air conditioning worked just fine.

Walking to that memorial was heartbreaking as it felt like a last hurrah for our beloved Music School in that amazing space. Once it's gone, it cannot be replaced. It's a tragedy that a local nonprofit is run by people who do not live in the neighborhood and don't have a clue about how important such cultural institutions are to the life of a community. It's also a tragedy that a new leadership team and board can come in and willy-nilly sell an irreplaceable asset.



THE GREENWICH HOUSE MUSIC SCHOOL BUILDING on Barrow Street (above) is up for sale. The music school has played a vital role in community life for 121 years. (inset) The grounds of the music school in April, covered in a blanket of Cherry Blossom petals. Photos courtesy of Melinda Holm.



Why would a nonprofit sell an asset that will never be able to be replaced? Is it because Greenwich House has lost momentum for fundraising and needs money? And why was the community not given the courtesy to comment?

Questions to Greenwich House and the board.

I sent the questions below to Greenwich House and its board for this article on July 1. Unfortunately, there has been no response prior to publication, despite a repeated request on July 15. In all fairness, there have been recent leadership changes in both Greenwich House and the Music School. The executive director of Greenwich House left in April and the director of the Music School left the week of June 30. Both positions re-

main open.

When a neighborhood resource as important as the Music School is put on the chopping block, the community deserves to know these answers.

1. What was the process that led to the decision to sell the Music School double brownstone at 46 Barrow St.?
2. Of the \$20 million contractor bid, how much of that is for necessary repairs to preserve the building's integrity? How much is for added amenities such as a new heat and cooling system, elevator, etc.?
3. What does the Department of Buildings actually require be done? (As it turns out, nothing per my telephone call to the DOB on July 1.)
4. What community input, if any, was there

in the decision to sell the building?

5. Who made the decision?
6. Please share some elements of the vision of a music school of the future.
7. It was expressed at the town hall Zoom on June 17 that more government monies are available to build a new school from the ground up versus renovating an old building. Was that the deciding point?
8. People employed by Greenwich House for fundraising and the board would usually have fundraising as the main focus of their job description, objectives, and activities. Has any fundraising been attempted to renovate the existing music school at 46 Barrow St.?

Melinda Holm is a longtime resident of Barrow Street.

Architecture and Planning as a Reflection of Character

The New Obama Presidential Center

BY ERIC UHLFELDER

The Central Park Conservancy has just given permission to Donald Trump to build his future presidential library across the southeast corner of Central Park.

Imagine ever reading such words?

In Chicago, they don't have to imagine. The 19.3-acre Obama Presidential Center, which opened in June, was built within the 552-acre historic Jackson Park along Lake Michigan in the south side of Chicago.

Most will see this development as honoring the country's first Black president, whose intelligence, grace, and gifted oration earned him two terms. He steered the country out of the Great Recession, created the Affordable Care Act, made the U.S. part of the Paris climate agreement, coordinated the Iran peace deal, killed Osama bin Laden, and showed Americans — and the world — what is possible through quiet diligence and diplomacy.

The center, a digital repository of the president's papers, honors our country's history alongside Obama's life and work. The project also includes a community center and public library, the reclamation of a six-lane road — about four acres — into newly landscaped paths and parkland that extend seamlessly over the center's smaller structures, and the planting of 900 new native, climate resilient saplings. And the center is entirely powered by renewable energy.

But was this an ideal way to honor the 44th president's legacy?

Building in a Historic Urban Park?

After considering sites at two universities in Chicago, at Columbia University, and at the University of Hawaii, the selection of Jackson Park was a compelling nexus. The president and his wife grew up in adjacent neighborhoods, where Obama was a community organizer and then became the district's state senator.

But the site was controversial. Jackson Park was designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux in 1871 — the same folks who gave us Central Park and Prospect Park — and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Opponents argued the city's decision to give away parkland was illegal. Herb Caplan, founder and president of Protect Our Parks, explained that "there is actually a statute in the Park District code that says public parks property cannot be distributed to a private party for private use without providing substitute property of equal or greater value that will be used for outdoor public park purposes. The city of Chicago bypassed that statute altogether."

One hundred faculty members of the adjacent University of Chicago wrote in opposition to the center's development in Jackson Park. Professor W.J.T. Mitchell, who co-authored the letter, said, "Olmsted had a very consistent vision, which was that the democratic urban park should not have monu-



MUSEUM TOWER. Credit: The Obama Foundation.



CLEAR CUTTING JACKSON PARK. Source: South Side Weekly.

ments to great men."

The legal fight reached the region's federal circuit court that oddly ruled Caplan's group didn't have standing to litigate the case. Caplan then petitioned the U.S. Supreme Court. But Associate Justice Amy Coney Barrett, without explanation, blocked the case from being heard by the full court.

The city approved the 19-acre plan, receiving near unanimous support of the city council and endorsement by Mayor Rahm Emanuel, who was President Obama's first chief of staff. The center paid \$10 for a 99-year lease and is exempt from future property taxes.

Why Was So Much Parkland Needed?

The design competition initially called for 115,000 square feet with another 42,000 square feet for parking. The final plan morphed into 450,000-square-foot master plan, driven by the Obamas' desire for far more than a presidential library — a multi-purpose community complex open to all.

Unusual components of the building program include an NBA-regulation size basketball court set within a 60,000-square-foot community center, a display of Michelle Obama's dresses, a 291-seat auditorium, a

full-scale replication of the Oval Office, and a 437-car parking garage.

The lead project designer, New York-based Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects, won the competition, in part due to their broad vision of an integrated campus plan that accommodated the president's increasingly ambitious vision.

With plenty of vacant and underutilized land in the surrounding neighborhood that the center could've revitalized, it's not clear why that option wasn't pursued. Clearly, a free and highly visible historic park setting was preferred.

Williams and Tsien explained they were repeatedly prompted to imagine a grander and more iconic project. They felt starting with this goal inverted the design process that's normally informed from the inside out.

Williams and Tsien also sought "to honor the land." But the development destroyed nearly 800 trees — many were healthy old growth trees that survived decades of Chicago wind and winters with nearly five-foot-wide trunks.

The official environmental assessment determined that this large urban development project would have "no significant impact."

Extensive destruction of the park's green canopy, reduced carbon capture, and higher levels of heat generation were not considered material concerns, even with escalating climate change and ever-increasing wildfire smoke perennially blanketing the region.

The National Park Service, which authored the assessment, argued that "these impacts would be minimal in scale compared to the size of the 552-acre Jackson Park Historic Landscape District." This argument feels very much like New York City's decision, made 20 years ago, that permitted the Yankees to tear down two adjacent mature Bronx parks and 1,000 trees to build a new stadium.

A sign the center could've made do with less land: Virtually every space, including the entire Presidential Suite on the penultimate tower floor and the rooftop lounge, is available for weddings, corporate receptions, professional networking events, and cocktail parties.

A Tower in the Park?

The center is comprised of many well-crafted architectural and spatial features. But the Museum Tower is by far the most discernable element from near and afar — an urban menhir. The architects original thinking was for a "quiet" organic design that complemented the setting, that "grew from the earth rather than stood on it."

But the Obamas pushed for a beacon, inspiring a lantern-like shape. It soars 225 feet, equivalent to a 20-story building, five times the height of the western glass façade of the Metropolitan Museum of Art facing Central Park. Each side has a distinct profile. From an elevated perspective (see photo), the center is an elegant multi-faceted sculpture. But from ground level, it overwhelms the park and adjacent neighborhoods.

In a strange way, the tower echoes the ungainliness of the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial in Washington; in both instances, designs that don't accurately reflect two remarkable personas. The major difference: President Obama actively shaped the center.

There's a cognitive dissonance going on here: A complex celebrating an honorable leader who improved America and her environment built upon the destruction of nearly 20 acres of historic parkland that had been serving his former lower-income constituents who first elected him to government. At a cost of \$850 million, the country's most expensive presidential center visually feels more like a backwards looking monument to Obama rather than a forward expression of hope on which his campaigns and presidency had been founded.

Perhaps the center is a search for permanence, a response to the shredding of so much of President Obama's work by the current occupant of The White House.

Both are unfortunate legacies.

Revolutionary Voices that Shaped The Village — and the World

BY LIZ THOMSON

Planning a festival to take place in America's big birthday year was always going to be a bit of a challenge. July 4 will be long passed by the time The Village Trip (TVT) kicks off on September 25 and, of course, many people had mixed feelings about celebrating at all this year. I'm British and remember well the excitement around USA200, an excitement which carried across the Atlantic. USA250 was rather different, and when Cliff Pearson and I and our colleagues began planning for the eighth Village Trip, we took the "arts and activism" part of our title very seriously indeed. TVT2026 would celebrate the revolution that brought about the independence, honoring some of the many figures whose courage, creativity and intellectual heft helped shaped life in the United States since 1776 — and lives far beyond America's shores.



WOODY GUTHRIE: *Songs to Grow On*. All photos courtesy of Liz Thomson/The Village Trip.

likewise. Each Trip we've worked on has featured a thematic element (Jack Kerouac 100, civil rights), but The Village Trip 2026 is the most thematic overall.

Under the banner of "Revolutionary Voices," TVT2026 will shine a spotlight on many whose names we know but whose stories have faded over time — Dorothy Day's for example. A close friend of Eugene O'Neill (they drank in the Golden Swan), she inspired the figure of Josie in *A Moon for the Misbegot-*

Ellsberg who, as a 19-year-old Harvard drop-out, lived in the Lower Manhattan Catholic Worker House — having helped his father copy *The Pentagon Papers*.

- The premiere of Woody Guthrie's *Songs to Grow On*, a 40 minute interactive kids' show created and presented by the New York City Children's Theater (Saturday 9/26).

A plethora of music.

We're honored to welcome back **James C. Martin** with *Let Freedom Sing: Paul Robeson — His Words, His Music* (Sunday 9/27), a tribute created especially for the festival which also includes a premiere by David Amram and others setting words by Langston Hughes, Robeson's friend and fellow activist.

America Sings a Siren's Song (Thursday 10/1) features new works by composers each examining the immigrant experience, including Nehemiah Luckett's *Let It Be Told to the Future World: Reckoning with the American Experiment at 250*, commissioned by ASCAP for TVT2026.

Artist Emeritus David Amram honors old friends in their centennial year with *Miles and Train at 100* (Thursday 10/1).

Classical Cool: Ich Bin Ein New Yorker (Sunday 10/4), hosted by Nina Bernstein Simmons, celebrates the independent spirit of NYC.

We close with a 40-year, all-star celebration of **The Greenwich Village Folk Festival** (Sunday 10/4), featuring Suzanne Vega, Noel Paul Stookey, John McCutcheon, Rod MacDonald, and many others.

Framing the Village

The festival's annual art show runs throughout September — its theme — "Independent Thinkers!" And our free concert takes place this year on Gansevoort Plaza (10/3) and features The Slambovian Circus of Dreams.



JAMES C. MARTIN (right) performs a tribute to Paul Robeson.



And many of their voices rang out from the Village, among them Thomas Paine, who lived on Bleecker Street and Grove Street, the site of today's Marie's Crisis Café, named for one of Paine's many pamphlets. It was he who wrote, "These are the times that try men's souls." Indeed they do, perhaps more than most. Yet what this neighborhood — Greenwich Village, the East Village — teaches us is that, however trying the times, brave souls always fight back. Those lucky enough to live in the Village walk daily in the footsteps of many of them. Clara Lemlich, who battled for union rights. Elisabeth Irwin, a gay woman who led the fight for progressive education and established the Little Red Schoolhouse. Emma Lazarus, poet and activist whose immortal words adorn the Statue of Liberty. Eugene O'Neill, who revolutionized the American stage. Dorothy Day, one of the Silent Sentinels, a journalist and radical pacifist who founded the Catholic Worker Movement. Woody Guthrie, Dust Bowl balladeer and champion of the dispossessed. And Paul Robeson, a true renaissance figure who used his great voice to speak out against injustice whatever the personal cost.

They and so many others fought the good fight in the saloons and salons of the Village. The lines of so many revolutions — social, political, artistic — can be traced through its crooked streets, crossing metaphorically in Washington Square Park where, for genera-



SUZANNE VEGA: A welcome return.

tions, people have gathered both to protest and celebrate. It was music that drew me to Greenwich Village and the first of many visits came in 1995, when I reported on Joan Baez's live recording sessions at the Bottom Line. It didn't take me long to discover that the Village was about much more than music and when I realized there was no festival to celebrate its rich history, The Village Trip was born. It was thrilling to meet Pearson, a West Villager who came aboard in 2021 and works with me as joint artistic director, and to discover that our visions coincided. We bring to our shared endeavor our own knowledge and passions, and we've been fortunate to join hands with others who do



NOEL PAUL STOOKEY: Village folkie.



DOROTHY DAY speaking at a protest.



NEHEMIAH LUCKETT: a Village Trip premiere.

ten. Arrested more than once in the park, she was held at the Women's House of Detention. Day also knew Woody Guthrie — he and The Almanac Singers often played at protests organized by the Catholic Worker Movement.

Three unmissable events.

- Cecilia Rubino's Eugene O'Neill guided tour (Sunday 9/27).
- The Village Trip Lecture: Dorothy Day (Tuesday 9/29), delivered by Robert

There's 35+ events and music to suit every taste, as well as more walks and talks, poetry, and exciting kids' programming.

Booking is already open at www.TheVillageTrip.com and the full program will be available with September's *Village View*. Spread the word, sign up to the newsletter, mark your calendars — and remember Paul Robeson's words, "Artists are the gatekeepers of truth. We are civilization's radical voice."

The Village View

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Brian Pape, Joy Pape,
Anthony Paradiso, Roger Paradiso

CONTRIBUTORS

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OPINION

America's Spartacus

BY TOM LAMIA

In July I wrote of Graham Platner's candidacy for Maine's U.S. Senate seat. Maine has been my home state since I retired from the practice of law ten years ago and took up full time residence in a farmhouse in South Bristol that had been a family summer retreat since 1980. This part of Maine has been home to several generations of my wife Susan's family. Spending summers in Maine gave our six children time to integrate with their grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins and for us all

to absorb the unique culture and traditions of Maine.

Our children are now well along in their career paths elsewhere but all have deep-seated, positive feelings for Maine. The Platner story was happening at my doorstep but I first learned of it from my children, who were seeing its national dimensions on both coasts — in New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego, and in small towns in Vermont and North Carolina. The story deserved telling in the West Village and so it was done last month under the banner *Maine's Spartacus*.

In the weeks since, the story has blown up in the faces of its participants. I make no effort here to find truth or fault in Platner's downfall other than to note that at the time of his withdrawal he was leading Senator Susan Collins, a five term incumbent, in post-primary polling.

My allusion to "Spartacus" to describe Platner astride the Maine political stage was apt as shorthand for several of his personal qualities. He is a battler, a risk-taker, an undisguised champion of the working class. None of these qualities caused his downfall. That was due to his behavior with women. He denies the stories that most sharply undercut his credibility, but the forces of public scrutiny and a short time window for making his case led to his withdrawal. His request to be included in the process for choosing a replacement was rejected by Democratic Party leadership.

The party leadership may see themselves as moral saviors. I don't. The party was justly concerned about the limited time available for replacing its candidate, but shaming Platner and his supporters was a mistake. Platner is an essential piece for a winning Democratic coalition. Sending him to the woodshed assumes the story he denies is true. Why do that? His followers are still with him and they are needed for a Democratic win against Collins. There is a moral issue here, but it is not unambiguous. There is no need for the Democrats to throw the first stone.

In marshaling his working class voters, Platner did not go through the national Democratic Party, the senate leadership or the Washington legislative leadership. That was not his choice, it was theirs. These power sources control the money, the endorsements and the press that every Democrat needs to win. Platner was identified by Democrat talent scouts for his working class attributes and military backstory, but



AN AMERICAN SPARTACUS IS NEEDED TODAY to save the republic. A yard sign in South Bristol, Maine. Photo by Tom Lamia.

abandoned by campaign professionals as untested and risky. He made the party nervous. They recruited Governor Mills, they wavered as his social networking, death's head tattoo, dating history, PTSD and strong opinions set nerves on edge. Of course they did, because they wanted to win and didn't think Platner, a neophyte in politics could do it. In all probability this history has left both Platner and the national Democratic establishment by the roadside of a failed effort in Maine.

It does not have to be a further disaster. The Spartacus parable applies here. Servile Republicans and discouraged Democrats are both currently unpopular. They are both passengers on slowly sinking ships and yearn to regain lost relevance. The Platner campaign and the Spartacus model is their path for a winning message. Again, the exemplar is Maine. Angus King, a former Republican governor, is now an Independent senator caucusing with the Democrats. Susan Collins, longtime Republican senator, is now facing serial party banishment for not following the MAGA line on abortion, Supreme Court nominations and ICE brutality. She could free herself from the party that has left her in its wake. There are thousands of Republican office holders who would join a Spartacus army of freed ideological slaves.

There is a rising demand among Democrats for putting taxpayer money to work for taxpayers and the Constitution to work for the people. As the November elections approach, the public needs to see candidates in person, on the air, in public, face to face with voters, answering questions, showing personality, being human. That is what Platner did all over Maine and it brought him more votes than ever before cast for a candidate in a Maine primary election.

As a candidate Platner was raw, fresh off his battles with the demons of warfare. He was also flawed, not prepared for the negative forces at work on tearing the cover off his past. But the issues he addressed remain and they are real, not only in Maine, but across the nation.

The historical Spartacus led a slave revolt in first century pre-Christian Rome. Spartacus, an enslaved gladiator, escaped from Roman captivity by using kitchen tools as weapons, recruited other slaves to form a formidable force that defeated Roman legions and gained control over large parts of Italy. Spartacus is a model for leadership, improvisation and fortitude as levers to gain power.

The political majority in America is not Republican or Democrat. The majority lies within a mass of unhappy Americans. Spartacus inspired and led a few that became many. An American Spartacus is needed today to save the republic.

Any comments? Email Tom Lamia at triamia15@gmail.com.

LETTERS

**Capitalism and Compassion
Are Not Opposites**

The New York City debate over capitalism and socialism has become clouded by rhetoric that ignores both history and economics. History repeatedly demonstrates that societies become wealthier when they embrace free markets rather than socialist economic policies. By way of example, Poland's remarkable economic transformation after the fall of communism stands in stark contrast to the economic devastation experienced by Venezuela after decades of Chavez-imposed socialist policies.

There is a false choice between capitalism and social safety nets being promoted and sold in New York City!

Acknowledging capitalism's success does not mean ignoring the needs of those who struggle. In fact, the strongest social safety nets in the world exist not because of socialism, but because of successful capitalist economies. Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Switzerland all rely on vibrant private sectors, strong property rights, entrepreneurship, and wealth creation to generate the tax revenue that finances generous public benefits.

Capitalism doesn't prevent social compas-

sion — it makes it financially possible.

That distinction is being lost in New York City's political debate. Zohran Mamdani presents expanded social programs as though they require hostility toward wealth and suspicion of those who create businesses, invest capital, and generate jobs. In my view, that conflates two very different ideas. One can strongly support helping the poor, expanding opportunity, and maintaining a robust social safety net without embracing socialist economic policies or portraying wealth itself as a social problem.

New Yorkers should reject this false

choice. We do not need to choose between caring for vulnerable people and encouraging economic success. A thriving capitalist economy is what produces the resources that make effective social programs sustainable. Vilifying wealth may be politically popular, but it risks weakening the very economic engine that funds the services we all depend upon.

The goal should not be socialism with promises of prosperity. It should be capitalism that creates prosperity with nobody left behind.

—Adam Lipson

MAGA and Liberals Agree to Tax the Rich

BY ALEC PRUCHNICKI

Sometimes a political consensus is wrong. Pundits throughout the political media decry the absolute division in American society where the political left and right are unable to find common ground. This is wrong. There is one area which the most MAGA of Republicans and the most leftist of the Democrats (or Democratic Socialists of America, DSA) can agree. Rich individuals and corporations should pay higher taxes.

Democrats, of all stripes, have advocated this position for generations, but Republicans, especially Ronald Reagan, have fallen in love with tax cuts for wealthy individuals and large corporations. Whether the economy is in recession or prosperous, deficit or surplus, war or peace, the solution is always to give more tax cuts to these favored groups. From the end of WWII to the 1970s, most increases in national wealth went to the general population and created the U.S. middle class, while increasing the overall prosperity of the nation. But starting with the massive tax cuts for rich individuals and corporations under Ronald Reagan, almost every Republican president and Congress have pushed for continued cuts.

As for the deficits these cuts produced, they were addressed in the most partisan fashion. Deficits under Democratic presidents and Congress were vehemently attacked by Republicans whereas Republican produced deficits were mostly ignored. The exception to this rule was the small tax increases under George H. Bush disproving his "read my lips, no new taxes" pledge, and he paid dearly for this when Republican vot-

ers kicked him out to elect Bill Clinton. And when Clinton actually balanced the budget for several years, he was still attacked by Republicans.

How has this changed? Many MAGA Republicans are working class, struggling to get by, who see the rich get richer every year. Usually this isn't enough for them to stop voting Republican, but it's enough to get them mad and blame Democrats. According to a quick internet search, about 40-60% of die hard MAGA Republicans want taxes increased on wealthy individuals and corporations. This usually isn't enough to get them to change their voting patterns, at least so far, but it does indicate a potential common ground with liberal Democrats of all types.

The Democratic base, according to the internet, favors increasing such taxes by about 80-90%. Since Democrats also take campaign contributions from many wealthy individuals this has led to the incorrect false equivalence that both parties are equally in the pocket of the rich. But many wealthy Democratic donors actually advocate for increased taxes on themselves for a variety of moral and economic reasons, which is something you never see with Republican donors. Although both parties are pro-business and pro-capitalism, they are not equivalent in the tax policies they actually try and establish. Even European countries with Democratic Socialist governments over the years, have tolerated mixed economies with government run social services on a democratic basis coexisting with a profit-making private sector.

But can the far right MAGA supporters join the far, or even moderately, left Democrats to enact such tax reforms? There is historical precedent for this. At the end of the 1800s the Populist movement in the U.S. included two contradictory policies. With the end of Reconstruction, numerous Southern states started to instill Jim Crow segregation laws with the permission of the Supreme Court's Plessy v. Ferguson decision that allowed for "separate but equal" public policies. But at the same time, many of these same states ratified the 16th Amendment which allowed for income taxes that had been banned by a previous Supreme Court decision. Somehow some of the most racist policies in U.S. history coexisted with a democratization of tax policies in the very same states. Further policies expanded social justice with the passage of the 19th Amendment for universal suffrage. I don't know how it actually happened during the course of political debates, but contradictory political behavior was possible. And this was during the Gilded Age when wealthy individuals appeared as politically powerful as they do currently.

Where does that leave us right now? Elected Republicans have managed to feed the working-class part of the MAGA base enough tribal cultural issues (immigration, trans rights, anti-woke issues, etc.) to keep them in the fold while enacting even more tax cuts for individuals and corporations. And they are also good at giving small benefits to lower income individuals with minor tax cuts, new birthright investment funds,

and promises of better times ahead to give the appearance that everyone benefits from Republican policies. Since these crumbs handed out to the working class are often paid for with major cuts to government services, like Medicare and Medicaid, the final result is worsening conditions for the majority of Americans of all political persuasions. Using these tricks, the Republican party believes it is in a position to never raise substantial upper income taxes.

One way to overcome this situation is to find areas of the tax codes to which even mainline Republicans can agree. Rep. Dan Goldman has proposed changing tax law that allows wealthy individuals to use assets to take out loans, not available to the general public, on favorable terms and avoiding a variety of taxes. Although he believed he might get a few Republicans, for whatever reason, to eventually agree to this, it didn't help him in the recent primary election which he lost. There are probably many loopholes in tax laws that can be legitimately stigmatized and might infuriate MAGA voters. As for raising the upper-level taxes that individuals or corporations passed, that is firmly rejected by the Republicans and reversal of the tax cuts of presidents Trump, George W. Bush, and Reagan is unlikely to happen.

Of course, if the economy gets worse for working class MAGAs and they start putting pressure on their elected officials greater than the pressure coming from wealthy individuals and corporations this might change. Somehow it happened with the 16th Amendment. Let's hope history repeats.

Accessibility *continued from page 1*

disappeared and returned with another employee who opened the door, got my book and rebooted the system so I could pay. I said, "Tell your mother you are a good man!"

I have many other examples; they have made me brave. Today at the post office, I walked up the stairs (my physical therapist taught me how) and then I asked the next arrival to carry up my rollator. He did, smiling, saying, "Of course."

July was Disability Month. The Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities estimates that almost one million New Yorkers have a disability. If you are one of them, my experiences might not surprise you. But as a newly disabled person, I am taken aback at the care and thoughtfulness of strangers. If the current political horrors tempt you to despair, you need to know that this city is filled with helpful people.

I have another lesson: our government needs to do more. I have become keenly

aware of inaccessible subways, of uneven curb cuts that lead to puddles, of narrow sidewalks, and of Trump's attack on mail-in voting. My local post office, on East Broadway, has no ramp.

I have always been in favor of accessibility (and I was proud to be endorsed by 504 Dems when I ran for school board) but personal experience adds punch. I now appreciate why we need elected leaders who themselves were born in another country, who are trans, who grew up in public hous-

ing, who are Muslim, or young men. I am needed too — a U.S. born, heterosexual, homeowner, Baptist, old woman. Diversity is our strength.

I do not wish broken bones or any other disability on anyone. But ideology is strengthened by personal experience. Reading about mine might help you understand why democracy needs us all.

Keen Berger is the former Democratic District Leader of Assembly District 66A.

New History of 1920s NYC Offers Rollercoaster Ride Through Era with Eerie Echoes to Today

BY PHYLLIS ECKHAUS

I've been waiting for this book.

Ever since Donald Trump retook office and began weaponizing the federal government to wage war on immigrants, his perceived enemies, and everyone demonized by his loony narrow narrative of white male hetero supremacy, I've been eagerly awaiting an account of the creepy parallels between early 20th century America and today.

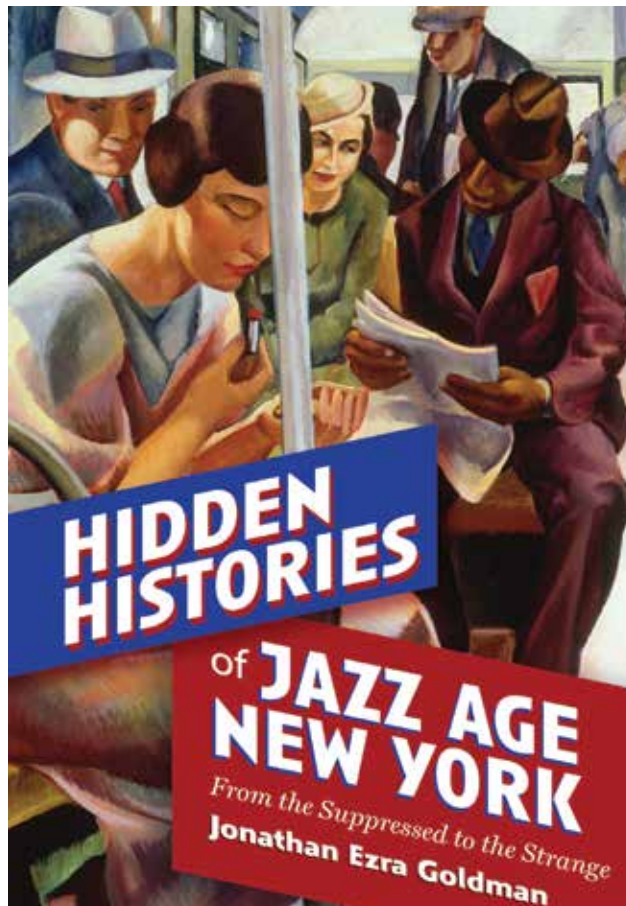
Jonathan Ezra Goldman's *Hidden Histories of Jazz Age New York: From the Suppressed to the Strange* exuberantly does the job. His rollercoaster ride through New York City cultural history, focusing especially on the years 1920 through 1925, highlights how "then" often looks like a fun-house mirror reflection of "now."

Deporting dissenters, persecuting minorities

Take the notorious Palmer raids, the massive dragnet to arrest and deport foreign-born radicals, first launched in 1919 by then-Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer and his newly-promoted protege J. Edgar Hoover. By December 1919, they'd netted famed Village anarchist Emma Goldman and her lover Alexander Berkman — and shipped them and 247 others off to the then-Soviet Union, on a ship the press christened "the Soviet Ark."

And that was just the beginning. On January 2, 1920, "the Palmer raids resumed with the single greatest day of political attacks in U.S. history (so far.)" Night raids took place across 35 cities and, in that single sweep, about 700 New Yorkers and 4,000 people across the country were arrested. Of the New Yorkers, 600 had no proof of citizenship and were detained for deportation on Ellis Island in conditions so squalid at least six would fall sick and die before their deportation hearings.

It was a time of targeted oppression. The Palmer raids spurred the founding of the American Civil Liberties Union, which held its first official meeting in January 1920. That same January, five Socialist Party members from New York City — duly elected to the state assembly — were voted out by fellow assembly members before they could be seated. A few months later, the head of the Society for the Suppression of Vice persuaded the police to launch aggressive raids on boarding houses popular with gay men. In Manhattan in 1920 more than 750 men were convicted of "homosexual solicitation" — an astronomical, eight-fold jump from four years earlier.



HIDDEN HISTORIES OF JAZZ AGE NEW YORK book cover art. Image courtesy of Jonathan Ezra Goldman.

New York City's Palmer raids were aided and abetted by the New York State Legislature's Lusk Committee, which in 1919 collaborated with U.S. Army Military Intelligence to publish color-coded maps of "racial colonies" engaged in "seditious activities" in Brooklyn, Manhattan, and parts of the Bronx. "Russian, Polish, and Other Jews" were coded red for Communist. A total of ten ethnic groupings each got their own color, and were presented as geographically distinct. Goldman spritely observes that "the idea of mapping New York City by its threatening cosmopolitanism" had such mass appeal that the government maps were commercially reproduced and sold to the public.

A love letter to NYC

Linking the tumultuous past to the turbulent present is just one virtue of *Hidden Histories*, which is a fun read, opinionated but not preachy, and packed with startling facts. Using the Lusk maps as a jumping off point, Goldman segues into an exploration of the city's historic diversity — and it's clear what he's really penning is a love letter to New York, embracing its variety, energy, oddness, and intermittent tolerance.

Over the course of 23 engaging and wide-ranging chapters, he makes the unseen visible, using yesterday's newspapers and today's scholarship to sketch out less well known New York contingents — including queer New Yorkers, anti-Zionist Jews, Arab literati, and Black librarians. His affection for quirky factoids extends to the city's nearly forgotten islands and denizens. Who knew (not me!) that the East River's North Brother Island was for 23 years the quarantine home of Mary Mallon ("Typhoid Mary") who died there in 1938?

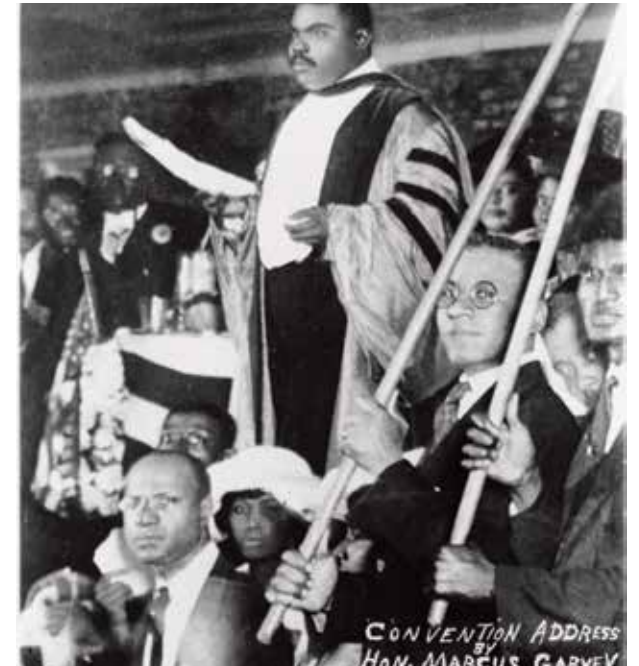
Along the way, Goldman makes extended forays to explore bizarrely educational episodes, like Black nationalist Marcus Garvey's opportunistic alliance with the Ku Klux Klan and sports great Babe Ruth's alleged Black blood and impact on baseball and celebrity.

The book's superpower is the velocity of its prose. This is a paperback you can take to the beach and entertain or annoy your companions with your discoveries. My only quibbles reflect the current dismal state of publishing. First, I wish *Hidden Histories* were better edited. I'd be speeding along the narrative highway and every 30 pages or so, I'd screech to a halt over an ill-chosen word or suspect fact (for example, contrary to Goldman, the Cable Act of 1922 did not trigger loss of citizenship for American women who married foreigners — instead the Act partially corrected that outrage, which dated to a 1907 federal statute and the 1915 Supreme Court decision that upheld it). Second, the numerous black-and-white illustrations are grievously muddied in reproduction. One has to find them online to recover their impact and aesthetic appeal, and to appreciate them as well-chosen.

Fortunately, Goldman has a website, <https://www.ny1920.com>, that offers a compilation of errata and is replete with great public domain images. It's a valuable addendum to his book, a volume that fans of New York City history will relish and cherish.



ANARCHISTS AND RADICALS rounded up and awaiting deportation as a result of New York City's notorious Palmer Raids in 1919. Photo via Wikimedia Commons.



MARCUS GARVEY at Liberty Hall, Harlem, 1920. Photo credit: United States Library of Congress via Wikimedia Commons.

Former Bayview Correctional Facility Transformation

BY BRIAN J PAPE, AIA

Construction is officially underway to transform the former Bayview Correctional Facility at 550 West 20th Street into the Chelsea Beacon, a new mixed use building. COOKFOX Architects' design includes housing, an interior courtyard and a 9,300-square-foot community facility with youth-oriented programming.

According to NY Sen. Erik Bottcher, the project will create up to 131 permanently affordable rental homes, including at least 79 supportive housing units, a 15-bed transitional residence and space for youth recreation, education, and other community services.

The ca. 1931 building was built in the Art Deco style with ornamental flourishes undimmed by time. Strong gestures of vertical brick pilasters topped by glazed art figures follow the rhythms of arched openings at the lower levels. The sun reflects brightly off the golden glazes. A nautical theme pervades all the decorative elements.

The COOKFOX website states that Chelsea Beacon will transform an Art Deco building into much-needed housing in Manhattan's Chelsea neighborhood through adaptive reuse and a multi-story expansion. The design recovers the site's history as a place of refuge and brings healthy, high-performance homes to New York's most vulnerable neighbors.

Chelsea Beacon will preserve and restore the building's historic street-facing façades and structure while entirely reimagining its interiors into a mix of studio, one-and two-bedroom apartments. The new extension (showing seven floors in current renderings) will be set back from the existing façade, creating a contextually resonant overbuild above the current structure. A planted terrace on the ninth floor will function as an accessible outdoor space for the residents. The



THE CHELSEA BEACON WILL TRANSFORM THIS ART DECO BUILDING, center left looking south from West 20th Street, into much-needed housing and other community services. It joins a row of new buildings by star architects. To the south we see the adjacent Jean Nouvel's condo, then Frank Gehry's headquarters for Diller's IAC, and BIG Architects' One Highline's twisted mixed use towers. *Credit: COOKFOX Architects.*

design will restore and repurpose a chapel on the second floor as a residential library, as well as relocate a series of nautical mosaic murals from the former indoor swimming pool to be featured in the new residential lobby.

Chelsea Beacon is developed by Camber Property Group and Osborne Association in partnership with Empire State Development. Osborne will operate the supportive housing while Urban Pathways will operate the short-term transition-

al residence program.

Originally designed by Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon, the same architecture firm behind the Empire State Building, the structure first opened in 1931 as the Seaman's House YMCA and served as a dorm-style residence for sailors and merchant mariners who were in New York on shore leave. It later functioned as a drug rehabilitation center and site of incarceration in the 1970s. During these years, New York State converted the building into a women's prison called the Bayview Correctional Facility.

Elsewhere in the Village, also in the 1970s, the infamous Women's House of Detention was vacated and demolished, nearly taking the Jefferson Market Courthouse with it, but for community preservationists' efforts. So it seems the House of D functions were transferred to the Bayview.

The nine-story structure has sat vacant following floodwater damage to the boilers and electrical systems from Hurricane Sandy in October 2012. Since then, only minor maintenance has been done by the state, with sidewalk scaffolding covering the lower levels. Meanwhile, many high-end buildings have been completed nearby, and construction has topped out on 550 West 21st Street, a 23-story, 250-foot-tall residential building, which will span up to 172,000 square feet and yield 83 condominiums.

Chelsea Beacon was formerly called Liberty Landing, which followed several other failed attempts to redevelop this facility. This site is directly across from Chelsea Piers Recreation Center and just two blocks from shops, buses and services on 23rd Street.

550 West 21st Street Condo Under Construction

BY BRIAN J PAPE, AIA

Construction is topped out on 550 West 21st Street, a 23-story residential building, designed by Thomas Juul Hansen and developed by Legion Investment Group and AVRS Partners LP, according to the YIMBY website.

Crews are currently framing out the fenestration with metal studs and insulation boards on the entire reinforced concrete superstructure, making a very colorful temporary presentation. Façade and window installations feature a light beige brick façade surrounding floor-to-ceiling windows, loggias, and setbacks topped with terraces. Especially intriguing are the vertical sawtooth setbacks breaking up the façade along West Street, which is offset from the Manhattan grid. The 250-foot-tall structure will contain 172,000 square feet of floor area for 83

condominium units on a nearly 0.5-acre site.

The project was initially started by Casco Development, which acquired the site for \$50 million in 2014 and planned to construct a nearly 200,000-square-foot building with 34 condominium units and 43,510 square feet of commercial space. The project fell into bankruptcy last summer with a debt of \$527 million after only an extensive foundation and basement walls were in place.

Legion took over the development last year with the help of a \$56 million loan from Deutsche Bank and a \$155 million construction loan from Eldridge Real Estate Credit. The developer is aiming to add another 11,000 square feet to the scope in exchange for a \$7.8 million donation to the West Chelsea Affordable Housing Fund.



WITH FLOOR-TO-CEILING WINDOWS, loggias, and setbacks topped with terraces, the purple insulation boards present a colorful façade in this view looking south. Norman Foster's architecture office designed the condo tower (left) several years ago across 21st Street, *Photo: Michael Young for YIMBY.*



THIS AERIAL RENDERING focuses on the upper level setbacks and terraces of the yellow brick façade, looking west to the Hudson River beyond the Chelsea Piers on the left. *Rendering: Visualisation One.*

The area is rich with art galleries and high-end residential projects, complete or planned. The nearest subways are the C and E trains at the 23rd Street station on Eighth Avenue and there is bus service on 23rd Street. 550 West 21st Street is slated for completion in mid-2027 and sales are expected to launch later this year. Corcoran Sunshine Marketing Group is contracted to sell and market the units.

To Know New York, Read *The News*

BY ALEC PRUCHNICKI

When I returned to New York from Los Angeles in 1990, I returned to reading *The New York Times* from *The Los Angeles Times*. But when I was a kid, I grew up in a working-class family in the Bronx and we read *The Daily News*. To get a working-class view of life in New York I felt I should also resume reading *The Daily News*.

During the 60s *The Daily News* was a very conservative paper and that reputation has followed them for years. But now it has more moderate or outright liberal positions at times. It is virulently anti-Trump with numerous editorials and political cartoons by Bill Bramhall. He portrays Democrats as unfocused and insufficiently aggressive, Republicans as Trump lackeys, and Trump himself in scathing terms on virtually any topic. Many of his cartoons are around the internet so you can judge for yourself.

The editorial policies are occasionally conservative, but mostly moderate. Over the years they have taken positions on more affordable housing (including at the Elizabeth Street Garden), protection for migrant farm workers, horse carriage workers, and opposition to almost anything Trump proposes. They frequently use the two op-ed spaces in the editorial section to present both views of the same issues. There have been op-ed editorials on both support and opposition to policies of the Israeli government. One weakness of the editorial page is that it sometimes has outside writers producing the editorial. As much as I am addicted to *The New York Times*, its editorials are sometimes so careful to appear balanced that you don't even know what position the paper takes after you read them. *Daily News* editorials are usually more clearly opinionated.

The most unique aspect of the paper, compared to *The Times*, is the letters to the editor section which is called *Voice of the People*. *The Times* letters are usually predictable and sometimes boring, and more an indication of what the U.S. liberal establishment (or the U.S. ruling class to use Socialist nomenclature) believes than presenting anything unique. *Daily News* letters are



FRONT PAGE OF THE DAILY NEWS. Image credit: By New York Daily News - <https://www.nydailynews.com/news/hy-new-york-daily-news-front-pages-2021-jan-20210103/zitnhetgongbdpaql3csltfvuq-photogallery.html>, Fair use, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?curid=69839198>

highly opinionated and much more diverse. The most right wing of MAGA followers to the most left wing of liberals all appear and often express their opinions in clear, direct, and unambiguous language. Sometimes the writers will attack other *Voice of the People* letters and a back and forth can occur at a level of intensity that I have never seen in *The Times*. Some writers take on a reputation of their own, like dedicated MAGA follower Bob Pascarella. Sometimes they write little poems to express their opinions, a format I've never seen in *The Times*. I've had letters published there also, and have been criticized by other writers.

Amazingly, sometimes the letters have better news content than actual news articles written in *The Times*. Many of their articles that explain the start of conflict between the U.S. and Iran go back to the overthrow of the Shah and the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979. Within the first week of the start of the war two letters appeared in *Voice of the People* which correctly pointed



FRONT PAGE OF THE NEW YORK TIMES. Image credit: By The New York Times - *The New York Times*, Fair use, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?curid=75809706>

out that the real start of the conflict began in 1953 when the U.S. and Britain organized an insurrection which overthrew Prime Minister Mossadegh. He was initially appointed by the Iranian parliament and eventually accused of being a strong-man type of leader. The Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, then became the strong-man leader and brutally led the country using the Savak secret police to suppress and torture opponents. The brutality was one of the main reasons he was overthrown in 1979. The *Voice of the People* letter writers remembered this but *The Times* writers, or at least the ones I read, either forgot or avoided this history.

A somewhat poignant letter, written by a woman named Karen, complained that her name was often used as an insult to portray entitled, white, middle-aged women. There was no real comparable term for an entitled man, although I remember some unsuccessful attempt to use "Ken" as a male equivalent.

All the letters are not so serious. There are the usual complaints about athletic teams and which managers and players should be replaced, complaints about the crossword

puzzle, and even the size of the type used to print the paper. Apparently, I'm not the only 78-year-old reader of the paper.

One other service it provides to readers are ads for affordable housing being built all over New York City, though seldom in Manhattan south of 110th Street. Several of these ads appear every week and they describe the location of the housing, number of apartments of various sizes, number of residents allowed in each apartment, the income levels for each unit, along with the monthly rent. I have never seen one of these ads in *The Times*, and if readers only get *The Times* they would believe that no affordable housing is being built anywhere in the city, including the four outer boroughs.

But the paper is still a tabloid, written with an 8th or 9th grade reading level in mind, compared to an 11th or 12 grade level for *The Times* (according to the internet). It believes in the "if it bleeds it leads" theory of journalism with sensational crime stories for the first few pages. Unlike *The New York Post*, it does not blame every crime on some Democratic politician. It also often has heart wrenching follow-up stories on crime victims. There are more crime stories in one issue of *The Daily News* than you have in a month of *Times* issues. But this is what working class people sometimes see in their daily lives and this is why you get a more complete picture of what goes into forming public opinion in New York City.

Sometimes the headlines shape the news. The "Ford to City: Drop Dead" headline of 1975 is sometimes held responsible for Gerald Ford's loss of New York in the 1976 presidential election. My favorite headline was a description of the neighborhood in Staten Island where Eric Garner was killed where "loosie" individual cigarettes were sold illegally. "Loosie Lawless" described the area, a play on the name Lucy Lawless, aka Xena Warrior Princess.

I'll still read *The New York Times* and *The Daily News* every day to get a complete view of the city. I'll write an occasional letter to *Voice of the People*. And, I'll read its comics.

THE HONOR OF CO-NAMED STREETS

Fred Bass Way

People have been honored here in New York with co-naming of streets or places for them. Look for the special green signs below the regular street signs and check out nycstreets.info/honorstreet

In June 2026, almost a year and a half after *Village View* published an article honoring Fred Bass, a *Fred Bass Way* sign had finally been added to this location, the corner of Broadway and 12th Street in a formal unveiling.



FRED BASS (1928-2018) began working at the Strand Bookstore when he was 13 years-old. Credit: Wikipedia.



THE NORTHEAST CORNER of Broadway and East 12th Street has been co-named Fred Bass Way. Credit: Brian J Pape, AIA.

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Siffert *continued from page 1*

label “DSA.” They all taught a lesson to the Democratic Party (which I discuss elsewhere in this issue). It’s the issues that matter, not the label. None “ran to the center.” All support Medicare for All and the NY Health Act. All are critical of corporate and billionaire-mogul money in elections. All want limits on AI, greater government efforts to make housing affordable, the fight against climate change, and less expensive and more accessible public transportation.

Siffert, who is 42 years old, was born and raised in Manhattan, went to high school in the Bronx, and graduated from the University of Chicago in 2006 and NYU Law School in 2009. In law school Siffert was a research assistant for Prof. Burt Neuborne, one of the top constitutional lawyers in the U.S. After that, they worked for a year at Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher, then two years as a clerk for U.S. District Judge Barbara Jones, then one year as a clerk at the NY Court of Appeals, followed by three years at Boies, Schiller & Flexner.

In 2016, Siffert became director of research and projects at the Center on Civil Justice, NYU School of Law, an initiative that advocates for more efficient procedures in local and federal courts and broader access to legal services for all Americans.

In 2022, Siffert became litigation director at NYU’s Surveillance Technology Oversight Project, and started as an ad-

junct professor of clinical law at NYU Law School. They also began teaching a course which pairs law students with state legislators who teach them how to write bills and introduce legislation. Siffert said the students have collectively worked on more than 80 bills. Last year, Siffert founded the law school’s State Government Initiative, which hosts panel discussions on topics like developing AI policies and becoming an elected official.

During the first Trump administration, Siffert helped incarcerated mothers and children in a Texas detention center gain entry into the United States. Now, they routinely visit the West Village to help business owners prepare for potential encounters with immigration officers. Siffert is also part of an advocacy group called New York for All, which drafted a bill that would designate New York as a sanctuary state.

In 2025, Siffert helped pass the Responsible AI Safety and Education Act, establishing transparency and safety regulations for the state’s leading AI developers.

They also previously worked as a legal director for a nonprofit that aims to combat excessive government surveillance and served as president of the Village Independent Democrats from 2019 to 2020.

In 2026, Siffert left to run for Assembly. The rest is now history.

Siffert is married, lives on East 10th Street, and has a two-year-old child.

SCENE FROM THE STREET

TEXT AND PHOTO BY BRIAN J PAPE, AIA

The July 4th Holiday Came in With a Bang



STARTING NEAR THE CHRISTOPHER STREET PIER, just south of Pier 45, a large oak tree was torn out from the roots by the force of the wind, falling partially into the bike lanes. With roots exposed, one can observe the presence of numerous shallow peripheral roots, but also the absence of large tap roots to hold it in the soil.

On Friday, July 3 at 8 p.m., I watched from my window as a windy mist turned suddenly into a ten minute raging thunderstorm with heavy rain falling sideways from the west.

Due to the holiday events, many areas of the Hudson River Park (HRP) were barricaded or restricted. I didn’t expect to see so many planted areas, and even some bikeway paths, cordoned off with yellow caution tape

when I was able to observe the devastation.

The next day, Russell of the HRP told me he spent more than eight hours in the smothering heat Saturday with a chainsaw clearing as much as possible of the dangerous tree limbs damaged in the storm. These photos give a hint of the destruction, but only a personal visit could do it justice.



FURTHER UPRIVER, NEAR PIER 49 AND BANK STREET (LEFT), one of the largest pine trees in the park was toppled by the wind, again exposing the lack of tap root to hold it in the soil. Although the tree was not lost, a rather large lower limb was broken by the wind storm, also damaging the park benches nearby. This photo serves as an example of dozens of trees and planted areas that were partially damaged by the storm, strewn branches over large areas.

ANOTHER LARGE DECIDUOUS TREE (BELOW) near West 12th Street was downed when the trunk was snapped off near its base, a very unusual sight unless the trunk had been compromised by wood rot or cutting; some rot was observed. By falling onto grassy lawns, damage was reduced. All photos by Brian J. Pape, AIA.



CHARACTERS OF THE VILLAGE

Vincent Inconiglios: Orchestrating Artistic Life In the Meatpacking District

BY BRIAN AND JOY PAPE

This month's "Character" is a voice for what made the Meatpacking District so special in so many ways. Village View sat down with Vincent Inconiglios at his Gansevoort Street loft studio that he shares with his wife Donna Raftery and their 4-year-old dog KlineWell (after Franz Kline and Robert Motherwell). We also had the chance to view his vast collection of artwork and artifacts from several series.

Where did you grow up and how did you get into art as a career?

I was born in Brooklyn and raised on Long Island. In my teens I worked for the neighborhood butcher shop and learned all about different cuts of meat. My grandfather, who I didn't get to know, was a barber who took care of Buffalo Bill's long hair. He taught my father how to cut hair and my father cut Caesar Romero's hair...and mine. My father could draw, too. When I was 5 years old I received my first art award for drawing. As a teen, I would draw in the late evening and I sent drawings into the *Saturday Review*. I saved copies of the checks I got for them.

I got a scholarship to Miami University of Ohio and after graduation worked with Richard Anuszkiewicz at the first Blossom Kent Program of music and art. Following that, I was artist-in-residence at the Dayton (Ohio) Art Institute where I lived in the penthouse. In Dayton, there was a wonderful project called The Living Arts Program with art, music, dance, and creative writing with visiting artists. I participated with a diverse group of wonderfully talented children. The arts were federally funded by grants and awards then, unlike now.

When I came to New York in 1969, I looked for a studio space for \$50 a month or, better yet, 2,000 square feet for \$200 a month. I found that in the Meatpacking District and it has been a symphony with multiple movements ever since. It was a 24-hours-a-day experience — it was emotional — creating connections at different times of the day.

During the day there were men in bloody white coats tending to the meat hanging everywhere and Al Pacino filming *Serpico* on the corner in 1973. Then we'd party all night, often crossing paths with the transvestite hookers as well as gay, straight, topless and bottomless folks. The bars on Washington Street were open 24 hours. In 1984, Florent opened on Gansevoort Street and the after-hours "breakfast" meeting became fashionable.

As an artist, I did assorted things in the early years. "Everything for Everybody" was this little storefront on Little West 12th Street. You would join for \$5 and you could be a doer, or you could get things done. In



VINCENT INCONIGLIOS AND KLINEWELL relax in their studio surrounded by books and artwork in his collection. Credit: BreakThrough Media.

the early '70s, before I decided to use what I knew in the commercial side, I'd do odd jobs moving people and painting apartments. Then came special creative projects like a movie history mural for Jerry Lewis. In the '80s I was publisher of *American Fabrics and Fashion* magazine and then I consulted for multiple major companies including Philips Electronics and Estée Lauder. It was just a couple of us doing work for some very large projects, including a major book on Hollywood and Broadway, but this is how you survive in the city and in the arts... sharing your talents.

The Meatpacking District was an inspiration for my art work on many different levels — whether I was doing abstract pieces or doing faces or cut-out masks based on people I'd seen in the street or things I would find in the street. I collect everything to learn and discover. The medium of collage is something that has been dominant for me since the '60s and the Meatpacking District is like a big collage, especially in the earlier days. When I walk the streets, some of the torn

signs, the little details on the poles, or even the graffiti...look very much like paintings or collages to me.

Other artists have worked in my building over the years. One day in the '70s one of them slipped a note under my door which read, "I have forced myself to contradict myself in order to avoid conforming to my own taste," by Marcel Duchamp. I framed it for inspiration and instruction.

Back then, I'd go under the railway and under the elevated West Side Highway to the Gansevoort Peninsula, which was the garbage dump where I would park my old Volvo. I remember when fires burned the piers down and it felt like the Far West Village was on fire — a wild experience bringing big change for sure.

It's one of those things with the evolution of the city, where all we have left is some vestige or shadow — but there's something that still identifies it as being a little different than other parts of the city. I walk the dog to Starbucks where he gets a pup cup... he loves going there. But my favorite thing is not go-

ing into places, it's walking the streets.

NPR had asked me a question about what's changed in the Meatpacking District over all these years. It was simple to answer: "No meat. The meat made it special."

Tell us about your favorite accomplishment.

Opening my studio in the '70s as part of "10 Downtown" events, having kids come to my studio to work on collages using tape, a staple gun, picture magazines, and other things. I've got notes from kids who have grown up, telling me, "I love the stapler — how Vince and I would learn to love art." Recently I did some more educational work with children and the stapler enables them to spontaneously discover how putting things together that don't normally go together can lead to an art experience.

I think of the T.S. Elliott quote:

*"We shall not cease from exploration, and
The end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time."*



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Signs

BY GENA GERBIER

My parents loved visiting us in The Village. They saw its evolution first hand as honorary residents since 1998 when I first moved here. My dad loved the small community feel of the low-rise building and the tree-lined cobblestone streets. I'm grateful to have memories of him here too.

Last October, my dad died at the age of 91. I was fortunate to be with him for the last six days of his life. When someone is deeply loved, their passing is never welcomed, but when every sign points toward the inevitable, acceptance becomes the only way to remain grateful for the time shared together.

Although he was in his nineties, those who knew my dad were surprised to learn of his passing. He lived his life with so much energy and joy that it was easy to think that he would simply keep going. He was a man of few words, but big on action. A reliable friend you could count on and the funny sibling who could always lighten the mood.

Up until an unexpected illness in August, he remained incredibly active, defying stereotypes around nonagenarians. He drove fast and steady. He led line-dancing flaw-

lessly, maintained a steady exercise routine which included tai chi, weight-lifting and cycling, a sport he took up in his seventies.

Last September, he completed a 5K walk and this month would have marked his 10th legacy ride for the Great Cycle Challenge to raise funds for juvenile cancer research. His favorite hobby was playing the ukulele which he started in his late seventies and continued to perform with a group through a Jamaican Chinese social club. Needless to say he was far from average.

My mom and brothers had been by his side since his admission to the hospital. However, by the time I arrived, he had lost the ability to speak and communication was limited to a quick nod or subtle shake of his head in response to questions. His eyes soon remained closed but we knew he was listening.

One day we played music from one of his performances that had been posted on YouTube. Remarkably, his hands moved as though he was strumming the strings of his beloved ukulele. At times, he found the strength to raise an arm to gently conduct the rhythm. The following day, a close

friend and fellow member of the group arrived with a guitar and sang some of his favorite songs. His body had weakened and his movement was more restrained but beneath the sheets we could see his feet quietly keeping time.

On his last day, the steady stream of visits continued. Two friends shared that they had each dreamt about him the night before. In one dream, a friend found him lying in a hospital bed and asked, "Gladstone, what you doing in hospital?!" Without missing a beat, he responded true to his sense of humor, "It's not me!"

In another dream, he was racing down a hospital corridor wearing only his gown. When the friend asked him to wait, he responded frantically, "I can't wait!" and continued running further and further away.

More stories, more laughter, and more tears shared as we reminisced about the man who never sought attention but attracted so much love. All the while, the steady rhythm of his breathing remained loud in the background. His body was shutting down, and he was drifting away while we waited.

Five days later, at my parents' home, a ladder my father had left leaning against a wall, despite my mother's repeated requests to position it on the floor, suddenly fell with a loud thump. She was nowhere near it. She knew he had finally acquiesced.

At that very moment, I was downstairs in his office. My father was never one for minimalism; he was a collector. He kept everything. Notes, drawings, calendars filled with daily entries, family photographs, greeting cards and tools. I stood staring at it all. Behind me, his treasured ukuleles hung on the wall and a guitar stood upright on the floor. Everything was just as he had left it. I didn't want to disturb any of it. How does one clean up 91 years of being?

Suddenly, in the silence that surrounded me, I heard the warm twang from a single string. One note. Out of nowhere. I'm no musician, but I've had a guitar since I was 12 and can identify a G note. "G" was one of his nicknames and one of mine as well. My first thought, after "What was that?!" was simply, "Daddy, is that you?" and I smiled because I knew it was.

Democrats *continued from page 2*

Govern who had alienated the party elite. With that, he lost access to traditional party support, a powerful donor network and the party-aligned labor movement. It also didn't help that McGovern was running against a completely unscrupulous and well-seasoned opponent.

The Democratic elite took back the party, and except for the Obama 2008 campaign — after which the party leaders taught Obama a lesson, with the Blue Dog Caucus in Congress reigning him in — national politics has been dominated by the “Third Way” approach adopted by Bill and Hillary Clinton. This blended traditional liberal social goals with conservative fiscal and economic ideas. Big money didn't just throw its dollars at the Republicans, they also supported the Third Way Democratic leaders — they were not a threat to the “one percent” controlling the economic life of the United States.

In 2016 Bernie Sanders almost threw them off track. At a nationwide press briefing in Washington he explained what he meant by being a “democratic socialist.” This included national health care (Medicare for All), universal pre-K, free university education, reigning in the fossil fuel industry, raising the minimum wage and making it easier for workers to unionize. Like today's “socialists,” in or out of DSA, he did not call for state ownership of the means of production, the abolition of private property, or the creation of a one party state. Sanders won 42% of the primary vote and was probably cheated out of the nomination. And what did we get? Trump.

Why do I talk about history? Because we — meaning the Democratic Party (and I am the Democratic Party district leader

Socialism? Capitalism? Who Cares!

Excerpt from an essay by E.J. Dionne Jr. in the July 26 New York Times,

It's hardly surprising that Republicans, including President Trump, have seized upon the victory of democratic socialists in a few high-profile primaries to cast their partisan adversaries as a bunch of reds. But Democrats have no business allowing themselves to be baited into a debate that is both useless and misleading. ...Cold War-style, “the reds are coming” politics won't do it...The triumph of Zohran Mamdani in New York City's mayoral election last year and recent primary victories by D.S.A.-backed congressional candidates in New York, [Arizona, DC] and Colorado unleashed a wave of elation on the Democratic left and cries of alarm among some of the party's moderates. [Congressman Tom] Suozzi [of Nassau County] organized a statement signed by 10 Democratic House members asserting, “We are capitalist, not socialist.”

for Greenwich Village, and a member of a party executive committee) — seem to be going around in circles. On July 23, E.J. Dionne Jr. wrote in the *New York Times*: “Do Democrats want to win this year's midterm elections? Or would they prefer to indulge in self-involved arguments over the relative merits of capitalism and socialism that are irrelevant to the choices they'll face if they win power?”

And you should hear James Carville, the top political advisor to the Clintons, and former Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, who wants to ride a “centrist wave” to the presidency. These folks, who continue to receive lots of corporate money, aren't listening to people who vote. Trump's approval rating is around 32%. The Democratic Party's approval rating hovers at the same number. In this setting — high inflation and an endless war — Democrats should be looking to pick up 40 seats in the House this November. But polls show a net gain of 3-8 seats.

The American voters don't think Democrats have answers. Just saying “Trump is bad” isn't enough.

Look at the energy these Social Democratic candidates have brought to the table — excitement, large scale door-to-door mobilization, and lots of votes. What do they say that people like? Progressive taxation, a single-payer health care system, universal childcare and housing, enhanced worker rights, climate action, a higher minimum wage, enforceable civil rights and voting rights, expansion and enforcement of anti-monopoly laws. Look at the “horrible” issues Zohran ran on: a rent freeze, public groceries (food justice), universal childcare, free buses, and construction of 200,000 new units of permanently affordable, union-built, rent-stabilized homes over the next 10 years. Hardly sounds like “communism” to me. And people loved it. And despite being attacked in the media, he retains a 59% approval rating.

It's not enough to keep repeating the word “affordability.” It's not enough to say “Trump's horrible.” (It irks me that roughly 450,000 New Yorkers lost their health coverage under New York's Essential Plan on July 1 due to federal cuts. Neither Gov. Hochul nor the Democratic State Legislature did one thing to plug this hole.)

The villains around the country are not the same as in New York. In some places it's broken right-to-repair laws, bad landlords or electric monopolies. In other places it's specific billionaires or corporations, excessive heat or fires, or housing foreclosures.

I think that within Democratic establishment there is a belief that we are in a “populist moment” and that if we can just get through this moment and control Congress, the Republican Party will collapse. This frustrates me intensely because I don't think there is any electoral indication that this is true. I think there is going to be a populist future in this country. It is a question of who's going to control it — and if it is not the Democratic Party — then it is only going to get worse. And so we need to start looking at what has been working, and learn from it, before there's no one left.

I will end with a quote from columnist Jamelle Bouie. In the July 26 *New York Times* he wrote about the same “red scare” that Trump and Democratic Party leaders are drumming up. “Both Trump and his movement are, as you might surmise from the slogan “Make America Great Again,” fundamentally derivative. His vision of the future rests on a rotten nostalgia, and his plans for getting there were drawn from the wreckage of a shameful past.”

The Democratic Party cannot live in the past. It ain't pretty.

How Did it Come to This?

BY SIGGY RAIBLE

I awoke late one sunny Sunday morning in mid-July and decided to visit the two bazars which appear magically every weekend around two churches in the Village — St. Vincent on Houston Street and Our Lady of Pompeii on Bleecker Street. I bought a friendship bracelet at the Bleecker Street fair and was on my way home when I came across a body stretched out on the street on the corner of Bleecker and Avenue of the Americas (Villagers call it Sixth Avenue).

Well, I stopped in front of the pop-up store where the man seemingly lay “out-for-the-count” on the sidewalk. Bleecker Street is heavily trafficked with cars, trucks, and all matter of transportation and, of course, people. And, on a Sunday, foot traffic is over the moon. Everyone walked by what appeared to be a lifeless body dressed in dirty black clothes. I called 911 and got an operator who asked what kind of services I needed — police, ambulance and one other option I cannot recall. I told her the circumstances and was directed to an EMS service technician. The gentleman asked me the same questions: what

was the emergency, was the man breathing and did he need assistance? I said I didn't know and that he was lying on the street in midafternoon and to me that indicated that he needed help of some sort. Then the technician asked me if I was willing to see if the man was breathing and I said no but that he had just moved, so he must be alive. I was told to call back in five minutes if things changed. I couldn't believe it.

So in a few minutes I called 911 again, got another operator who put me through to EMS again. This time I got a lady who asked me if I was the person who called with my cell phone number. I said yes. She then proceeded to go through the same routine and in a very aggressive manner told me not to hang up since she was required to go through these questions. (Mind you, all I wanted to do was to get this man some attention.) Well, what does anyone do when told not to do x, y or z? Well you can guess what I did.

I then waited 10 to 15 minutes when an FDNY ambulance truck came along. Four fire rescue workers hopped out and came

over to the man lying on the street. Just as they asked him if he was okay, a woman fell on the street and went down. The men ran over to the woman and gave her assistance. After five minutes the three EMS assistants walked back to the truck. The fourth worker came over to the body still on the ground. When they again asked the gentleman if he was okay, he got up groggily and faded into the afternoon crowd.

I guess no one would think this was a big deal, but I thought about the incident for some time. I was upset with the first EMS person who told me to call back if it looked like things were getting worse. Well hello?! I thought things were bad enough since a young man was lying on the street in the midafternoon not moving. To me things were not looking good for him. And I was upset that the woman EMS operator was treating me as if I did something wrong by calling back. Is this any way to address a possible life/death dilemma?

I also thought about the different reactions of the two individuals serviced by the EMS reps. The Black gentleman didn't ac-

cept their help and looked like he wanted to escape (from what I am not sure) while the white woman probably thought how wonderful EMS arrived so fast.

Initially I was taken aback by the fact that so many people in broad daylight could walk past what appeared to be a lifeless body — without a thought. I recalled how not too long ago black garbage bags would pile up on the streets and people would walk by them just like they did the young Black man lying on the street.

Then I thought about how the EMS tech on the phone wanted me to see if the man was breathing. I felt like I was talking to one of those techs who you call up on the phone for help when something breaks down. I don't know about you, but my Verizon tech wants me to do all the work while he/she tells me what to do. I once told the tech I should share in his salary.

Anyway, I asked myself what have we come to? Where has our humanity gone? Do we value life so little that we can blithely walk past a human being lying on the sidewalk?

THE PINT-SIZED PALATE: A KID'S TAKE ON NYC FOOD

Holy Môle

BY CHURCHILL STONE

MOLE

57 Jane St. (entrance on Hudson St.)

You have probably walked by this place a thousand times. On the corner of Hudson at Jane, it's hard to miss. There is a large front patio with people eating nachos, or guacamole, and drinking bright-colored cocktails. I never knew what Môle was, but today I would finally find out!

Since it was a Tuesday at 7 p.m., I thought it wouldn't be too busy. Besides, my mother had a reservation. But when we arrived, there were so many people eating outside that we had to sit inside. Fortunately, the staff was nice and let us sit at the table even though our entire party wasn't there yet.

Inside is small. The floor, seats, and tables are dark wood. The lighting is fairly dim, but the place is vibrant with Mexican paintings and decorations. There are mirrors all around the restaurant and cool patterned lamps hanging as well. The wall facing us was bright orange — it really lit up the whole restaurant.

The kitchen was visible from where we sat, framed by colorful printed tiles. Some big French restaurants have a mountain of butter in the kitchen, but Môle had a gigantic pile of fresh cilantro. I watched the chefs putting out food for the servers — different-sized platters of delicious-looking meals served to people all around us. It definitely made me hungry.

The Môle menu is very long, which makes it hard to choose. I didn't get to finish reading it before we had to order. All of the drinks looked colorful and beautiful. I ordered Agua Fresca, lemonade served in a large glass, and very tasty — more like a limeade than lemonade since it's slightly more sour than lemonade; but it was well-balanced, refreshing, and it even came with a lime on the edge of the glass (not a lemon).

The food arrived quickly. We got the queso fundido, which they call "Mexican cheese fondue." It's a ton of melted cheese with flour tortillas — everyone loved it. It was very cheesy, smooth, and made a great



CHURROS WITH CHOCOLATE SAUCE: ¡Viva Mexico! Photo credit: Katrina Robinson.

cheese pull (my dad did that). The mushrooms made it a little less kid-friendly, but you can't taste them that much because there is so much melted cheese. They also served us a lot of tortilla chips that were crispy and flavorful, along with salsa verde that was good, but a little too spicy.

The adults ate Mexican ceviche which is raw fish with tomatoes, onions and cilantro. I do like sushi, but I did not like this so much. Then they forgot my guacamole and seemed confused when we asked where it was, so we had to reorder it. But it was worth the wait — it was great!

My mom then ordered steak fajitas which are grilled steak strips with beans, rice, onions, peppers, salsa, and sour cream that you put in a tortilla. Even though there were vegetables mixed in, everything tasted good together, but I preferred just eating the steak with the tortilla alone. But the steak was a bit overdone if you ask me.

My father had pollo en "môle poblano" which he liked, but I didn't even want to try it. Môle is a Mexican sauce that has lots of things in it, including dark chocolate. But that was too much for me. And by that point, with all the melted cheese, tortilla chips, and steak, I was full.

But wait, there was dessert. And they had churros. So I had to try those. Churros are long fried donuts with cinnamon sugar all over them. They came to the table super hot. They tasted great on their own. But they also came with a bowl of chocolate sauce for dipping. That was even better. My parents loved their tres leches cake, but I had four churros to eat so I stuck with those.

Môle is very kid-friendly because there are so many dishes on the menu that we like. And it's good for families because the servings are large — I would order less than you think, not more. Next time, I want to try their nachos (without jalapeños), pozole soup, (because I read about it in a book) and carne asada (marinated skirt steak). So I have a lot of reasons to go back to Môle!

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The Best Chinese Take-out in New York City

On the Side

BY KEITH MICHAEL

Bird watching is a portmanteau hobby. It can take you anywhere and you can take IT anywhere. Just open it up for layers upon layers of surprises. Waiting for the bus might unpack a dapper black-cravatted House Sparrow fellow stomping out his courtship dance fanning a mid-summer romance. Need a soundtrack on your way to the subway? The nearly sub-aural whining of nestlings high in a tree when Mom Robin just delivered their mid-mid-morning snack might be tucked away in that side pocket.

New York City served up so many celebratory spectacles this summer that detoured me from my usual thither and yon devoted birding outings. Did those stop me from seeing birds? Nope.

Though not a sports fan, I was enthralled by NYC going bonkers over the Knicks win! When it came to the morning of the triumphal parade, a last-minute inspiration took me to One World Observatory for a bird's eye view. Astonishingly, I was only about twentieth in line when the doors opened, and as hoped for, seeing the mass of blue and orange packing the downtown streets along the Broadway parade route was, indeed, a spectacle. More than the crowds and the might-as-well-be-in-another-state anticipated passing of the Knicks floats in front of St. Paul's Chapel, what diverted my attention long enough to actually MISS seeing the celebrity Knicks, was tracking a soaring Red-tailed Hawk through the downtown canyons. What might that hawk have been thinking about the commotion below while gliding over his rooftop domain?

Who knew there was a summer rave called the Jet Ski Invasion? Last year, I happened upon it by chance from the deck of the Staten Island Ferry. This year, I raced down to the South Street Seaport, on purpose, to see 1,000 jet skiers overtaking the East River from under the Brooklyn Bridge. A nonchalant Common Tern kept me company, intent on catching breakfast. Maybe all that ruckus in the harbor was chasing fish his way.

I'll admit, during the beginning of July, I



ECUADOR'S BAE GUAYAS bidding farewell to Lady Liberty. All Photos by Keith Michael.

was obsessed with the Fourth of July Sail 250. I took every opportunity to cram in sightings of the international congregation of tall ships. July 1, the first entry on my dance card was a day trip to Yonkers to tour the Oosterschelde, the 1918 last remaining topsail schooner from The Netherlands. On the way up the Hudson on Metro-North, of course I was looking for birds the whole time. I was amply rewarded with a family of Ravens exchanging banter on an electric pole, two Great Blue Herons racing the train upriver, and a Bald Eagle devouring a fish on a snag.

Idiotically, July 2, on what would be the first day of an historic 100° heat wave, a siren's song lured me to Brooklyn Bridge Park to take a gander at the early arrival of

the Elissa, a three-masted 1877 beauty from Galveston, Texas. A wiser Canada Goose gander and his clan chose bathing in the river to cool off rather than traipsing over boiling sidewalks. While I was seeking shade, Gray Catbirds seemed to be mewing everywhere undaunted by the sweltering heat.

July 3, a host of the tall ships were staging off Sandy Hook, and I boarded the Seastreak to Highlands, NJ to catch a leisurely sight of them. Colossal and heroic up close, from a distance, the ships look surprisingly delicate and vulnerable. Anchored together like that, I was reminded of the seemingly romanticized maritime oil paintings I've pored over in museums. That's what sailing ships really look like! Common Terns and Laughing Gulls plied the wake of our speeding boat. An Osprey passed over the masts of the imposing U.S. Coast Guard Eagle. On the way home, masses of Double-crested Cormorants fished near Hoffman and Swinburne Islands with the Verrazzano Narrows Bridge arching across the toy NYC skyline at the horizon.

For the Big Day, July 4, I had booked a spot on the American Princess whale watching boat out of Sheepshead Bay for a marathon of the Tall Ships Parade in the morning and the fireworks spectacular in the evening. All day I was keeping an eye out for some rarer birds that had been spotted recently in the New York Bight — Shearwaters, Willson's Storm Petrels, Brown Pelicans — as well as noting our constant accompaniment by terns, gulls, and cormorants. A fleeting pod of dolphins filled the cetacean checkbox

for the day. Catch me with a martini sometime to gush about the panoply of ships, fireworks, and unscripted lightning show.

Naturally, despite a rainy-day July 6, I made a pilgrimage to Pier 86 for a chance to loll about on "the most beautiful ship in the world," the Italian Amerigo Vespucci, and headed further north to Pier 92 for that cornucopia of tall ship riches including touring the imposing ARA Libertad from Argentina. This is what New York harbor must have looked like in its early centuries — though grittier and not crammed with tourists in shorts. On July 8, I packed lunch and hung out at the tip of Pier 45 in Hudson River Park to bid final farewell to all the ships heading out to Boston and beyond. I think I spotted a young Bald Eagle winging its way west over Hoboken.

If it stays clear tonight, I'll pop up to 42nd Street for the final Manhattanhenge party of 2026. Maybe a midtown Peregrine Falcon will join the celestial festivities. Wherever you go, may the birds be with you.



RED-TAILED HAWK watching the parade pass by.



COMMON TERN considering lunch options.

Amid Spain's Victory, World Cup Final's First-Ever Halftime Show Warms the Soul

BY ANTHONY PARADISO

Sunday, July 19 was the day that Spain took down the defending FIFA World Cup champions, Argentina 1-0 in the final of the 2026 World Cup at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey.

Argentina were denied becoming the first men's national team since Brazil in 1962 to retain the World Cup, while Spain lifted their second World Cup trophy since 2010.

Fast forward to the end of the 90 minutes of regulation play. Things could not have seemed worse for Argentina. They had been reduced to 10 men thanks to Enzo Fernandez's second yellow card and Spain would not let them possess the ball.

In the 96th minute, Spain won a free kick on the edge of Argentina's 18-yard box. Spanish teenage superstar Lamine Yamal bent the free kick inside the right post, but his shot was denied by veteran Argentina goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez, who made a great diving save.

In the second 15-minute extra time period, Spain was controlling the ball on the edge of Argentina's box when right-back Pedro Porro decided to hit a high, looping cross to the back post. Spanish midfielder Nico Williams chased down the cross, which was going out of bounds at the byline, and headed it back into the box.

The ball popped up for substitute Spanish forward Ferran Torres inside Argentina's box. He hit a half-volley that flew into the roof of the net and gave Spain a 1-0 lead in the 106th minute.

In the 118th minute, Argentina had one last chance to equalize. Argentina's captain Lionel Messi took a corner that was flicked

on at the near post. The ball fell to Argentina substitute midfielder Guiliano Simeone who hit it first time but over the bar.

Just minutes later, the referee blew the final whistle and Spain's bench erupted in celebration.

Scoring the decisive goal in the World Cup final was a full-circle moment for Torres because he hit the crossbar in Spain's opening group stage match against Cape Verde, which ended in a 0-0 draw and borderline humiliation for Spain who had been heavily favored in that match.

As Spain felt the elation of capping off a terrific run to the World Cup final, during which they conceded one goal — a new men's world cup record — Argentina and their hero, Messi, could not hold back their tears.

With this likely being Messi's last World Cup appearance, let's review the World Cup records he holds: Messi has recorded the most assists (12), goal contributions (33) and matches played (34) in World Cup history. In addition, Messi became just the second man to play in three World Cup Finals, alongside Brazil's Cafu. Lastly, at the age of 39, Messi scored eight goals at this World Cup which made him runner-up in the Golden Boot race.

It was a spellbinding final which will be remembered for Spain's remarkable consistency as well as the 11 saves made by Argentina goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez who kept his team in the game. Sadly, for Argentina, they fell one win short of becoming the third men's national team to win back-to-back World Cups and the first men's national

team to win a fourth consecutive major international tournament, including their victories in the 2021 and 2024 Copa America and the 2022 World Cup.

During halftime, the first World Cup final halftime show was held on the field at MetLife Stadium, adding American flair to the global sporting event.

The show began with Madonna performing her hit song *Music* in a pre-taped performance, which was a weak start. Eventually, the British singer/songwriter made her way through the tunnel and onto the field to sing for the fans, flanked by former Brazilian soccer superstars Ronaldo and Ronaldinho, who garnered a rousing applause from the crowd of 80,633.

At this point, TV viewers caught a wide shot of the field, which had been covered by a colorful canvas containing an image of the planet Earth and various hand-written words. Meanwhile, dancers and an orchestra, including Muppets were led by Venezuelan conductor Gustavo Dudamel as they performed *Seven Nation Army* by the White Stripes. When the performance ended, the camera shifted to members of the K-Pop band BTS who gave a now hackneyed performance of their hit song *Dynamite*.

Then the show shifted to a little bit of acting. Actor Jason Sudeikis walked onto the field in-character as Ted Lasso — the main character in the TV show *Ted Lasso* — and gave pop singer Justin Bieber a pep talk before sending him onto the field to give his musical performance. Bieber proceeded to sing and play guitar to his 2025 hit *Everything Hallelujah* in the middle of the field. The performance was quiet compared to the other performances and Bieber sang to the crowd instead of the camera, which had a way of acknowledging the fans who had paid high prices to attend the World Cup final in-person.

After Bieber bowed out, the cameras cut to Colombian singer, songwriter and dancer Shakira, who performed the anthem of the 2026 World Cup, *Dai Dai*. Shakira and Nigerian singer Burna Boy followed up Bieber's strong performance with an energetic, well-choreographed performance. That, along with the colorful costumes of Shakira and her back-up dancers, reflected the pageantry and vibrance of the World Cup.

Once more, a wide shot of the stadium revealed the stadium's big TV screens displaying the late former Brazil and New York Cosmos superstar soccer player Pelé. Pelé repeated the word "love" several times before members of Staten Island's P.S. 22 Children's Choir closed out the halftime show by singing Coldplay's World Cup song, *We Dance*, alongside the famous band.

All in all, FIFA, the teams and a diverse group of musicians brought the world a sporting event and halftime show that truly captured the spirit of the World Cup, which is based on passion and togetherness.

MTA Tourists

BY MARY SPRINGER

Natives sitting/standing
shoulder to shoulder
hip to hip,
on subways, buses
on our daily grind to work or appointments.
Our peace disturbed by loud and excited dialects
of tourists breaching the rules of silence etiquette
understood by commuters.

Whether we like it or not,
we natives must endure this assault on our senses
from tourists near and far that ensure

our city's financial security.

Thank you to our
land, sea and air folk who
visit, and once again
open our eyes
as to what brought us here

in the first place.

DNA from a multitude of countries
meld together like no other place

in the world.

Thank you for allowing us
to play the game of urban sleuth
as we attempt to discern

your land of origin.

Thank you for your
wonder and zeal,
for we natives
sometimes forget that
we live in a

magical place.

In this kingdom,
all belong-all fit in.
Our defects are also our strengths

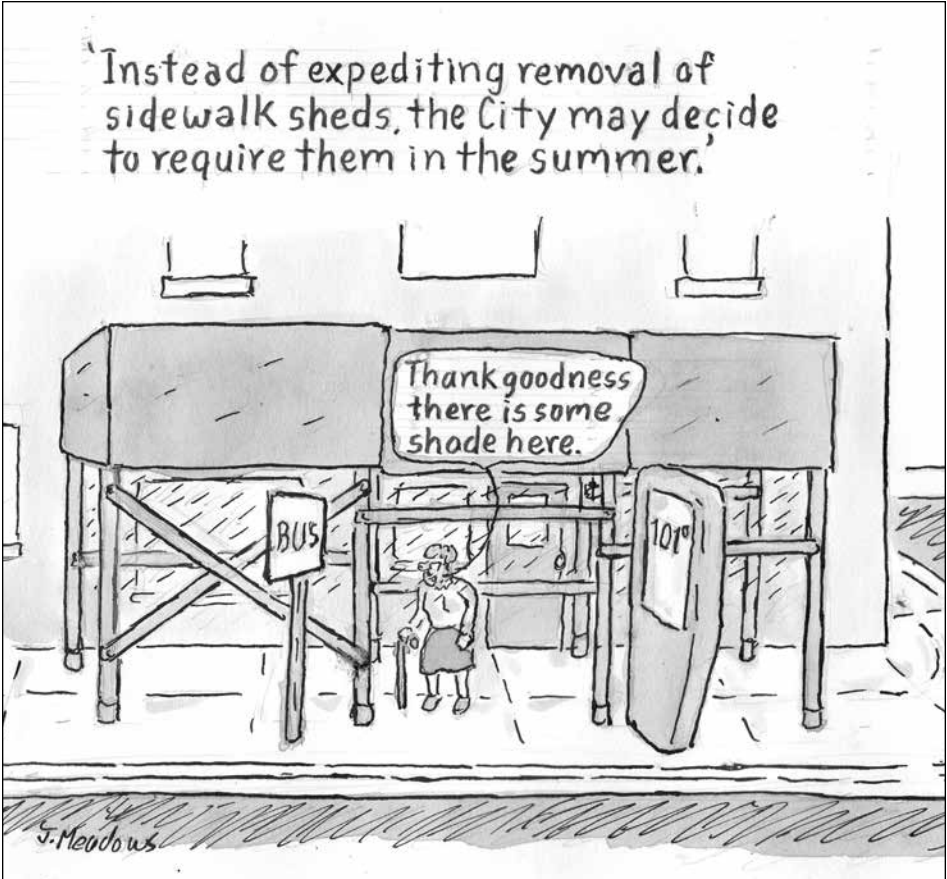
that birth the extraordinary.

Thank you for coming to our land
and witnessing our world
that we sometimes love or loathe,

but always embrace.

We natives may appear
brusque, wary and weary
but trust me, we lead with the heart-

when it matters most.



VILLAGE PET PAGES

BY JOY PAPE AND BRIAN PAPE

A Cast of Characters

BY MILA BOUJNAH



GUS (LEFT) AND BIRD, spooning at home in Mila's bed.

Our animal family is very much a cast of characters. I have two cats, Bird and Gus. Bird is my baby girl — she just turned three on June 16. Gus, formally Augustus — but only when he's in trouble — turns two on August 18, which also happens to be my late grandmother's birthday. My mom, Cristina, has Luna, our six-year-old English cream golden retriever.

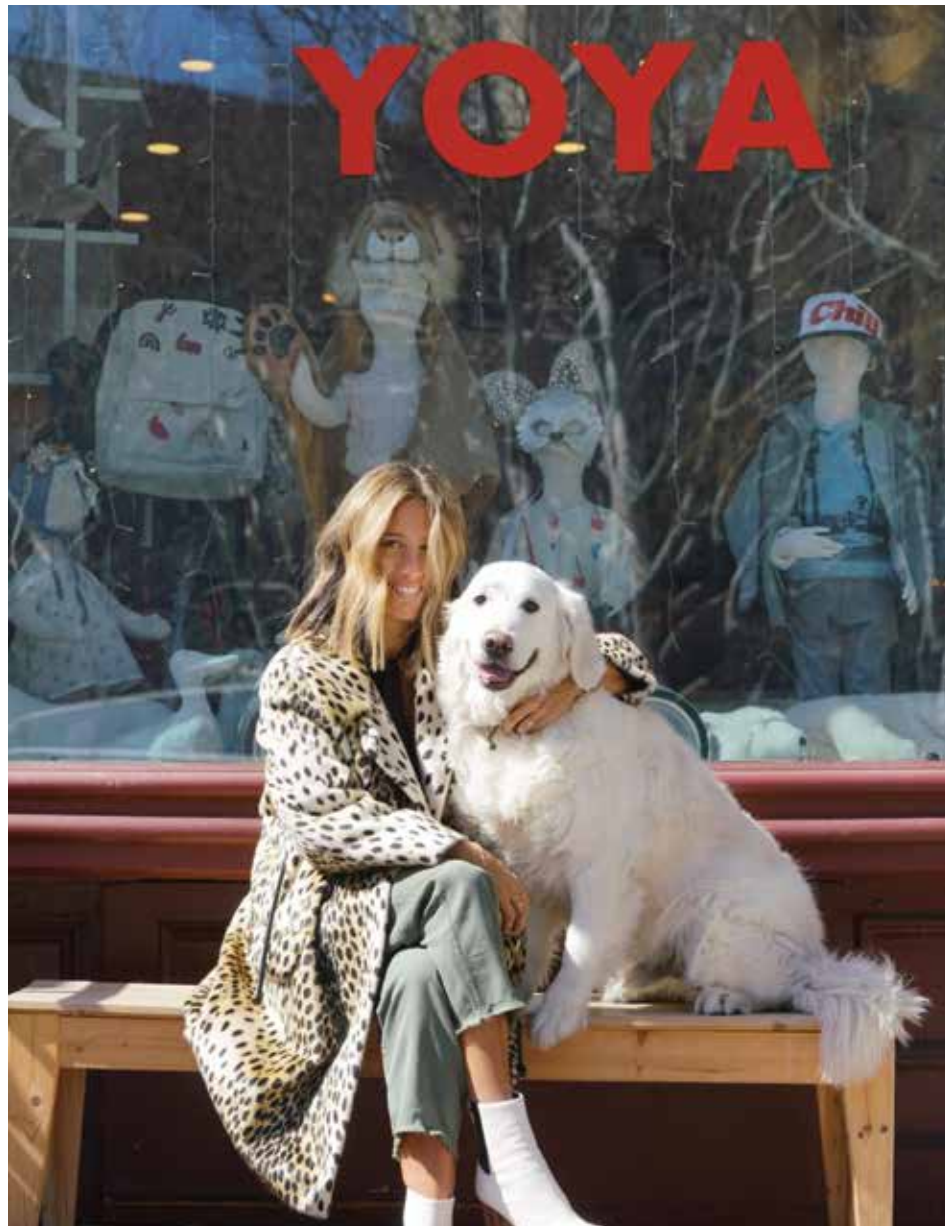
We recently lost Oso, our longtime family dog, also an English cream golden, who was 13 when he passed. Oso was my childhood dog, my mom's shadow, and one of the gentlest souls I've ever known. I was 12 when we adopted him, and he was my soul dog. Oso means "bear" in Spanish, and one look at him told you why. He was built like a little polar bear with the gentleness of an old soul.

Oso and Luna were just as bonded. Luna made Oso braver, Oso made Luna more patient. Now Luna is learning how to be a city dog, and if we're lucky, a proper Yoya shop dog like her late brother.

I consider Bird one of my first, and best, adult decisions because she came into my life during a deeply transitional stretch. I had just moved back to New York after five years in Paris, was newly single, and was still figuring out what it looked like to be an adult in a city I'd been away from for so long. I'd never really been a cat person but the second I saw Bird's photo online, I knew she was mine. I knew in my heart it was the right choice. A year later I'd gone full cat lady. I adopted Gus, mostly because I hated the idea of Bird being alone all day while I worked. He became her little brother and my second completely correct, slightly impulsive decision.

Luna came into my mom's life as a puppy, a birthday gift to herself. She is hyper, needy, confident, and fully convinced the world exists to greet her.

The West Village has always been a sacred place to our family. It has a way of turning an ordinary walk into a map of tiny rituals, and ours starts most mornings at Bonsignour. My go-to is an Arnold Palmer and an empanada — not the typical morning order, but every-



CRISTINA VILLEGAS AND OSO. All photos courtesy of Mila Boujnah.

one I've recommended it to now starts their mornings the same way. Then we continue down Hudson toward Yoya, the family boutique store we own at 338 West 4th Street. A

few doors down is Aux Merveilleux de Fred, which makes, in my opinion, the best croissant in the city. We're equally weak for a pain au chocolat, especially when it's right out of



OSO AND LUNA being brother and sister.

the oven.

Zoomies on Hudson is a favorite for all of us too. Sometimes I also take Bird and Gus down to the West Side Highway in a stroller for fresh air. So if you've ever seen a woman pushing two cats down to the highway in a stroller, that was probably me.

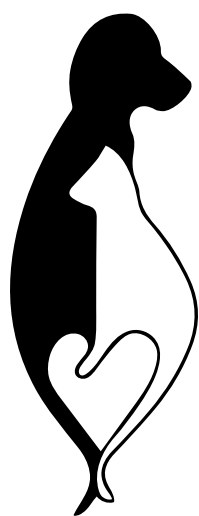
We'll round out the walk with Cursive for anything small and covetable, Café Panino for a BLT, and Plantshed, where you can get a bunch of tulips and a coffee in the same five minutes. The West Village truly is that kind of neighborhood, where the florist doubles as a café, the bakery knows your dog's order, and somewhere around the third stop you've usually run into someone you know. It's a small, walkable, loyal community, the kind where people actually notice if your dog isn't with you that day.

It's been such a blessing setting up shop in a community like this. Since returning, we've said hello to old friends who shopped at Yoya the first time around, and moms will come in with their now grown children (who have grown out of our clothing) and get a little weepy saying, "I used to put you in these clothes!"

Since reopening the new store in September, my mom and I have been slowly finding our way into a new rhythm. She and Luna are moving back to the city to be closer to Yoya, which means Luna, Bird, and Gus are all going to have to figure out how to coexist.

Luna is slowly, unevenly, picking up the shop-dog torch. She's done a few trial runs at the store but is still learning the rhythm of people coming and going, mostly by wanting to greet every single one of them with her entire body, so we're working on manners.

It's a lot of chaos for one small storefront, but it's the same chaos Oso started years ago. Luna is learning the ropes now, Bird and Gus have their own Village rituals, and my mom and I are learning a new version of our old routine. But Oso was really the start of our family's whole pet story in the Village. To know him was to love him, and although he is no longer walking the streets beside us, he is still part of all of it.

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Susan F, client

PRESERVING THE SPIRIT OF TANGO:

Leonardo Suarez Paz and the Piazzolla100 Festival Bringing Buenos Aires to New York

BY KAJU ROBERTO



THE PIAZZOLLA100 FESTIVAL honors the spirit of Astor Piazzolla and tango's place as one of the world's most dynamic and influential cultural forms. Photo by Kaju Roberto.

New York City once again became a center for tango culture as the Piazzolla100 Festival returned, celebrating the music, dance, and legacy of legendary Argentine composer Astor Piazzolla. At the heart of the festival was Leonardo Suarez Paz, an internationally recognized violinist, composer, educator, and fourth-generation tango artist whose lifelong connection to the music shaped his mission of preserving and advancing the genre.

As co-founder and organizer, Suarez Paz created an event that extended beyond honoring Piazzolla's music. The festival served as a cultural bridge between Buenos Aires and New York through concerts, educational workshops, film screenings, dance programs, and traditional milongas.

Held June 18–21, the festival opened with two performances at the K&J Theater in Union Square. Educational workshops followed at Times Square Studios, offering instruction for string players, bandoneon performers, pianists, guitarists, singers, and ensemble musicians.

Rediscovering the Guitar's Role in Tango

One of the festival's highlights was its guitar program, led by renowned Argentine guitarist Alejo de los Reyes. Suarez Paz emphasized that while many people viewed the bandoneon as tango's defining instrument, the genre's origins were rooted in the guitar.

He traced those roots to Gabino Ezeiza, the 19th-century payador, poet, and improvisational musician widely credited with creating the milonga, one of tango's foundational musical forms. Performing with guitar while improvising lyrics and melodies, Ezeiza helped establish traditions that evolved into modern tango.

The connection was also personal. Suarez Paz is directly related to Ezeiza and considers the musician's legacy part of his family heritage. Ezeiza's original guitar is now displayed at the National Academy of Tango in Buenos Aires, serving as a symbol of tango's beginnings. The guitar remained central throughout tango's evolution. Even Carlos Gardel, history's most celebrated tango singer, performed and recorded with guitar ensembles. Gardel's career intersected with Piazzolla's in a remarkable twist of fate.

The Twist of Fate That Changed Tango Forever

During the 1930s, Gardel was working in New York, where he made films and built an international following. There he met a young Piazzolla, then an Argentine immigrant growing up in the city. Although Piazzolla spoke limited Spanish, Gardel recognized his talent and invited him to join an upcoming concert tour.

Piazzolla's father refused, insisting his son stay in school. That decision proved historic. Soon afterward, Gardel and his musicians died in a plane crash in Colombia. Had Piazzolla joined the tour, he might have been among the victims.

Instead, Piazzolla went on to revolutionize tango through nuevo tango, blending traditional forms with jazz and classical influences. His innovative style transformed the genre and expanded its global reach. Suarez Paz believes New York played an important role in shaping Piazzolla's artistic vision, making the city an especially meaningful place to celebrate his legacy.

The festival grew out of Suarez Paz's own experiences as a contractor for Broadway pro-

ductions. Because few American musicians had the specialized training needed to perform authentic tango, he often brought artists from Argentina. Recognizing the need to develop local talent, he set out to build educational opportunities that would cultivate a new generation of tango musicians in the United States.

His connection to Piazzolla began in childhood. Suarez Paz's father served as Piazzolla's violinist and the youngster frequently attended rehearsals and performances, observing the composer at work. Those experiences profoundly shaped his musical career.

Piazzolla became a lasting artistic influence. Suarez Paz recalled that the composer always encouraged innovation, viewing tango as a living, evolving art form rather than a fixed tradition. That philosophy inspired the creation of the festival during the celebrations marking Piazzolla's centennial.

Tango: More Than a Dance

Beyond celebrating Piazzolla's achievements, the festival aimed to deepen public understanding of tango itself. Outside Argentina, tango is often associated primarily with dance. Suarez Paz argued that it represented something much broader — a complete cultural tradition.

In Buenos Aires, tango lives in neighborhood cafés, literature, poetry, conversations about politics and society, and everyday community life. It reflects the hopes, struggles, and emotions of generations of Argentines. Understanding tango, Suarez Paz said, meant understanding an entire cultural ecosystem.

The festival reflected that philosophy through performances, workshops, discussions, film presentations, and traditional milongas, giving both newcomers and long-

time enthusiasts a deeper appreciation of the art form.

Education remained one of the festival's central missions. Its tango orchestra — featuring bandoneons, strings, piano, bass, and guitar — gave musicians the opportunity to perform both classic and contemporary repertoire within a traditional orchestral setting. Introduced in earlier editions of the festival, the orchestra had become one of its most popular features.

For guitarists, the festival also offered a unique experience. Workshops focused on the stylistic foundations of tango performance, teaching the rhythms, phrasing, vibrato, and tonal colors that define the genre. Participants gained insight into techniques passed down through generations of Argentine musicians.

Keeping Tango Alive

Ultimately, the Piazzolla100 Festival celebrated both tradition and innovation. Through music, education, and cultural exchange, Suarez Paz continued the work of preserving tango's heritage while encouraging its future evolution. His efforts ensured audiences in New York and beyond could experience a musical tradition that remains as vibrant and relevant today as ever.

By connecting tango's historical roots with contemporary artistic expression, the festival honored Astor Piazzolla's enduring legacy while reaffirming tango's place as one of the world's most dynamic cultural traditions.

Kaju Roberto is an accomplished musician, singer-songwriter, journalist, award-winning producer, and recording artist Rad Jet.

No Picnic: Phil Hartman's Long-Lost East Village

BY MICHAEL JACOBSON

Some films arrive right on time. Phil Hartman's *No Picnic* took 40 years. It premiered at Sundance in 1986, winning a cinematography prize for Peter Hutton's luminous black-and-white images of the pre-gentrification East Village. Then, improbably, it vanished. Its distributor disbanded and Hartman started the Two Boots pizzeria empire and raised three kids. The film's only print sat in a closet.

Then, during COVID, Hartman digitized the film. A distributor saw it, Film Forum offered a single week, and the film refused to leave, holding over for an astonishing 12 weeks. Now it's touring the country: San Francisco, Nashville, Chicago, playing to audiences who never lived on Avenue A.

It's a genuine Cinderella story and a reassuring one. Hartman jokes it was marketing genius to sit on something for 40 years and build up the demand.

Hartman's *No Picnic* is quirky in the most disarming way: it takes the deadpan machinery of hard-boiled noir (the world-weary voiceover, the lone man on a quest, the mysterious woman glimpsed and lost) and bolts it onto the soft-boiled life of a jukebox repairman. Macabee Cohen, a washed-up musician played with hand-dog melancholy by David Brisbin, tools around the East Village in a wheezing VW bus, servicing dive-bar jukeboxes and chasing a woman in a striped dress he can't quite catch. It's Raymond Chandler filtered through Avenue A, a picaresque with no real plot and all the better for it. The comedy comes from the mismatch between grand narration and shabby stakes.

The texture is what lingers. Peter Hutton's cinematography, which won at Sundance, turns rent-strike banners, cigarette machines, and derelict tenements into something elegiac. The neighborhood is the real protagonist, caught mid-erasure: real estate speculation creeping in, art "invading" the bars, the old bohemia sensing its own eviction. Hartman stocks the frame with downtown fixtures (Richard Hell, Judith Malina) and future stars in embryo (Buscemi, Guzmán), scored to a wild jukebox of Minus, Fela, and the Raunch Hands.

A CONVERSATION WITH PHIL HARTMAN
Recently, I had a conversation with Hartman at his Two Boots Pizza in the West Village. This conversation has been condensed and edited for length and clarity.

You made *No Picnic* in 1985. What pulled you toward filming the neighborhood itself?

I was living in the East Village and I loved it. But you could feel change was imminent, and we had this incredible passion to capture things before they disappeared — like Adam Purple's garden, that beautiful circular gar-

den on the Lower East Side. They bulldozed it three or four months after we filmed.

The film is packed with faces. Real people, not just actors.

Many indie films have a tiny cast, but we actually had about 130 people, because there were so many amazing folks we wanted to capture, like Princess Pamela, who ran a soul-food place on 10th and First. There was a man everybody called Santa Claus, big white beard, walked around with his pockets full of toys for the kids. Bleecker Bob from Bleecker Bob's record shop is in there. A few of them became famous: Steve Buscemi, Luis Guzmán. A lot of them never appeared in another movie.

Where did the cast and crew come from?

Mostly from the Great Jones Café, a Cajun juke joint that a friend and I opened on the Bowery. It became a magnet for the film, music, and theater crowd. The film was filled

with friends, family, ex-girlfriends, professionals, neighborhood characters. And everybody got paid, which was unheard of for a small indie film.

And Two Boots grew out of finishing the movie?

We ran out of money for post. A stranger walked into the Jones and said he wanted to open a restaurant. My partner, Doris Kornish, and I said we'd give him six months if he helped us finish. He did. That restaurant was Two Boots. The six months turned into 39 years.

Your roots on the Lower East Side go back generations.

My grandparents lived on Henry Street, right behind where we later raised our three kids on East Broadway, in an old exterminator's warehouse under a synagogue. My daughter is a block away now, raising her own daughter. Five generations below East Broadway.



PHIL HARTMAN. Photo by Michelle Esrick via Michael Jacobson.

Why do you think the film is resonating now, 40 years later?

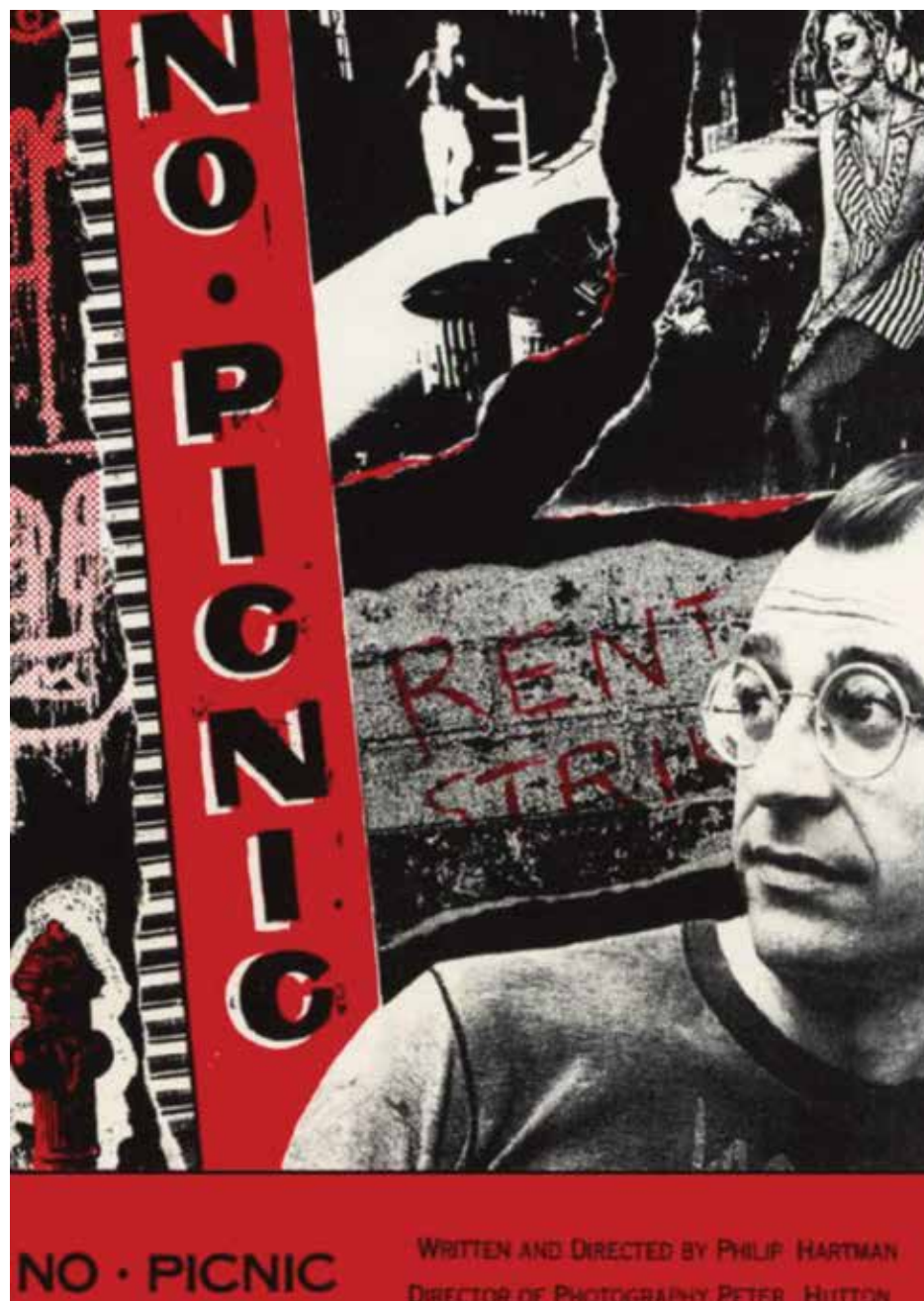
For old-timers it's the neighborhood of their youth. But the young people are digging that it's not just pre-gentrified, it's pre-digitized. Jukeboxes, phones on walls, bathtubs in kitchens, empty lots and rubble. It looks post-war to them. I see *No Picnic* in a continuum of black-and-white love letters to New York: *Little Fugitive*, *Pull My Daisy*, and *The Plot Against Harry*. I love this city. I'm just so happy we caught this time and place before it was gone.

No Picnic looks back at a New York that is gone. Watching the film today brings the past and present close together because people are still worried about losing the same kind of neighborhood. The restored film arrives at a time when many New Yorkers are struggling with rising rents and the cost of living. Hartman's line, "the more things change, the more they change," now feels less like nostalgia and more like a warning.

Hartman wanted to capture this world before it disappeared. Forty years later, we can be thankful that he did. He saved a piece of New York that might otherwise have been forgotten.

Learn more about *No Picnic* from its distributor, The Film Desk: thefilmdesk.com
The next NYC show is August 3 at The Roxy in Tribeca, where Phil Hartman will do a Q & A.

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. The next show will be on Saturday, August 22 at 6 p.m.



NO PICNIC film poster.

Hung Dance's *BIRDY* Takes Flight in New York with a Powerful Meditation on Freedom and Identity

BY KAJU ROBERTO

Against a minimalist stage where movement and light carried as much meaning as words, eight dancers from Taiwan's Hung Dance transformed long pheasant feathers into extensions of their bodies, creating an unforgettable visual meditation on freedom, identity, and transformation. The company's acclaimed contemporary dance work, *BIRDY*, opened at NYU Skirball on July 17 as part of the 35th anniversary celebration of the Taipei Cultural Center in New York.

"It's a really special opportunity that we can be here," said Lai Hung-Chung, choreographer and artistic director of Hung Dance. "We're very grateful that Taiwan's Ministry of Culture brought us here, and it's the first time we've presented *BIRDY* in New York."

Blending contemporary dance with tai chi, traditional Peking opera, martial arts, and elements of street dance, *BIRDY* presents a distinctly Taiwanese artistic voice while exploring universal themes of freedom, limitation, and identity.

A Personal Journey Becomes a Universal Story

For Lai, *BIRDY* grew from his own struggle to become an internationally recognized choreographer after beginning his career as a high school dance teacher. At the same time, he says the work reflects Taiwan's ongoing search for identity and freedom. "It's actually like my portrait," he explained. "When I wanted to become a choreographer internationally, there were so many limitations and struggles. I wanted to break through those limitations."

The production also draws inspiration from Alan Parker's 1984 film *Birdy*, about a young man whose dream of becoming a bird allows him to transcend reality. Lai connected that story with his own artistic ambitions, seeing the desire to fly as a metaphor for pursuing seemingly impossible dreams.

From an Intimate Duet to an International Production

The piece has evolved considerably since Hung Dance was founded in 2017. According to Operations Director Wei-Ping Chen, *BIRDY* began as an intimate duet — the company's very first creation. "The duet was much more personal," Chen said. As the work matured, it expanded into the current eight-dancer version that has toured internationally while preserving its emotional core.

While the ensemble version has become Hung Dance's signature production, the original duet is still performed at select venues. The company returns to the United States and Canada this fall for a nine city tour.

The Feather That Becomes Part of the Body

One of *BIRDY*'s most unforgettable visual elements is the long pheasant-tail feather



HUNG DANCE'S *BIRDY* TOOK FLIGHT in New York with a powerful meditation on freedom and identity at NYU Skirball area Washington Square Park on July 17 as a part of the 35th anniversary celebration of the Taipei Cultural Center. Photos by Kaju Roberto.

worn by each dancer. In traditional Peking opera, paired feathers attached to a performer's headdress symbolize rank and are often associated with military generals and heroic characters. Lai reimagines the centuries-old prop, transforming it from a symbol of status into an extension of the dancer's body. At roughly five feet long, each feather ripples through the air, making invisible forces visible and adding another dimension to the choreography.

"We actually travel with many feathers," Chen said. "They're very delicate, so we transport them inside long protective pipes." The feathers are also among the production's greatest technical challenges. Because even the slightest movement

causes them to sway, dancers must develop extraordinary control over their necks, posture, and timing. Fast movements create dramatic motion, while slow movements produce a sense of stillness and emotional balance.

"The dancers have to control not only their bodies but also the direction and emotion of the feather," Lai said. "Every performance, their necks are really sore."

The audience's fascination with the feathers has become one of the company's most common experiences on tour. "The question we get most often is whether they're real feathers," Chen said. "People can't imagine how the dancers wear them and make them feel like part of their bodies."

A Distinctive Taiwanese Movement Language

That seamless integration reflects Hung Dance's distinctive movement vocabulary. Taiwan's dance education emphasizes versatility, with students studying ballet, contemporary dance, tai chi dao yin, martial arts, and movements derived from traditional opera. Lai's dancers absorb these disciplines from an early age, allowing them to merge traditions naturally rather than treating them as separate styles.

"Tai chi is already part of the dancers' bodies," Chen explained. "Even when they're dancing contemporary choreography, that spirit and those techniques naturally come out."

Lai's own path was equally unconventional. He began as a middle school street dancer, learning popping before a teacher encouraged him to pursue formal dance training in ballet and contemporary dance, influences he later fused into his own choreographic language.

Traditional opera continues to shape *BIRDY* beyond the feathers. The production incorporates rattan poles inspired by Chinese opera props, while gestures and movement vocabulary drawn from opera are transformed into abstract contemporary imagery. Rather than recreating tradition, Lai uses familiar cultural symbols to invite audiences to discover new meanings.

Poetry Before Choreography

Lai's creative process begins not with movement, but with language. "Before I go into the studio, I write paragraphs," he explained. "Each paragraph is an idea, almost like poetry. The words are more important to me than the choreography at first."

Movement and music emerge afterward. Composer and choreographer developed the score collaboratively, blending traditional Chinese instrumental colors with deep bass and contemporary textures into a soundscape that feels both ancient and modern.

For Lai, leaving space for interpretation is essential. "When people hear the music, they might feel something traditional, but it's actually something new," he said. "We want to give the audience space to think."

An Invitation to Reflect

That openness ultimately defines *BIRDY*. While rooted in Taiwanese culture, the work speaks to experiences shared across borders: confronting limitations, pursuing aspirations, and discovering one's identity through continual transformation. As Hung Dance made its New York debut, *BIRDY* offered not only an impressive display of physical artistry but also a poetic reminder that freedom is rarely a destination — it is an ongoing journey.

Jefferson Market Library

BY CORINNE NEARY



MARIANNE MOORE: *Complete Poems*.

Some of you may already know that we host a monthly poetry discussion at the library every second Wednesday at 4:30 p.m. At each discussion, we focus on a poem, or poems, by one poet, and do a close reading and interpretation of the work. We try not to focus so much on the biography of the poet, and more on the language itself, and how we can understand it.

As you can imagine, interpretations are varied, depending on our own experiences, and we often discuss the idea that a poem, or really any work of art, is a conversation between the artist and the audience. There can't be one without the other. Because of the conversations we have around these poems, and about art and life, I often find that the ideas that have come up in the poetry discussion tend to pop up for me in other places.

For our July discussion, we read Stéphane Mallarmé's 1897 poem, *A Throw of the Dice Will Never Abolish Chance*, which is famous-

ly thought of, in part, as heralding the beginning of modernism. The poem, which plays with form by using irregular fonts and placement on the page, ends with the line "every thought emits a throw of the dice." There is so much to think about with this piece, but I was very much caught up in thinking about our desire for control in a life, and a world that can never promise anything.

I think Mallarmé was writing, in part, about his creative process, and the desire for perfection in his work, when there can really never be such a thing as perfection in art. The throwing of the dice is knowing that perfection can never truly be achieved, but not giving up the effort in seeking it anyway. This desire for control and perfection extends into the way we live our lives as well, and the relationships we form with others. What else but the seeking of control over, and happiness in, our lives could lead us to marry, for example? Especially

when we see over and over again the failure of marriages among people we know?

In this month's poetry discussion, which will meet on August 12, we are reading Marianne Moore's 1923 poem, *Marriage*. This is a long poem, nearly 300 lines, and, like *Throw of the Dice*, is also considered modernist, mixing abstract thought with vivid imagery and wide-ranging quotations. Moore's poem pushes a look at the nature of relationships, and the delusion that we can forever unite our own thinking with another. It can be looked at from a feminist perspective, and also a satirical one, but I'm most intrigued by its look at our cravings for control in our lives.

Stop by the second floor desk to pick up a copy of the poem, and make sure to bring it with you to the discussion! We will meet in the third floor Mae West room. As always, check our website for the most current listing of our events for adults, teens, and children.

A Miriam Kind of Therapist

BY NANCY DAVIDOFF KELTON

My first and last psychotherapists are deceased. Several I saw in between them were not all that alive. Two did not even learn to nod in Psychotherapy 101 or from watching Bob Newhart nod as Dr. Hartley on *The Bob Newhart Show* in the 1970s.

Miriam, my first therapist, validated who I was immediately. "You can only be a Nancy kind of writer," she said when I mentioned I disliked being a hired wordsmith and really liked writing personal essays. So I resumed writing personal essays.

Miriam raised her fee substantially. I left and had several free sessions with young Jessica at the free counseling center at the university where I am an adjunct professor. Once or twice during each session after something I said, Jessica disappeared to the restroom. The restroom was to the right but she turned left and returned with a response. Upon seeing my book, *Writing from Personal Experience*, she asked to borrow it. The following week she did not have it. She lent it to her mother who had started writing. I told Jessica to return it to me at the next session. "Did you tell Mom I'm your patient?" I asked her. She excused herself. Upon returning she said, "Of course not."

'Free' is a bad idea. After leaving Younger-

than-Springtime and her supervisor, I saw Dr. Wolf who insisted his patients have a weekly evening group therapy session in addition to one individual session. I hated group therapy. Wolf rarely gave me a chance to speak about myself or respond to other patients and focused his attention on an Episcopalian minister who wheezed. I had to hire a babysitter to attend group and Wolf's office was far from my apartment, so I had to take a cab. At my individual sessions, I told him that group didn't work for me — which he claimed was precisely the reason I should make it work. Wolf took personal phone calls during my sessions from a salesclerk to discuss a table he wished to return, a friend in his poker group, and others. I said his long personal phone calls were wrong. He said I should continue working on that, too, because he would continue taking them.

Beatrice, another of my psychotherapists, had a hyphenated last name and a hairstyle with pieces she twirled. I told her I probably only wanted a few sessions to discuss my mother's death. She said she only saw patients once or twice a week on a long-term basis but agreed. Her 45-minute appointments were wide open.

During session one, Beatrice seemed to lis-

ten. At the outset of session two, she shoved a two-page form at me, instructing me to write my emergency contact information. "Now?" I asked. "Is THAT a problem?" she replied. After completing her "Do Not Stiff" form, I resumed discussing my mother's funeral and sitting shiva at my aunt's house. Moments later she asked, "Is your mother deceased?" I wondered aloud if she was in another galaxy. The hyphenated therapist wondered louder what I meant.

There are more of them than us. I had several decent Facebook sessions with David. At the beginning of the fourth, he was chomping away on big bites of what looked like steak. I asked him if he was eating. He said hadn't had time for breakfast or lunch and was starving.

"That's not my business or problem," I said. "Chowing down during my session is ridiculous. Also, you don't make eye contact with me." He nodded and replied, "The thing is I am at my country house and I am waiting for the pool man and the gardener to show up."

Not that I was cured, but it seemed silly seeing therapists who were in worse shape than I was. Then my father was admitted to a hospital in Florida with pneumonia. I wanted to see Miriam. "Pneumonia's serious

at his age. Make your travel plans, Nancy," she said. Miriam, still very present, supportive, tender, tough and impeccably groomed, was shorter now and had a dowager's hump.

We had a few phone sessions from the hospital lobby. Shortly after Dad died, Miriam retired and moved to Arizona. When I had a child, she sent me a huge bouquet. "You'll be a Nancy kind of mother," she wrote on the card.

I started seeing my last therapist Dr. J. when I got divorced and became a single mother. He took notes on legal pads about much of what I said. When I told him his note taking bothered me, he made a note of that. "I feel like a case, not a person," I said. "You ARE a case," he said as he pointed to two piles of legal pads on the floor. "Those are my other cases."

Dr. J. curtailed much of his notetaking, saying he knew me better. I curtailed most of my regular sessions only seeing him on a need-be basis. When I tried reaching him a few months ago, he did not call or email me back. I checked the obituaries. He died.

I don't see any psychotherapists now. I carry around much of what Dr. J and Miriam shared. Dr. J was competent, smart, and straight forward. Good enough, but he wasn't a Miriam kind of therapist.

Where
do I find
THE
Village
View?

PLEASE VISIT THESE LOCAL BUSINESSES FOR COPIES OF THE PAPER

Caffe Reggio
Center for Architecture
Cinema Village
Golden Wok
Greenwich Village Animal Hospital
Hudson Park Library
Integral Yoga Institute
Jefferson Market Library

Kettle of Fish
La Lanterna di Vittorio Restaurant
Northwell Greenwich Village Hospital
Li-Lac Chocolates - Greenwich Ave.
Mercer Street Books
Player's Theater
The Red Lion
Village Revival Records
Washington Square Hotel
Yoya

ALSO AVAILABLE ONLINE villageview.nyc



August 2026

EVENTS

in and
around the
West
Village

FESTIVALS

DREAM UP FESTIVAL 2026
August 23–September 13
Theatre for the New City
155 First Avenue
theaterforthenewcity.net/2026/02/theater-for-the-new-citys-dream-up-festival-2026/

A downtown showcase of premieres, experimental productions and independent theater artists.

BALLET FESTIVAL CURATED BY MISTY COPELAND



August 4–16
The Joyce Theater
175 Eighth Avenue
joyce.org/performances

A two-week festival bringing leading dancers and creators together in programs designed to broaden the story of ballet.

THEATER

SHIFTERS

August 1–30; Mondays–Wednesdays and Fridays at 7:00 PM; weekend matinees and evenings on select dates
Cherry Lane Theatre
38 Commerce Street
cherrylanetheatre.org/shows/shifters

The North American premiere of Benedict Lombe's acclaimed romance follows two former lovers confronting memory, secrets and paths not taken.

HUNGRY WOMEN

August 1–30; performance times vary
SoHo Playhouse
15 Vandam Street
www.sohoplayhouse.com
A new downtown run continuing through August at SoHo Playhouse.

MUSIC

WHEN VOICES RISE: A NEW GENERATION OF PROTEST MUSIC
August 21 at 7:00 PM
Joe's Pub at The Public Theater
425 Lafayette Street
publictheater.org

Emerging artists use song to examine resistance, solidarity and the continuing role of protest music.

ARTURO SANDOVAL
August 25–30; 8:00 PM and 10:30 PM
Blue Note Jazz Club
131 West 3rd Street
bluenotejazz.com/nyc
The Grammy-winning Cuban trumpeter closes the month with a six-night headline residency.

JOE LOVANO PARAMOUNT QUARTET
August 25–30; 8:00 PM and 10:00 PM
Village Vanguard
178 Seventh Avenue South
villagevanguard.com
Saxophonist Joe Lovano leads Julian Lage, Santi Debriano and Will Calhoun in a marquee weeklong engagement.

HERBERT HOLLER'S FREEDOM PARTY — MICHAEL JACKSON TRIBUTE
August 7, 6:00–10:00 PM
Le Poisson Rouge
158 Bleecker Street
lpr.com/lpr_events/hhaug26nyc
The long-running downtown dance party dedicates its August edition to Michael Jackson.

ART

WHITNEY BIENNIAL 2026
Through August
Whitney Museum of American Art
99 Gansevoort Street
whitney.org/exhibitions/2026-biennial
The eighty-second Whitney Biennial presents work by 56 artists, duos and collectives exploring connection, conflict and contemporary American life.

CERAMICS NOW

Through August 28
Jane Hartsook Gallery at Greenwich House Pottery, 16 Jones Street
greenwichhouse.org/calendar
An exhibition featuring new ceramic work by Lizzy Chemel, Amir Hariri and Melissa Joseph.

TWO WAY RIVER
Through August 9; Wednesday–Sunday, 1:00–6:00 PM; closing reception August 9, 4:00–6:00 PM
Westbeth Gallery
55 Bethune Street
westbeth.org/event/two-way-river
A group exhibition curated by Sabra Booth and Sophie Sanders concludes with a public closing reception.

WHITNEY MUSEUM ANNUAL STAFF ART SHOW
August 20–September 6
Westbeth Gallery
55 Bethune Street
westbeth.org/event/whitney-museum-annual-staff-art-show
Whitney staff members step out from behind the museum scenes to present their own creative work.

FILM

CATVIDEOFEST 2026



August 8–9 at 11:00 AM
IFC Center, 323 Sixth Avenue
ifccenter.com/films/catvideofest-2026/
A compilation of new and classic cat videos benefits animal-welfare organizations while supplying an hour of communal feline absurdity.

DARK CONTINENT — THE FILMS OF AGNIESZKA HOLLAND
August 17–19; showtimes vary
Quad Cinema, 34 West 13th Street
quadcinema.com
A concentrated series highlights the politically engaged, internationally acclaimed filmmaker.



JOHN HUSTON, HOLLYWOOD MAVERICK
August 4–27; showtimes vary
Quad Cinema, 34 West 13th Street
quadcinema.com
A major retrospective surveys the genre-hopping career of director John Huston.

DANCE

JOYCE SUMMER SOIRÉE
August 4 at 7:30 PM
The Joyce Theater, 175 Eighth Avenue, reception at PHD Rooftop Lounge
joyce.org/summer-soiree-2026-jx1y
The opening performance of the Ballet Festival is followed by a rooftop reception with participating artists.

LECTURES

MICHELLE IM ARTIST TALK
August 13, 6:00–7:00 PM
Greenwich House Pottery
16 Jones Street
greenwichhouse.org/calendar
The ceramic artist offers an overview of her work and her Greenwich House summer-residency project.

ELIZABETH CADY STANTON — A REVOLUTIONARY LIFE
August 18 at 6:00 PM
Virtual program by Village Preservation
villagepreservation.org
A free presentation examines Stanton's long, complicated and consequential role in the American women's-rights movement.

FROM VILLAGE TO VILLAGE — THE IMMIGRANTS' JOURNEY TO GREENWICH VILLAGE AND THE EAST VILLAGE, 1880–1924
August 25 at 6:00 PM
Virtual program by Village Preservation
villagepreservation.org
Historian William Roka traces migration into two downtown neighborhoods during a transformative period in New York history.

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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Kelly Craig
Lic. Assoc. R.E. Broker
M: 917.656.5682
kelly.craig@compass.com