

ICON Parking? Not so Iconic.

New Yorkers Continue Campaign Against ICE Parking in Lower Manhattan

BY AUDREY HILL



PROTESTERS AT THE SEPT. 14 RALLY accused an ICON Parking location in TriBeCa of housing ICE vehicles. Photo: Audrey Hill.

Carrying signs reading “No Parking For ICE Anywhere Anytime,” dozens of New Yorkers gathered near a TriBeCa location of the garage chain ICON Parking on a golden afternoon in mid-September, aiming to call attention to the alleged presence of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) vehicles there.

As chants of “Hey ICON, you can’t hide, we know you have ICE inside!” rang out behind him, one of the protestors, Ray, said that he was not deeply involved in the movement but wanted to show support. As an attorney who had done work in immigration law, he was particularly horrified by what the agency had been doing nationally. “I just feel that our Constitution, the laws that we’ve always had on immigration, aren’t being respected,” said Ray, who was only comfortable sharing his first name. “People are not only being arrested and deported, they’re languishing in horrendous facilities.”

ICE has increasingly grabbed headlines

since Trump’s inauguration for a variety of well-documented abuses, ranging from the alleged extrajudicial killing of protestors to the frequent detention of legal immigrants to the inhumane conditions of detention centers.

Standing in front of the garage, Council Member Chris Marte, an unwavering critic of the agency, told the crowd about increasing ICE presence and kidnappings in the city — something that has been anecdotally reported by immigration activists. “People say, ‘Why are you protesting their parking lot?’ Marte said. “Because if they don’t have their parking lot, they don’t have the vehicles to abduct our neighbors.”

Longtime anti-ICE activist Julie Delaurier said that this is the central idea driving the ongoing effort by the NO ICE PARKING IN NYC Coalition, which has staged almost a dozen protests this year across lower Manhattan, targeting parking lots they believe house ICE Vehicles.

Low-Speed Car Chase

The efforts of the coalition, which includes Rise And Resist, Hands Off NYC, and Chelsea Neighbors United, began after a January 2026 *HellGate* article revealed ICE had been storing their vehicles in a parking lot on Pier 40, which is managed by Hudson River Park Trust. The organization, a publicly owned corporation overseen by the city and state, had had a longstanding contract with the agency, the latest iteration of which expired in June 2026. In March, protestors successfully pushed the Trust to not renew their contract with the agency, but were unable to make them terminate the contract early.

After ICE put out a call for 150 parking spaces within a half mile of its headquarters in April, members of the coalition ramped up their efforts to find vehicles in the neighborhood. This included monitoring the ICE contracts database, noting vehicles associated

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New School Declares War On Its Faculty

BY ARTHUR SCHWARTZ

Paul Kottman, a tenured New School professor sued the university in September, claiming that his layoff — and the termination of other tenured faculty — illegally dismantled academic tenure. His lawyer is Richard Emery, one of the country’s leading First Amendment lawyers.

The New School laid off 19 full-time faculty members in June — including nine with tenure — citing severe financial deficits and shrinking enrollment. Kottman’s lawsuit argues that the university failed to meet the strict handbook conditions required to dismiss tenured staff and neglected the mandatory “look around” process to find him another departmental post. The suit seeks Kottman’s reinstatement, back pay, and compensatory damages, arguing that using financial restructuring to bypass tenure threatens academic protections industry-wide.

The layoffs at the New School sparked months of escalating campus demonstrations, union actions, and public pushback. Critics argue that the administration used a \$60 million budget deficit to disproportionately target vocal critics and gut the university’s progressive foundations.

In March 2026, ahead of the formal layoff announcements, over 100 students, faculty, and staff marched across the 5th Avenue entrance and delivered a 10-foot-long letter

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THE 10-FOOT LONG protest letter was delivered to President Towers. Photo: NYC Central Labor Council.

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ter signed by over 1,600 community members to university President Joel Towers, demanding an end to “unilateral restructuring.” The New School Full-Time Faculty Union (FTF) collaborated with UAW Local 7902 (representing part-time faculty and student workers) to organize rolling pickets and rallies against what they termed “extreme austerity measures.”

Protesters have been particularly vocal about how the cuts dismantle the social

sciences and humanities. Faculty leaders pointed out that while arts divisions function heavily on part-time adjuncts, gutting full-time research professors eliminates the unique intellectual culture that defined the university since its 1919 founding.

A central point of public and faculty outrage is the allegation that the university used the financial crisis as an excuse to silence dissent. Beyond Kottman, the layoff of tenured economics professor Sanjay Reddy drew intense pushback. Reddy had spent years being publicly and bluntly critical of how the

administration managed its finances.

There has been a global academic backlash. High-profile global academics — including Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz — authored open letters of protest to pressure the university to reinstate the terminated faculty.

The university’s chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) issued a blistering statement accusing leadership of deploying “severe and reckless austerity” that completely hollows out academic freedom.

In this era of the Trump Administration cracking down on universities because of their curriculum — as part of its effort to undermine the First Amendment — it is disappointing that the New School, created out of our community’s iconoclastic heritage, has stooped this low. Judith Friedlander, a former New School dean and the author of a history of the institution, described the restructuring as a frontal attack on the university’s progressive, social research core. “It no longer represents what this institution stood for and was about,” she said.

What’s Left of The New School?

BY JEREMY VARON



NEW SCHOOL ON WEST 12TH STREET in 1932. Credit: New School Archives.

These are excerpts from a recent piece in Dissent magazine (reprinted with permission).

Leadership at the iconic progressive university has declared war on its own workforce, fired tenured professors, and shuttered whole departments. But what’s happening to the New School is an increasingly common story across all of higher education.

NYC’s iconic progressive university was founded in 1919 by faculty protesting the censorship of speech criticizing the First World War and later served as a refuge for European intellectuals fleeing fascism. Over the course of the school’s history, generations of professors took inspiration from these exiles’ stand against authoritarianism and proudly clung to the mission that made it “new” in the first place: a commitment to fostering creativity and critical thinking, with the aim of solving real-world problems.

Countless students at the school are drawn to its progressive bent, bringing with them fresh ideas about contemporary society and directions in rebel youth culture.... Core departments, like economics and philosophy, embrace heterodox traditions that challenge the mainstream of their fields. The New University in Exile Consortium, led by the New School, offers sanctuary and other support to today’s scholars persecuted in their home countries. The world over, the New School is famous for dissent.

In 2016, the focus of faculty and students turned in a new way to fighting authoritarianism at home... Under President Donald Trump, this authoritarianism has raged, stoking the opposition of a broad-based democracy movement. Trump’s return to office in 2025 brought ghastly assaults on higher education — student abductions, financial extortion, curricular bans, corrupt federal “investiga-

tions” — and deepened resistance among the New School’s professors and students. In April 2025, they helped spearhead a mass “Rally for the Right to Learn” in New York City protesting these measures. From that effort was born an unprecedented, citywide coalition of academic unions and professional associations to defend higher education.

Yet this academic year, the battle has been within the New School itself. New leadership has declared war on its own workforce. Drawn from the arts world, the president and provost seek to bolster Parsons, the design school within the larger university, and retreat from the humanities and social sciences. Targeting these areas, forced retirements and layoffs claimed dozens of faculty and staff. Program closures decimated whole disciplines. (The history department, where I have taught since 2008, is “indefinitely discontinued.”) Whether the New School’s rebel legacy survives is in grave doubt...

The saga is a chilling case of neoliberal austerity, pocked with disaster capitalism, descending on academia... What’s happening to the New School is an increasingly common story across all of higher education...

The New School’s financial woes are real enough, though their causes and scope are matters of dispute... University leadership, claiming a 20% enrollment drop from a peak in 2021, cites the loss of tuition revenue as its grand alibi.... Whatever the source of the troubles, faculty, staff, and students have paid the price...

The New School’s own restructuring has been particularly odious... Separate purges last winter and spring significantly shrunk the full-time faculty. Often shy of Medicare age, senior professors have meager chances of academic re-employment... With lapsing contracts left unrenewed, many part-time faculty have been hurt too.

The impact on curriculum and morale has been severe. Beloved courses and valued mentors have vanished overnight, while confusion reigns among students over how to matriculate through canceled programs.

To reach its fiscal targets, the administration also did the unthinkable. It fired tenured professors, including ten in June. Nearly all were housed in the undergraduate humanities and graduate social science divisions... No firing was based on performance; to the contrary, both current department chairs and recent recipients of promotions

and teaching awards were let go.

Though small in number, these firings are a shot across the bow of all of academia and signal the full danger of the New School’s path. Tenure is commonly regarded as lifetime employment, so long as one’s institution remains solvent. A form of job security unimaginable to most workers, it has a logic and purpose worth defending. Tenure comes after the lengthy credentialing of a Ph.D. and further years of rigorous evaluation... The ability to speak, write, and teach... without fear of being fired for one’s views has been a vital guarantor of academic freedom.

Yet tenure at the New School ultimately offered no protection at all. ...[P]er the faculty handbook, that they could fire anyone part of a...program...designated as “discontinued.” “Financial exigency” could trigger this discontinuance. ... It could therefore fire anyone, anywhere at the school.

The whole episode was a dispiriting lesson in the weakness of both laws and norms, familiar from the Trump administration’s dictatorial, stop-me-if-you-can rule. As with national politics, the “law” at the New School provided fewer constraints on executive power than anyone had imagined. So too, time-honored norms — like the sanctity of tenure and shared governance with faculty — are irrelevant if leaders have the audacity to smash them...

The New School’s attack on tenure — indeed, its entire “workforce realignment” — brazenly accelerates the long-standing objectification of academic labor. More and more, full-time faculty give way to part time, adjunct, or contract faculty. Their lot is poorer pay, fewer benefits, less research time, and more precarity. By 2023, 68% of faculty nationwide were part-time or contingent, up from 44% in 1987...

Already, social research has been devalued at the New School. Last year, it froze Ph.D. admissions for nearly the entire graduate social science division... For faculty, increased teaching loads and the slowing of sabbatical cycles take away time from scholarship, arduous in any field. What a new generation of university leaders most wants from faculty...it can get on the cheap from part-time instructors....No longer would it be a sizable community of expert thinkers, secure in their jobs, who collectively nourish democracy by probing mechanisms of power and imagining better futures...

Academia has long been a prime target for

culture war rantings about the “wokeism” of educated elites. Making it a real war, Trump’s new reign seeks to discredit, censor, bully, extort, bankrupt, and ultimately control higher education. So far, it has been an uneven effort... the banning of whole subject matters from classrooms to accord with (some) state laws and ludicrous executive orders; the cancelation of huge grants and the extraction of cash payouts for alleged violations of federal anti-DEI directives or [alleged] failures to police antisemitism on campus; proposed loyalty oaths to the Trump education agenda as a condition of federal funding.

The response from universities has for the most part been galling... Some have capitulated...[and] accepted the dismantling, alteration, or intrusive federal oversight of programs, curricula, hiring decisions, and disciplinary processes. A principled few have pushed back....

[M]ost universities, including the New School, have chosen quiescent silence. Fears of government reprisals or donor pushback for speaking out are real. ...Overcoming them, and managing any blowback, requires a courage, smarts, and will that university leaders plainly do not have. The result is a wicked irony. At precisely the moment when the United States faces unprecedented threats to democracy, a civil society institution as important as the university stifles its own voice...

Absent Trump, higher education would still face serious financial and cultural challenges. But budgetary concerns are too easily an excuse for silence, which only encourages government efforts to defund universities. The prevailing sense among institutional leaders is that getting one’s financial house in order must precede taking any risk.

The opportunity costs are enormous. The New School spent a whole year figuring out how to fire its own faculty... During that time, it made no statement nor sponsored any dialogue about how the institution might meet the current authoritarian threat... At best, it confused the question of whether the New School has any role to play in the defense of democracy. At worst, it walked away from its own legacy. Few recent times have been darker than these. May those still committed to the best of the New School turn its light back on.

Jeremy Varon is a professor of history at the New School.

What to Know About NYC's Five Ballot Proposals Ahead of Election Day

BY KAITLYN SCHWANEMANN



VOTERS CAST BALLOTS on Election Day, Nov. 4, 2025. Photo: Ben Fractenberg/The City Reporter, used with permission.

This election cycle, there are five questions for voters — or five opportunities for New Yorkers to vote yes or no on amendments to the City Charter, a constitution that establishes the framework for city government. In this case, the 2026 proposals are part of an initiative at the top of Mayor Zohran Mamdani's agenda: streamlining government processes and cutting red tape for small businesses. (Mamdani outlined these goals in his viral *Halalflation* video, lamenting city permit backlogs that drive up the price of a chicken over rice.) The Mamdani administration's COGE — Commission on Government Efficiency — has taken the helm to propose and create the five ballot questions.

"Charter commissions are often seen as opportunities to think through how the structure of government works, and propose comprehensive solutions that might not easily be developed through the regular legislative process," said Ben Weinberg, director of public policy at Citizens Union, an NYC civic engagement organization.

Susan Lerner, executive director of Common Cause New York, a nonprofit democracy watchdog group, urges voters to pay attention to local issues, even as election coverage focuses on who's in control of the House of Representatives, or the governor's race. "Every election is important, and for sure your opinion will not be reflected if you don't vote," she said. "Nobody hears your voice when you don't speak, and voting is your voice."

What are the proposals?

Unlike local laws, the Charter must be changed by a vote of the people directly because it can change the powers of government itself. The five proposals concern use of public space, city contracting, street safety, building permitting and the city's rainy day fund. Convened by Mamdani in May, COGE developed the proposals after 10 public hearings across the boroughs in June and July, where the commission heard recommendations from community members and elected officials.

Proposal 1 would remove some steps from the process of getting permission from the city to use public space to build ramps, benches and outdoor dining structures.

This proposal comes after the City Council approved a package of bills to expand outdoor dining in August, including one bringing back year-round street sheds. As it stands, applying for an outdoor dining structure can take about three to five months, and a sidewalk cafe can take up to eight months. This proposal would combine the application process with the aim of cutting it down to two months.

To streamline the permission process, the proposal would also "remove the mandatory public hearing, modernize the public advertisement requirements and direct the Department of Transportation to use alternative methods to seek public input."

Proposal 2 seeks to simplify the city contracting process by authorizing the mayor to award contracts, reduce paperwork for small businesses and nonprofits looking to work with the city, and reduce reporting requirements.

The proposal would cut down the procurement timeline by 12%, according to the COGE report. Procurement is the process by which the city picks organizations or companies to award contracts to. "The mayor has talked a lot about excellence in government, and part of that excellence is speed," said Andrew Rein, president of the Citizens Budget Commission.

The changes would shave about 30 days off of the notoriously long process for completing requests for public work. The median time between the initial public announcement and when the work is awarded is 387 days.

In fiscal year 2025, nearly 40% of the city's budget went to goods and services from outside contractors — or \$42.3 billion.

Proposal 3 combines three measures that aim to speed up processes for transportation projects, the sale of some city-owned land and leasing office space for government workers.

The first piece of the proposal would remove some steps that delay major transportation projects, in hopes of speeding up street safety initiatives, including bike and bus lanes, by 33%. These include eliminating some requirements concerning intra-agency consultations, allowing the DOT to start working on projects before presenting to community boards and letting projects continue amid some procedural planning errors. It would also speed up the sale of small pieces of city-owned land — reducing the timeline from about seven months to 90 days. The expedited process would allow for multiple agencies to review certain sales or leases at once, without a final review from the City Council. Plus, the proposal would remove hearing requirements and approvals from the City Council and City Planning Commission when the city seeks to lease office space for its employees.

Proposal 4 seeks to create a centralized construction permitting system and move waterfront construction permitting to the Department of Buildings.

The proposal would authorize more city agency officials to approve construction projects and create a permitting "hub," so that New Yorkers have to tap only one entity for approval, instead of multiple agencies. Plus, the DOB would gain control of permitting city-owned waterfront properties. Currently, the Department of Small Business Services handles permits for those types of structures. The proposal would also allow the DOB commissioner to appoint more officials who can approve construction documents.

Proposal 5 would set a goal of putting aside a rainy day fund equal to at least 12% of the city's previous year's tax revenue.

Until 2019, the city wasn't authorized to maintain a rainy day fund due to state requirements, but a ballot proposal from that year changed the course. Since then, the Citizens Budget Commission has been rallying for a larger target for savings; a 2022 report from the comptroller's office recommends 16% to support the city through the "full length of an average recession." While Rein will be voting no on this proposal because he thinks the 12% benchmark is too low, he urges voters to push for a stronger rainy day fund that's more resilient against a potential recession or economic crisis.

The proposal would also codify a state requirement that limits withdrawals to 50% of the fund, unless the mayor has a "compelling fiscal reason."

Where do I learn more?

NYC Votes, the voter education arm of the Campaign Finance Board, puts out a voter guide annually which is now online, and will be mailed to voters in early October. The organization will post summaries of statements from both supporters and opponents of each proposal the week before early voting begins. You can also head to the COGE report to read the history, context and full details of each proposal. It can be found at nyc.gov/site/charter/reports/coge-reports.page.

Voting Calendar

Election Day is November 3. First things first: make sure you—and your friends and family—are registered to vote and make a plan to vote early if you can.

— Check your voter registration —

Go to the NYC Board of Elections
<https://vote.nyc/page/am-i-registered>
or call 1-866-868-3692

October 24: Last day to register to vote

October 24: Last day to request mail in ballot application

October 24: First day of early voting

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Inherit The Wind?

BY ARTHUR SCHWARTZ



SPENCER TRACY AND FREDRIC MARCH in *Inherit the Wind*, 1960.

President Trump's rantings from the White House, and his appeal to the most base instincts of the American population, have included calls to wipe out large swaths of American history (even going so far as to deny that the Civil War was about slavery). He has also included calls to restore the United States as a "Christian Nation," whose guiding light should be the Christian Bible and not the Constitution. This caused me to watch *Inherit the Wind*, a 1960 fictional movie based on real events — a prosecution of John T. Scopes, a young science teacher and coach in Dayton, Tennessee, who volunteered to test the state's anti-evolution law in 1925. Spencer Tracy plays Henry Drummond — the brilliant defense attorney modeled after Clarence Darrow who represented Scopes. Fredric March plays Matthew Harrison Brady, the zealous prosecutor and orator modeled after William Jennings Bryan (who came close to getting elected president in 1896, 1900 and 1908).

The exchange sounds like a lot of the drama going on in the U.S. these days. Maybe Trump will sign an executive order barring the teaching of evolution, saying it is "fake" like global warming, or "harmful to young minds," like learning about racism, sex discrimination and sexual orientation.

Inherit The Wind Excerpts

Bertram T. Cates: [addressing his class as Mayor Jason Carter, Reverend Jeremiah Brown, Jessie Dunlap, and Deputy Sam enter the classroom to arrest him] Good morning visitors. For our science lesson for today, we will continue our discussion of Darwin's Theory of the descent of man. As I told you yesterday, Darwin's Theory tells us that man evolved from a lower order of animals: from the first wiggly protozoa here in the sea, to the ape, and finally to man. As some of you fellas out there probably gonna say that's why some of us act like monkeys.

Deputy Sam: Bertram T. Cates, you're charged with violation of Public Act 31428 - Volume 37, Statute Number 31428 of a state code - which makes it unlawful for any teacher of the public schools to teach any theory that denies the creation of man as taught in the Bible, and to teach instead that man has descended from a lower order of animals.

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City's Proposed "Fair Housing Growth Strategy" Plan Would Add a Sixth Borough Worth of New Housing, But No New Land

BY ANDREW BERMAN

The city has released its draft Fair Housing Growth Strategy report, a blueprint for new housing development in NYC over the next ten years. It calls for dramatic changes across the city, in every corner.

It proposes NYC increase its number of housing units by 700,000, or 20%, over ten years. That's about triple the rate NYC has been building in recent years, which have been some of the most intense years of residential building in decades.

That proposed increase would be the equivalent of adding Philadelphia to NYC in a decade — but without adding any new land. It's also the equivalent of adding a sixth borough, but no extra space.

As an illustration, Queens, the city's largest borough, has 896,333 housing units. The Bronx has 547,030 units, and Staten Island has 183,692 units, for a combined total of 730,722 units — about what is proposed to be added.

Each community board in the city would be expected to build a roughly proportional share of those new units to meet that goal. That's the equivalent of each community board adding a Hudson Yards ("the largest private real estate development in United States history") or a Long Island City ("the fastest growing urban neighborhood in America") in that time. Those developments took place on largely industrial or underutilized land which lent itself to large scale new development. But community boards like ours, for the most part, don't have such areas — so meeting those goals would require large scale demolition of existing buildings and neighborhoods.

To meet these goals, in just the next five years,* Community Board 2, Manhattan (Greenwich Village, SoHo, NoHo, Hudson Square) would need to add the equivalent of 200 more of 5-11 West 13th Street. That's the 538-foot tall tower under construction west of Fifth Avenue which will be far and away the tallest ever built in Greenwich Village.

Alternatively, 80 more of the 17-story 155 West 11th Street would be required to meet those targets. Presumably, roughly the same would be needed for the five years after that.

The housing the city and each community board would be expected to produce would be 75% market rate — which in our neighborhood means super-luxury housing — unaffordable to all but the richest of the rich. Twenty-five percent of the new housing the plan envisions is called "affordable." But 70% of that "affordable" housing, or 17.5%

of the total new housing, can require income levels that would make it unaffordable to at least almost half of all New Yorkers — and income levels unaffordable to a more than half of all NYC renters. Just 7.5% of the housing would be required to be affordable to New Yorkers at lower incomes.

The plan is based on the belief that there is an overall housing shortage in NYC, as opposed to a shortage of affordable housing, which continues to rapidly disappear. The premise is that large additions of new housing, no matter how expensive, will make prices more affordable for everyone, especially those most in need.

But the reality is that NYC actually has more housing now than it's ever had, and more housing per person than it's ever had. Many economists, planners, and housing experts dispute the contention that simply increasing housing supply will bring down costs, especially for those most in need.

If the proposed plan is adopted, moving forward it will be used to guide whether any rezoning proposal from developers or the city should be approved. Each community board will be called upon to pass rezonings to meet the housing goals these plans have set. Oftentimes those rezonings also include big giveaways to developers for luxury office, retail, and other commercial development (like the recent SoHo/NoHo rezoning), as well as the housing development they promise but frequently fail to deliver.

Prior such rezonings in our neighborhoods have missed the mark — by huge margins — at producing the housing and affordable housing they were supposed to generate. For example, rezonings in nearby Hudson Square and at St. John's Terminal failed to produce much of the housing — and especially the affordable housing — they promised. Similar results from rezonings can be found throughout the city. But under the proposed

planning framework, more such rezonings would be expected to be approved, based upon similar faulty methods of prediction of outcomes, to satisfy the goals set by the plan.

To learn more and send messages to the mayor and other city officials about the draft plan, go to www.villagepreservation.org/housing-plan.

*The plan's specific community board-by-community board housing targets only cover the next five years, as opposed to the specific citywide target, which covers ten years.



155 WEST 11TH STREET: The city's plan would require adding about 80 more of these to the neighborhood. Image courtesy of Village Preservation.

The Quiet Brick Building On Washington Street

BY BRIAN J PAPE, AIA



THIS QUIET BRICK BUILDING is a former warehouse that was repurposed for an art collector. Generous, landscaped roof terraces add to the ambiance of the single-family residence at Washington and Jane streets. Credit: Leroy Street Studio.

I've walked by this ultra-simplistic brick building at 777-781 Washington Street weekly, noticing the 'private property' signs but never seeing any activities there. Curiosity got me to look for information in the public realm and here is what I found to explain this unusual building.

There are many architecture firms working in NYC's historic districts, but a few have many projects in our Greenwich Village Historic District. While researching another project on the website of Leroy Street Studio (LSS), this project was also shown. To my best guess, this work was done close to 15 years ago.

This is how LSS describes their designs for an industrial townhouse at the southeast corner of Jane and Washington streets: "Central to the concept for this art collector's house was maximizing the amount of natural light and outdoor living space through a series of volumes carved out of an existing industrial warehouse. At the heart of the building, well insulated from the bustle of the city, sits a large courtyard lined with walkways that act as both circulation and gallery space. A three-story steel and glass curtain wall allows for simultaneous experiences between galleries and the tree-filled courtyard. Successful project delivery required a high level of coordination and management due to the complexity of new construction in a landmark district, an E-designated site with unstable soil con-

ditions, and shoring of neighboring buildings. LSS's commitment to a collaborative and hands-on working process allowed us to meet this challenge by coordinating an expert group of 17 consultants."

As evidenced by the two-story corner windows, a double-height living room has been carved from the interior. It appears like the other large window openings have their origins in the original building, while upgraded for contemporary functions, probably in a bid to satisfy historic preservation rules.

Every project reviewed by the Manhattan Community Board 2 (CB2) Landmarks Committee that involves excavation must prove with engineering analysis and procedures that neighboring properties will not be disturbed or damaged. Such was the case for this work, adjacent to many older buildings. Since this single-family mansion was completed, similar mansions have been built involving extensive excavations nearby, namely the Stryker mansion facing across Jane Street and the residential conversion with two swimming pools and penthouses just south at 12th Street and Washington Street.

Balancing the character of the former warehouse and neighborhood with the needs of a new use can be very difficult without a thorough knowledge of historic precedent. This quiet building seems to have struck that balance.



THIS AERIAL VIEW shows the courtyard in the absolute center of the image. It has been cut from the floor plates to add light and exterior space at the southeast corner of the lot. Credit: Google maps.

Parks Department Says Planned New Rec Center at 388 Hudson Will Be Built Only if Dapolito Is Demolished

BY PHYLLIS ECKHAUS

The Parks Department has again confirmed plans to demolish the Tony Dapolito Recreation Center. It has been closed since 2020, despite \$120 million previously allocated to its repair and Mayor Mamdani's campaign promise to restore the 118-year-old landmarked facility at Clarkson Street and Seventh Avenue South.

Speaking before Community Board 2's Parks and Waterfront Committee on September 9, Parks Department official Steve Simon said that the plans for a new indoor recreation center across the street, at 388 Hudson, were dependent on the demolition of Dapolito. When asked whether the plans were an "either/or" proposition, contingent on not restoring Dapolito, he replied, "Basically, yes."

Simon described Dapolito as impossible to repair and modernize. "The constraints in dealing with Dapolito are structural, they deal with layout, they deal with all sorts of other questions, apart from finances," he said. "Going back and looking at it time and time again...and realizing that the needs of this community could not possibly be accommodated by that building if we were going to comply with current safety and accessibility standards, let alone solve the structural problems with the building, we took the community board's direction and... went to 388 Hudson to create a brand new state-of-the-art facility, which would satisfy the needs of this community."

Simon did not address a study by expert architects and engineers commissioned by the Parks Department that concluded the opposite — that Dapolito could readily be retrofitted as well as repaired. The study only came to light this past spring, following a public records request from advocacy groups. Also revealed was an email from a Parks Department staffer confirming that Dapolito "can be fully repaired."

Don't Talk About Dapolito

The official agenda at the meeting was to



COMMUNITY BOARD 2'S PARKS AND WATERFRONT COMMITTEE, SEPTEMBER 9, 2026. CB2 is on record with a resolution calling for the repair and restoration of Dapolito. Photo: Village Preservation.

hear the Parks Department plans for 388 Hudson and to offer the department feedback on its design and programming. The new rec center — part of a planned 400-foot-tall tower that includes affordable housing — must go through a lengthy land use review process and is not expected to be completed for at least five years.

Committee chair Rich Caccapolo began by warning members of the public — many of whom had "Save the Dapolito Rec Center!" signs — that if they sought to "hijack" the meeting by talking about Dapolito, he would shift the meeting to a business session and foreclose public comment.

Despite the warning, people talked about Dapolito. CB2 member Mar Fitzgerald "respectfully" pushed back, suggesting that the programming and design of 388 Hudson are "intrinsically connected" to the plans for Dapolito and "we would be remiss" not to consider both spaces together, especially given the potential over-subscription to and space limits of 388 Hudson. "There's a whole other rec center across the street that may be able to support whatever 388 lacks. So let's just have a conversation about both," she said, lamenting that "the community feels silenced."

Jonathan Mellon from Village Preservation identified himself as a former Parks De-

partment employee and noted that when he worked at Parks, "We would look at all the sites together and come up with a plan, and that just seems like common sense."

Villager Anita Isola said, "It sets a very bad precedent" to demolish a landmark, "weakening landmarks law" and "destroying the trust" placed in government officials.

Democratic candidate for state assembly David Siffert said, "This community has been very clear about what they want, and they want the Dapolito Center."

Other speakers bemoaned the lack of information and discussion about Dapolito, describing the meeting as "surreal." Gil Horowitz, who noted he was a CB2 and Parks Committee member back when Tony Dapolito chaired CB2, asserted that the late activist and preservationist "would be turning over in his grave" at plans to demolish the landmarked community hub.

Perhaps five speakers — identifying themselves as city residents from outside the Village — accused Dapolito supporters of acting in bad faith, opposing affordable housing, and delaying the construction of affordable housing at 388 Hudson.

Simon touched on, but did not detail, plans for the Dapolito site — specifically a larger outdoor pool with locker room facilities. He said the Parks Department is col-

laborating with the Keith Haring Foundation on plans to preserve the artist's mural painted on the walls around the pool.

Advocates and Public Officials Speak Out

CB2 members continued discussion in the business session. Frederica Sigal described Dapolito as a "money pit" and expressed relief that Parks no longer plans to save it. Jeannine Kiely observed that fears that Parks could sell the Dapolito site to real estate developers were misplaced, as the site is state-designated parkland.

CB2 is on record with a resolution calling for the repair and restoration of Dapolito. Members proposed to flesh out further recommendations with regard to its use.

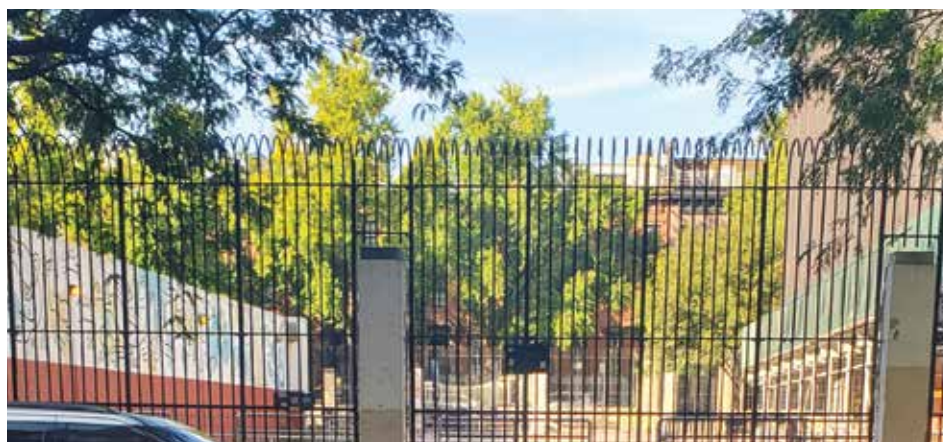
Advocates for Dapolito have been galvanized since this summer when Parks Commissioner Tricia Shimamura defended the planned demolition of Dapolito as "more efficient" than repair. Village Preservation and the Coalition to Save the Public Recreation Center Downtown responded that the Parks Department is the owner and steward of literally scores of historic landmarked buildings and structures throughout the city, including the Washington Square Arch, the department's headquarters in the Central Park Arsenal, and most of the rec centers in Manhattan, which, like Dapolito, were first constructed as public bath houses. If demolition is rationalized as more efficient than repair, advocates contend no landmark is safe.

Importantly, the two local elected officials with sway over final approvals for 388 Hudson also support the preservation and use of Dapolito. In August, Manhattan's District 3 Council Member Carl Wilson and Borough President Brad Hoylman-Sigal jointly wrote the mayor and others, urging that, "at a minimum, the visible facade of Dapolito must be preserved" — and that Parks should "maximize preservation" and "do everything in its power to maintain as many recreation services as possible within the existing space."

It's Time to Let Dapolito Go

BY ALEC PRUCHNICKI

Having been newly appointed to Community Board 2, I was advised to attend as many committee meetings as possible in order to see where I could serve most efficiently. Although I prefer to attend in person, on September 9, the meeting at the Lenox Hill Village Emergency Department was filled so I attended the Parks and Waterfront Committee meeting by Zoom. The reason the room was packed was because there has been an intense and ongoing community movement to renovate the closed Dapolito Center on Clarkson Street. Chairman Rich Caccapolo started the meeting by explaining that the agenda would include the proposed recre-



THROUGH THE FENCE AT DAPOLITO, L-R: the Keith Haring mural, empty pool, and side of the Dapolito center. Photo: Alec Pruchnicki.

ation center that will be part of the new affordable housing proposed for 388 Hudson Street, also on Clarkson, about one block away. It would not discuss Dapolito renovation. It didn't work out that way.

Most prominent in leading the demand for Dapolito renovation was Andrew Berman, director of Village Preservation, who was present by Zoom. I have enthusiastically supported many of VP's proposals, but not this one. Berman encouraged the audience to ignore Caccapolo's direction and discuss both Dapolito and 388 Hudson as they are linked by community needs, budget, and

continued on page 7

VILLAGE BLUEPRINTS – BUILDING THE NEIGHBORHOOD'S FUTURE

New West Village Mansions on Charles Lane Continue a Trend

BY BRIAN J PAPE, AIA



THE TWO TOWNHOUSES (center) planned for 7 and 11 Charles Lane's cobblestone alley. They are near 173 and 176 Perry Street at West Street (far right), a pair of glass apartment towers by architect Richard Meier and 150 Charles Street (left background) by Cook Fox. *All Renderings: The Boundary.*



A CENTRAL COURTYARD is planned for 11 Charles Lane to maximize natural light while protecting privacy.



THE TOWNHOUSE slated for 7 Charles Lane will have a pool.

Village View has covered new developments in the West Village for years. It may have seemed to start out as a one-off now and then, mainly replacing or restructuring existing townhouses or industrial lofts. The West Village has many historic, century-old brick townhouses and warehouses, and has one of the larger historic districts in the city. Now, larger buildings or parcels are getting the mansion treatment, especially properties located outside of the historic districts, with fewer restrictions on development.

Case in point: numbers 7 and 11 on Charles Lane will soon be developed by Aurora Capital Associates. The properties are just west of the West Village Houses, a mid-century Mitchell-Lama affordable housing project. The small brick warehouses and garages that sat on Charles Lane were de-

molished at least two years ago, leaving empty lots. At the time, rumor had it that these were William Gottlieb properties, who frequently collaborated with Aurora for their development expertise. This large lot was surrounded by other mid-block, mid-rise luxury multi-family developments, like 150 Charles and the Meier glass buildings on Perry Street. Residents have often complained at community board meetings that multi-family buildings were being transformed to single-family, lowering the density and making remaining homes more expensive. But why would a developer choose to give up the chance to build a multi-unit luxury block?

We may not get the full reasoning that went into the decision, but perhaps building single-family homes is simpler and easier than an apartment block. Seven and 11 Charles Lane are respectively 13,772 square feet and 13,048 square feet in floor area, and are expected to come on the market for \$67 million and \$65 million. That's a pretty quick return on investment for developers.

Charles Lane is a narrow cobblestone alleyway between Perry Street and Charles Street. High-profile buyers who want privacy for coming and going will get private rear entrances and possible parking on Charles Lane, and a grand formal entry on Perry. The renderings don't define the parking arrangements.

Each home will be 40 feet wide and six stories in height, nearly doubling the floor area of a typical Manhattan townhouse. Seven Charles is planned for five bedrooms, six bathrooms and four powder rooms, while 11 Charles is to have four bedrooms, eight bathrooms and three powder rooms. Square footage accounts for some of the \$2 million price difference between the two listings, but the property at 7 Charles is also designed with an indoor pool in the basement, and will feature a structural glass ceiling for a brighter than normal basement. The homes will have double-height main living spaces of 20-foot ceilings.

The homes are not yet under construction, allowing for buyer requests for modifications. The current designs have a central courtyard to provide natural light inside while protecting privacy, and roof deck views of Manhattan. Some lot-line windows on the newer apartment building to the west may be obstructed.

Marc Turkel, founding partner of the project's architectural firm Leroy Street Studio (LSS), designed the properties with privacy as a priority. Founded in 1995 at a Leroy Street location, the studio has grown and relocated just below Grand Street, staying close to its roots. In a 2025 article by Rebecca Bratburd for *Mansion Global* magazine, renderings by *The Boundary* help to visualize the new project that is described in some detail.

"The courtyards are wonderful, light-filled spaces that make the place feel both open and private," Turkel said about similar properties he has designed in the past. "It's one of the ways we can take a very large home and unify it and make everybody feel like they're connected to each other even though they're in separate spaces. They all cohere around the central courtyard."

Turkel described using handmade Danish brick previously employed in other West Village projects by his firm, combined with bronze window systems and paneling. He said, "It's the kind of thing that when it works well, it's quiet and respectful on the street, and when you come inside, you discover this whole world within...This idea of privacy is the highest form of luxury. This building is meant to start out by saying it's a familiar neighbor. Something that you can feel is respectful and understands the rules, then you go inside and you're really surprised at what you couldn't imagine."

Elections *continued from page 3*

Voting Locations:

North of W. 4th St.

IS70 373 West 17th St. (between 8th & 9th)

South of W. 4th St.

City as School, 16 Clarkson St.

(between Varick & Hudson)

East of 2nd Ave.

Campos Plaza Community Center,

611 East 13 St. (between B & C)

November 1: Last day of early voting

November 3: Election day (polls open 6 a.m.-9 p.m.)

Find polling locations and sample ballot at vote.nyc

This story was first published by The City Reporter September 23.

**SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS WITH US —
WRITE TO EDITOR@VILLAGEVIEW.NYC**

Inherit the Wind *continued from page 3*

Henry Drummond: For I intend to show this court that what Bertram Cates spoke quietly one spring morning in the Hillsboro High School is not crime. It is incontrovertible as geometry to any enlightened community of minds.

Prosecutor Tom Davenport: In this community, Colonel Drummond, and in this sovereign state, exactly the opposite is the case. The language of the law is clear, your Honor. We do not need experts to question the validity of a law that is already on the books.

Henry Drummond: Well, what do you need? A gal-lows to hang him from?

Prosecutor Tom Davenport: That remark is an insult to this entire community.

Henry Drummond: And this community is an insult to the world.

Henry Drummond: I say that you cannot administer a wicked law impartially. You can only destroy, you can only punish. And I warn you, that a wicked law, like cholera, destroys everyone it touches. Its upholders as well as its defiers....Can't you understand? That if you take a law like evolution and you make it a crime to teach it in the public schools, tomorrow you can make it a crime to teach it in the private schools? And tomorrow you may make it a crime to read about it. And soon you may ban books and newspapers. And then you may turn Catholic against Protestant, and Protestant against Protestant, and try to foist your own religion upon the mind of man. If you can do one, you can do the other. Because fanaticism and ignorance is forever busy, and needs feeding. And soon, your Honor, with banners flying and with drums beating we'll be marching backward, BACKWARD, through the glorious ages of that Sixteenth Century when bigots burned the man who dared bring enlightenment and intelligence to the human mind!

Judge: I hope counsel does not mean to imply that this court is bigoted.

Henry Drummond: Well, your honor has the right to hope.

Judge: I have the right to do more than that.

Henry Drummond: You have the power to do more than that.

[the Judge holds Drummond in contempt of court]

My View of the Village

BY ROGER PARADISO



Glinda the Good Witch on a Halloween Dress Rehearsal

I was walking around and I saw this crazy bus with people dancing on the roof. I followed the bus until it stopped at Washington Square. People were dressed as Glinda the Good Witch from the Broadway musical, *Wicked*.

I asked the bus driver for information and she pointed to the side of the bus. The sign asks you to "Gather your closest companions and embark on this bewitching adventure with Glinda where every moment is a celebration and every mile is a memory in the making."

It looked like fun for those of you who want to dress up as Glinda and tour the Village and other places.

Kips Bay Residents Urge NYU Langone to Save Local Movie Theater

By Paige Tang, Deputy News Editor

Here are excerpts from *Washington Square News*, September 11, 2026

New Yorkers and local officials rallied for their local AMC theater, slated to close by 2027, after learning that NYU Langone Health purchased the site to expand its medical center campus. About 100 residents joined the Community Board 6 meeting to express their concerns. All 47 written testimonials condemned the closure, about two weeks after news spread that NYU Langone has control of the site.

Assemblymember Keith Powers noted that NYU Langone representatives aim to expand outpatient and ambulatory care in the space, but that their plans are not finalized.

Kips Bay resident Theo van der Meer said, "We chose to live in a neighborhood and not a sprawling medical complex, which is slowly what the neighborhood is becoming."

NYU Langone representatives were not present at the Community Board 6 meeting, and the medical center did not respond to WSN's request for comment.

Manhattan Borough President Brad Holzman-Sigal said that NYU Langone would have to seek approval from the community board to change how the lot with the theater will be zoned.

"This is not just a theater — it's a community asset," he told WSN. "I will be advocating that a theater remains in this location."

Read the entire article "Kips Bay residents urge NYU Langone to save local movie theater" - *Washington Square News* - <https://nyunews.com/>



Provincetown Playhouse

If NYU still owns this historic playhouse, you would think they would put a plaque outside to remind people that Eugene O'Neill, arguably one of our best playwrights, would get some mention of his role in making Provincetown the place to go for riveting theater back in the early part of the 20th century. O'Neill's most acclaimed plays include *Emperor Jones*, his first smash hit at Provincetown in the Village. *A Long Day's Journey Into Night* won the Tony Award for best play on Broadway as well as the Pulitzer Prize.

Gates and Fences Around Washington Square Park?

I asked a police officer about a rumor that NYU or the city will be fencing in and gating Washington Square Park soon. The officer said it could happen. Several violent crimes surrounding the park may be one reason they are thinking of closing it at night. Wow this is big news. Keep a look out for this at community board meetings.



KEEP THE POLICE HERE FOREVER — and forget about the fence and gates. Photos: Roger Paradiso.

Dapolito *continued from page 5*

geography. I have been to many meetings obeying Robert's Rules of Order, including a defined agenda, but I have never heard an audience participant reject and override a stated agenda. Never. But Berman read the audience well, and speaker after speaker wanted to discuss Dapolito, sometimes ignoring 388 Hudson completely. The chat line over Zoom eventually ended up with 450 chats, a number I have never seen in any other Zoom meeting. Many demanded both sites to be discussed, so let's discuss both in proper context.

A Parks Department spokesman stated that the original plan was to renovate Dapolito and a budget was even approved. Dapolito supporters had confirmed that with documents obtained from a FOIL request and demanded that it be implemented. But the Parks representative said that once a closer look was taken at the 120-year-old building it was clear that it would be more difficult, expensive, and maybe even non-compliant with ADA access after renovation. I could have saved Dapolito supporters a lot of FOIL access hassle by saying that of course anything can be accomplished if you are willing to spend the time and money on renovation. In my own 40-year-old building and my previous office in a newly constructed building, new renovations discovered new problems and expenses once renovations actually started. Also, the new recreation center will have facilities like an indoor pool and a larger basketball court than even a successfully renovated Dapolito Center. The Parks Department is also planning to start renovation and enlargement of the outside pool next to Dapolito possibly including the Keith Haring mural. It is unclear if any of the Dapolito supporters could find any services reinstituted there that could not also be put in the new center at 388 Hudson. If the Parks Department has its way, eventually there will be a new state-of-the-art recreation center at 388 Hudson and an outdoor pool next to the demolished Dapolito site. If the Dapolito supporters have their way there will be two state-of-the-art recreation centers within one block of each other. The question now shifts from "could" we do this to "should" we do this.

The Parks Department does not have an unlimited budget and is presently fighting to get the total up to 1% of the city budget and distribute services to the 59 community boards in New York City. There are only 12 indoor pools and CB2 will have one. There are 53 outdoor pools and 17 mini-pools and CB2 will have a large one. There are 35 major recreation centers, although 52 of various sizes. CB2 will have one major center. It will also have a baseball/soccer field on Clarkson Street and another one three blocks away on Pier 40. It would be wonderful if we had an unlimited budget and could afford multiple sites within a block of each other, covering present needs and nostalgia for the admittedly historic Dapolito Center.

This is selfish. In fact, it goes beyond selfishness to institutional racism. This is not the same as personal racism which I do not believe



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is at play here. Institutional racism involves a set of policies and priorities which intentionally or unintentionally favor a privileged segment of society over an underprivileged, and usually racially discriminated against, segment. CB2 is one of the richest, most politically powerful, and predominantly whitest neighborhoods in the city. To access the limited and contested city budget to get an above average level of parks services and then demand more is clearly an example of institutional racism and selfishness. Yes, Dapolito is historic and beautiful. Institutional racism, even if inadvertent, is also historic but ugly.

There is a compromise, if the Dapolito supporters are willing to compromise. Tobi Bergman, a former CB2 member I believe, has proposed that the main Dapolito building be demolished, as planned, and the land turned into new open space parkland, (*Village View*, April 2026, "Just Imagine-A Wide Open Park Space from Varick to Hudson") This would produce a park stretching from Varick to Hudson streets, including the ball/soccer fields, the small playground, the renovated outdoor pool and possibly a renovated and improved façade from the Dapolito Center to provide a grand entrance to this new open space. Although the Hudson River Park is only about three blocks away, there is a shortage of open green park land in that area of Varick/Hudson/Clarkson. During the fight over the Elizabeth Street Garden, many of its supporters pointed to the need for open space for a variety of esthetic and health reasons. Since some of these supporters are also involved in this fight, I hope they transfer this love of greenery to this compromise proposal.

Chelsea Hotel Artist Staring Down Eviction

Gerald Decock has lived at the hotel for 32 years. This may be his final one.

BY AUDREY HILL



GERALD DECOCK stands in the middle of “the vortex” - his apartment in the Chelsea Hotel. Credit: Blake Davis.

Stepping into Gerald Decock’s apartment is like stepping into one of his psychedelia-inspired paintings — every surface bursts and shimmers in vibrant color, from the floors to his entirely pink ceiling. Decock is one of the last artists residing in the iconic Chelsea Hotel, which now functions mainly as a luxury hotel. But after a years-long legal battle, he is probably going to have to leave.

While the few other artists who still live at the hotel were able to secure rent stabilization, Decock, represented by the same lawyer as many of his peers, said he feels like he’s slipped through the cracks. Decock said he’s paid his rent on time throughout his 32-year tenure there, scraping together \$2,700 through painting sales and cutting hair. He believes the owners want to strip his apartment clean of its character and lease it at market rate. Rooms at the Chelsea now start at around \$650 per night.

His legal troubles began in 2007, and have continued for almost two decades through multiple lawyers, several different owners of the Chelsea and many levels of the court system.

As of this writing, Decock is trying to appeal an eviction order giving him until Sept. 30 to leave his home. It’s scary, but in some ways, he’s used to it. “More than half of the time that I’ve lived here, I have had this hang-

ing over my head,” he said. “I’m in limbo constantly. I never really feel 100% secure.”

Decock is far from the only tenant that the Chelsea has tried to evict. Kennan McClung grew up going to the hotel, where his artist grandparents lived. After taking over their apartment in 2023, the Chelsea also tried to force him to leave. Luckily, he was able to get a lawyer friend involved and the Chelsea left him to his rent-stabilized apartment. McClung, who doesn’t work in an artistic field, said he makes bad music to “try to keep the [Chelsea’s] soul alive.”

Gaining Traction on Social Media

Earlier this year, with the assistance of various friends in the art world, Decock took to social media to share his story. Sitting with his legs crossed on a chair in the middle of his apartment, Decock tells the camera that he is one of the last artists living in the Chelsea Hotel, and that they are trying to evict him. He then leads the audience through the halls of the building to see some of the 21 paintings purchased by the hotel right before they renewed their efforts to kick him out — a move he cast as blatantly cruel.

The message, which feels like a transmission from a bygone era of New York, evidently resonated, garnering more than 2 million views. Decock has since amassed

more than 32,000 followers on Instagram.

The indignation inspired by his story frequently spills into the comments of the Chelsea Hotel Instagram account, which often posts images of former famous residents of the hotel — the irony of which commenters are quick to point out. One commenter wrote “@hotelchelsea is just another soulless monstrosity profiting off artists while harming the artists that made the Chelsea famous.” On a picture of Janis Joplin from the 60s that the hotel posted, another commenter posted “Janis would be grossed out if she saw what y’all were doing to Gerald.”

At weekly painting sales, New Yorkers and out-of-towners alike come to buy paintings, lend their support, and get a glimpse of Decock’s life at the Chelsea. Decock welcomes them in, shares updates on his legal situation, and if they stay long enough, regales them with tales about his time at the famed hotel. Anthony Kiedis, the front man for the Red Hot Chili Peppers, he says, occupied the unit before he moved in.

“I think it’s unconscionable,” said Erin Kelly, a nearby resident. “People are being priced out. If the city loses its artists, I feel like it loses its soul.”

One and all who step into the “vortex” — Decock’s name for his home and workspace — stop in their tracks, arrested by the unique

space. Every inch of the apartment, from the walls to the floors to the ceilings is covered in paint, gold leaf, and shimmering metallic foil.

Decock said as a child, he was fascinated by cars: their bright metallic colors and the way they shone in the light. He’s also inspired by the natural world and psychedelia. His paintings, which he began working on after decorating his apartment, often incorporate many of those elements.

Melissa Haupt, a frequent guest of the hotel, attended one of Decock’s sales. While she loves the history of the hotel, Haupt said she might consider staying elsewhere if they go through with Decock’s eviction.

For many who pass through Decock’s apartment, his story is a microcosm of a broader trend: many of the same places in New York that are eager to capitalize on their rich artistic histories are also now places where it is nearly impossible for real artists to survive. “It is capitalism,” said Amanda Sromek, who spent time at the Chelsea years ago. “Institutional redevelopment is destroying the soul of New York.”

For Decock, his struggle is about more than being an artist. It’s about affordability more broadly. “I’m a person. Even if I wasn’t an artist, I’m 67 years old. I’ve lived here for almost 32 years,” he said. “Can I honestly navigate New York real estate?”

How Clean Is the Hudson River?

The Answer Can Change From Pier to Pier

BY BRENNAN LABRIE



LUNA HORSLEY, a seasonal field science assistant with the River Project, collects a water sample in Hudson River Park. Photos: Hudson River Park Trust.

In April, the New York State Department of Health (DOH) announced that New Yorkers could eat some fish from the Lower Hudson River for the first time in 50 years. It marked a milestone for a river with a toxic reputation and an infamous designation as the country's largest Superfund site. But many New Yorkers still view the murky river with skepticism. After all, the state says you can eat fish from the river, but should you? And is it safe to spend time on the water — or even swim in it?

The answer, it turns out, depends on where and when you go. A public water quality database compiled during warmer months by a citywide network of researchers and volun-



WATER QUALITY TESTING performed by the River Project.

teers can help you make your decision.

The Community Water Quality Testing (CWQT) project launched in 2011 in response to requests for timely water quality data from kayakers, boaters and other people who use the river. Existing databases showed a steady decline in chemical pollutants in the water thanks to actions like the 1972 Clean Water Act and a major cleanup by the Environmental Protection Agency. But those heading out onto the river were dealing with a more immediate concern: sewage contamination. "They'd take people out on the water and it would smell like sewage, and it would look like sewage," said Cody Herrmann, program coordinator for CWQT. The testing they requested from the state could take months, she said. "The

state and other agencies are doing really important large-scale, long-term research, but that's not as helpful to someone who wants to go kayaking this weekend," said Siddhartha Hayes, manager of research and aquaria at Hudson River Park Trust.

The Trust's River Project team is one of 12 groups spanning nonprofits, colleges and even a high school — as well as community volunteers — that gather weekly water quality data from May to October. They collect samples at about 100 sites ranging from the Hudson River to the Gowanus Canal and Flushing Creek and test them for enterococcus bacteria, an indicator of fecal contamination. Results are posted on a public spreadsheet and shared in a newsletter every Friday during the recreation season.

The Hudson River Park team takes samples at six spots along the park's four-mile shoreline and four in Hoboken. A team from John Jay College, led by Dr. Sandra Swenson (from John Jay College has been testing the Hudson River's water for the past two decades) and her environmental science students, collects samples from Piers 84, 96 and 99 in Hell's Kitchen.

Over the 20 years she's tested the Hudson's water, Dr. Swenson said the river has become "undoubtedly much cleaner." It's certainly better than the Hudson of her childhood, which she said was filled with "cars, gunk and all sorts of debris."

These days, the Hudson River is "actually quite a healthy body of water," said Tina Walsh, vice president of partnerships and engagement at the Hudson River Park Trust. Seahorses are among the aquatic species that have rebounded in the river and are now thriving, according to Walsh. "They're very sensitive to pollution and to water conditions, and they're seen as one of our top species every year in our survey," she said.

Our local stretch of the Hudson is far downstream from where General Electric dumped more than a million pounds of toxic PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) in the mid-20th century. While the legacy contamination remains a concern, PCBs accumulate primarily in sediment and fish, making eating contaminated fish a greater exposure risk than casual contact with the water while kayaking. If anything, we're seeing a slight increase in fish abundance, which is kind of wildly at odds with almost every large-scale vertebrate biodiversity survey," Hayes said.

The river's murky appearance alone doesn't reveal whether the water is contaminated. Walsh said, "It's always been green, brown and murky." This is caused by a thick layer of mud on the river's floor getting stirred up by powerful currents that move both ways, she explained. Phytoplankton add a green shade to the mix. But while the river thrives as a whole, its water quality fluctuates wildly at the local level due to spikes in enterococ-



THE HUDSON RIVER is home to numerous recreation opportunities but many New Yorkers still view the murky river with skepticism.

cus bacteria, which comes from the intestinal tracts of humans and animals. "It can even change from pier to pier," Walsh said.

For example, on September 10, Pier 96 had a reading of 10 "most probable number" (MPN), an acceptable level of bacteria according to DOH standards. Meanwhile, the Pier 99 boat launch, just a stone's throw away, had an "unacceptable" reading of 199 (anything above 104 is a red flag). Across the river in Hoboken that same day, one reading came back above 24,196 MPN.

Rainstorms are usually behind spikes in bacteria levels, as the city's sewer system, which combines stormwater runoff and sewage, fills up quickly and releases overflow into local waterways. Even a tenth of an inch of rain an hour can overwhelm the 150-year-old system, Herrmann said. Leaking septic systems, sewage discharge from boats and even bird droppings can cause bacteria spikes too, Dr. Swenson added. Microplastics and floating trash can also enter catch basins and wash into the river.

On July 30, Pier 96 had an especially bad day of its own, hitting 8,704 MPN. The good news is that testing spots along Hudson River Park often register below 10 MPN. This stretch of the Hudson is a tidal estuary, where the tide changes approximately every six hours, helping to dilute enterococcus bacteria and flush them out of the system, often within 36 hours, according to Hayes. Smaller, more confined waterways like the Gowanus Canal typically have much higher bacteria levels.

An accidental splash is different from swallowing river water, according to Dr. Swenson. "The bacteria contaminated water isn't going to cause serious harm, but if it's ingested it can be very problematic," she said. But if the water contains high levels of bacteria, does that mean you should think twice about eating fish caught in it? Not necessarily. "Pathogens have nothing to do with how safe the animals are to consume," Hayes said. "Fish and other wild animals eat dead and rotting

things constantly." The threat to fish eaters comes from PCBs and other man-made toxins that have accumulated in the fish's flesh and can be passed on to us.

Dr. Swenson has caught and eaten striped bass from the Hudson, which spend much of their lives out in the Atlantic Ocean, and said they're "delicious." She personally favors less fatty fish, which tend to accumulate lower levels of PCBs.

Under the DOH's updated guidance, New Yorkers can eat certain fish from the Lower Hudson River, although limits vary by species and who is eating the catch. For example, the general population can eat up to four meals of striped bass a month, while people who may become pregnant and children under 15 are limited to one. The state advises everyone to avoid eating carp and smallmouth bass altogether.

The state also permits the general population to eat limited amounts of blue crab meat but advises people in sensitive groups not to eat it. Everyone should avoid consuming the crabs' internal organs and cooking liquid, where contaminants can accumulate. For the full list of species, consumption limits and preparation precautions, see the DOH's Lower Hudson River fish advisory table.

Kayaking conditions can change after rain, while the safety of a fish meal depends on the species and who is eating it. But what about swimming? Water quality is only part of the equation. The stretch of the Hudson along Manhattan is classified for "secondary contact" recreation, such as kayaking, rather than "primary contact" activities like swimming.

Even when bacteria levels are low, strong currents and heavy boat traffic present additional risks. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation warns that both factors, along with changing weather and submerged hazards, need to be considered when swimming outside designated bathing areas.

Originally published in W42St.

The Village View

Published by Village View Media, Inc.,
a tax exempt 501c3 corporation.
Contributions can be mailed to us at
225 Broadway Suite 1902
New York, NY 10007.
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OPINION

Pull Your Boots On!

BY THOMAS LAMIA



REQUIRED CAMPAIGN FOOTWEAR. Photo: Susan Lamia.

Jonathan Swift said, in 1710: “Falsehood flies, and the Truth comes limping after it.”

When asked for context, Swift elaborated: “. . . when men come to be undeceived, it is too late; the jest is over, and the tale hath had its effect: like a man, who hath thought of a good repartee when the discourse is changed, or the company parted; or like a physician, who hath found out an infallible medicine, after the patient is dead.”

This wisdom from the author of *Gulliver’s Travels* found a receptive audience among generations of political operatives. The image of a lie spreading at light speed while its victims plan a withering response is like Mike Tyson’s crack about the effectiveness of plans: every boxer has one until he takes a punch in the face.

An 1820 article in Maine’s *Portland Gazette* put the message thusly: “Falsehood flying from Maine to Georgia while truth pulls her boots on.”

The footwear analogy and political context have appeared in myriad forms over centuries attributed, among others, to Thomas Jefferson, Mark Twain and Winston Churchill. Clearly, the wisdom of Jonathan Swift caught a political wave.

One would think that by now candidates would be fully aware of the cost of navel-gazing while opposition lies reach their targets. The reverse has happened. Today’s political liar is expert in giving reasonable doubt to his lie by sprinkling it with supportive speculation. Facts and detail are avoided, the exploration of rabbit holes is encouraged. The distraction of the drama gives the lie protective cover as it finds its way to the gullible.

In 2016 Donald Trump’s chief lieutenant, Kellyanne Conway, created a fresh starting line for the political lie, introducing “alternative facts” into the political vocabulary. Voila! Trump gets elected and sets about his version of governing, while the *Washington Post* keeps a running count of the lies: 30,573 in his first term; a number so outrageously high that the press, public and political opposition turn away with disgust and horror. The lying continues, but the counting stops. The liar learns that if no political price is paid, the lie becomes mere backdrop.

The sheer volume and brazen audacity of Trump’s lies (never admitted, never withdrawn) has exhausted his critics. His veracity is no longer an issue; he has none, he can live with it and so must we. In press conferences and gaggles on Air Force One, he often responds with denials or evasion and attacks the questioner (“That’s a stupid question!”). End of discussion — no news in that. Acceptance of a climate of untruths has become the agreed playing field.

It now seems clear that both major political parties understand that this year’s mid-term elections will be of monumental importance to the country. The testing of our Consti-

tution by President Trump’s style of governance has brought us to a crossroad. Trump says, and may sincerely believe, that Article II of the Constitution gives him the power to do whatever he likes as president — no limits, no restrictions, no accountability. The constitutional institutions of government (Congress, the courts, the states, the rule of law) and our 250 year history of struggle to unite disparate peoples into one population (*E pluribus unum*), is either over his head or beneath his contempt. He is getting away with it because he has a working plurality among voters, Congress, federal agencies and, possibly, the Supreme Court. Donald Trump is not untouchable by law, but he has found protective cover for his regal beliefs in Article II of the Constitution and in the immunity conferred on him by the Supreme Court’s 2024 election eve decision in *United States v. Trump*. Our system cannot be so open to capture. It must be reformed.

It would be Pollyannish to expect that this situation will be reversed by one, or several, elections. The seeds of dissension within the country were in the ground before independence was won and they remain vigorous. The birth pains of achieving representative government and having it tested by wars, geographic expansion, civil war, reconstruction, financial collapse and recovery are still active. The seeds of resentment are deeply-seated still in several parts of the country. They continue to produce sturdy plants, tangled and in need of pruning. A constitutional convention for discussion and reform among all citizens is needed.

As we pull on our boots to be ready for elections in 2026 and 2028, care must be taken to respect and participate in our democracy. This requires voting, of course, but it also requires sharing values and goals. Donald Trump is not the first president to have a personal agenda or selfish attributes, but he is the first to have acted on them, lead an insurrection and avoid criminal prosecution. He is also, perhaps, the first to hold a major political party hostage to his power. His claim that only he can lead us to glory is, of course, a lie. A landslide mid-term defeat of Republican candidates in November would substantially dilute his power. A Democrat majority in the House would expose his agents to subpoenas to appear and testify under oath or face contempt citations. A Senate majority would give Democrats the upper hand in advising and consenting to presidential appointments. Legislation could pass in both houses and be sent to the president for enactment or veto. A two-thirds majority in the House and Senate would override a presidential veto. Impeachment and conviction (by 2/3 of senators present) would be within reach.

We are pulling on our boots now, but much is yet to be done.



GREENWICH HOUSE

The Loneliness Epidemic Hiding in Plain Sight Among NYC's Older Adults

Many of the older adults who come through Greenwich House's Older Adult Centers are navigating some kind of loss. A spouse or partner may have passed away. Friends they've known for decades may have died, one by one. Their children may have grown up and moved away, and the calls and visits may have become less frequent. Over time, those losses can shrink a person's world in ways that aren't always immediately visible.

This is not unusual in New York City. A 2026 Service Needs Assessment from NYC Aging found that roughly one in five older adults in Manhattan report high levels of loneliness, and more than one in four describe themselves as socially isolated. Retirement and declining mobility compound the same pattern, narrowing the daily contact that once came from a job, a commute, or an easy trip outside. New York City is home to roughly 1.8 million older adults — a population that has grown by nearly 40% since 1980 and continues to climb. In a city this dense and fast-moving, it is entirely possible to be surrounded by millions of people and still feel almost entirely alone.

We have known for years that isolation can affect both physical and mental health. The challenge is that isolation rarely announces itself. A National Academies of Sciences study found that social isolation raises the risk of premature death from all causes by a margin that rivals smoking, obesity, and physical inactivity, and is associated with roughly a 50% increased risk of dementia, a 29% increased risk of heart disease, and a 32% increased risk of stroke. More than a third of adults 45 and older report some degree of loneliness, and the risk climbs further for those who live alone, have limited mobility, or are managing a chronic illness

— circumstances that become more common with each decade of age.

October offers a fitting moment to talk about this. The month opens with the International Day of Older Persons on October 1, includes Mental Illness Awareness Week from October 4 - 10, and closes with World Mental Health Day and National Depression Screening Day on October 10. Together, they're a reminder that mental health does not stop maturing once someone reaches retirement age, and that the isolation many older New Yorkers experience is a mental health issue, not just an unfortunate byproduct of getting older.

The challenge is that isolation tends to show up gradually, in small changes that are easy to miss or explain away. A parent who used to call every few days goes quiet. A neighbor you used to see out and about rarely leaves their home now. Someone skips a doctor's appointment they normally wouldn't miss, or seems less interested in meals, hobbies, or conversations they used to enjoy. Sleep patterns shift. They may seem more forgetful or foggy than usual, or say something that sounds hopeless, even in passing. None of these signs alone is proof of a crisis, but together, or as part of a pattern, they are worth paying attention to.

It is also worth naming something that often gets missed: what looks like depression in an older adult is sometimes rooted in isolation itself, not a separate condition layered on top of it. A sudden drop in someone's usual mood, energy, or interest that lines up with a recent loss, a move, a change in mobility, or a shrinking circle of contact is worth paying closer attention to. The underlying cause may be the isolation, and addressing that directly, through connection and routine as much as through treatment,

can be part of what helps.

The good news is that connection is one of the more addressable parts of this problem, and small actions genuinely help, such as:

- Make a regular phone call or visit. Even a short one matters more than people often realize.
- Encourage one standing weekly routine, whether it's a class, religious service or regular coffee with a friend. Having something on the calendar gives the week structure and puts a person around others on a predictable schedule.
- Treat a mental health check-in the same way you'd treat a checkup with a cardiologist: as a normal part of taking care of yourself, not a sign that something is wrong.
- Say hello to a neighbor.
- Become a member at an older adult center, such as Greenwich House's Older Adult Network.
- Attend a group.
- Volunteer.
- Share a laugh.

For older adults navigating this kind of loss, Greenwich House's Older Adult Centers and its geriatric mental health services have become a lifeline, not by treating isolation as an afterthought, but by building connection back into people's weeks. That model works in part because the support is right where people already are. In partnership with the Department for the Aging, Greenwich House has opened 11 satellite clinics where licensed therapists are embedded directly in Older Adult Centers. Mental health support sits inside the same building as the lunch program, the art class, and the front desk staff who already know someone's name. That matters, because it means getting help does not

require a separate appointment across town or a referral that feels like one more barrier. Services include individual and group psychotherapy, crisis intervention, medication management, and bereavement counseling. Therapists work together with case managers to connect members with broader resources for support and engagement.

One Older Adult Center member's experience illustrates what this can look like. After her husband passed and her children settled into their own lives out of state, a friend encouraged her to try the Older Adult Center nearby. What kept her coming back wasn't any one class or activity. It was the staff, sharing meals with other older adults, new friendships, and the feeling that people noticed when she was there. The exercise and art classes turned out to be a nice bonus, but the real draw was having somewhere to belong. The on-site therapist was someone she already recognized from the center, not a stranger she had to seek out, and that made it easier to say yes to a conversation. Months later, she still shows up several times a week.

This October, it's worth paying attention to the older adults in our lives who may be spending more time alone. Call a parent. Check on a neighbor. Invite a friend to lunch. These are small things, but they can make a real difference. And for anyone who needs more support, help is available close to home, often closer than they realize.

Written by Greenwich House staff, including Sigourney E. E. Nelson, LMHC, Department of Geriatric Mental Health therapist. Learn more about Greenwich House's mental health services for older adults at greenwichhouse.org/health-services/mental-health-clinics.

Democrats, Don't Forget Staten Island

BY ALEC PRUCHNICKI

Of all the political races heading to this November's vote, the one I am most interested in is for the House of Representatives NY-11 District. This includes all of Staten Island, and several areas in Brooklyn such as Bay Ridge, Dyker Heights, and Bensonhurst. This is probably the most Republican district in New York City, and the only one that has a Republican representative in Congress. Although it is heavily Republican, it has voted for Democrats at times with Max Rose being elected in 2018 and President Obama winning it once.

Those exceptions are what encourages me this year. When Rose won in 2018, it was a midyear election and Trump was not too popular. This year's midterm election has Trump even more unpopular and Demo-

cratic turnout soaring in special elections. Eventually, Nicole Malliotakis beat Rose — by almost 30 points in their last competition — and Trump beat Harris by over 30 points in 2024. But a lot has happened since then. Trump's disapproval rating has soared as has the cost of gasoline for the car-driving population of Staten Island.

As for Malliotakis, among her first actions in Congress, she voted to question election results from some contested states and voted against impeaching Trump in his second trial. She has been close to Trump on many issues although she questioned a few of his policies without confronting or angering him.

The Democratic nominee opposing her is Mike DeCillis. He is proud of his heritage as a multi-generation Italian American, resident

of Staten Island (although Brooklyn right now), and union member. He worked as an EMS first responder to 9/11 before becoming a New York City police officer. During that time, he obtained a law degree and served in a variety of progressive causes. Earlier in his career, he obtained a master's degree in education and taught special needs children. His background is one of public service, although never as a professional politician like Malliotakis.

So, how do these two compare on the issues?

Malliotakis was originally a Rubio supporter but when Trump got the nomination, she went along with most Republicans, endorsed him enthusiastically and he endorsed her. She depends on the traditional Republican turn out of the Southern half of Staten Island. If significant numbers of them defect

to DeCillis, or just stay home, this midterm election could be a repeat of the 2018 results.

On the issues, DeCillis is consistently progressive. He supports Medicare for All, affordability, defense of the Department of Education and its programs from Trump cuts and attempted destruction, and the defense of democracy in its fight with Trump's totalitarian policies. His website, decillisforcongress.com, has more details.

How do these two compare on the strengths and weaknesses of their campaigns, the so-called horse race issues?

Malliotakis has a hold on the traditional Republican voters of Staten Island, minus the defectors and abstainers. DeCillis has presumed good support in the one third of the district

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CHARACTERS OF THE VILLAGE

David Rothenberg — Founder of The Fortune Society

BY BRIAN AND JOY PAPE

Sometimes an event happens that changes a life forever. For David Rothenberg, it was that night when he realized what his play said about real life for former prisoners. It seems unlikely that a theater and television producer would become a staunch advocate for prison and parole reform, but sometimes fate steps in. Rothenberg's multilayered life has thrust him into Broadway's brightest lights, prison riots, political campaigns, civil rights sit-ins, and a Central American Civil War.

Rothenberg told the *Village View* what led up to that moment of epiphany. Born and raised in New Jersey, he always knew New York was the place to be. "I didn't want to live anywhere else," he said. "It was a spirit of freedom, opportunities, lack of judgment." As a young theater publicity agent, he represented some of the most successful productions in the second half of the 20th century. He then spent time in Italy, hanging out with Italian friends in music and the theater. When he returned to New York in 1964, he looked for similar types of theater. He chose to live on Sheridan Square — his own "little piazza" — and has lived in the West Village ever since.

After reading *Fortune and Men's Eyes*, Rothenberg produced the play in 1967 at the Actor's Playhouse in the Village. The Fortune Society literally began on the stage of that theater in an after performance talk-back. In 2006, he co-authored and directed *The Castle*, with a cast of formerly incarcerated men and women that ran off-Broadway for a year.

Rothenberg said, "A college professor brought some students for a discussion of the play, which was right up my alley. I came out with two of the actors and we started fielding questions. One guy stood up at the back of the house and declared his experience in



DAVID ROTHENBERG was an unlikely person to become a justice advocate but one theater production changed his life and work. Credit: David Rothenberg.

jail. We went out for coffee and soon it was a regular thing. At that time, the law said if parolees associated with other convicts, they would be violating their parole. I realized that was like telling alcoholics that they were not allowed to go to AA meetings because it associated them with other alcoholics. There was nothing for people coming out of prison that motivated them to change their lives."

He added, "When I learned that many parolees were often not able to sign a lease, get a bank account, or even get a job, I knew we had to do something. It started by having session discussions in my apartment. When somebody said they did not want to go back to the danger of their shelter, I had to offer them the couch for the night. Soon I realized I needed to find transitional housing for these people. I became an activist when I saw the condition of people incarcerated — including kids who were on drugs, although I didn't know it. I just thought they were sit-

ting there numb. This inspired me to found the Fortune Society in 1967, now one of the nation's leading advocacy and service organizations in criminal justice."

The Fortune Society is nationally recognized for developing model programs that help people with criminal justice histories become assets to their communities. Fortune offers a holistic and integrated "one-stop-shopping" model of service provision, including discharge planning, licensed outpatient substance use and mental health treatment, alternatives to incarceration, HIV/AIDS services, career development and job retention, education, family services, drop-in services, and supportive housing, as well as lifetime access to aftercare. For more information, visit www.fortunesociety.org.

Later, Rothenberg served as a civilian observer during the Attica prison riot, which spurred his lifelong activism for prisoners' rights. Rothenberg Productions perfor-

mances continue run in colleges, churches, civic groups and prisons around the country. As a social activist, he was appointed to the NYC Commission of Human Rights, and served on several special state and New York City commissions, including a Governor's Advisory Committee on Criminal Justice, a Mayor's Task Force on Child Abuse, and the American Bar Association Commission on Correction. He has testified before numerous government committees, including several in Washington D.C., before Senate and House committees, and before state legislative committees around the nation. In 1985, Rothenberg ran for city council in Manhattan to raise AIDS awareness as an openly gay candidate. He has been a guest columnist for several newspapers and continues to host a weekly radio program on WBAI in New York, an assignment he has held for over 50 years.

He shared a favorite memory. "I believe that humor is a healing component to getting through difficult situations," he said. "I remember working with a 17-year-old kid named Nichols who was very angry. I would get him to play ping-pong. Being in theater, I would throw out a one liner, and I could see he was trying to conceal his smile or laughter. We created an atmosphere of trust. If you can make people laugh, they relax and are much more open. About 30 years later, I'm walking down the street and this man with three little girls came up to me and said, 'We used to have so much fun at the Fortune. I remember we had laughter; we used to go to plays together.' And I said, 'Yeah, great to see you, too.'"

Last year at age 92, I made my debut as a stand-up comedian at Studio 54, one of the biggest clubs in New York.

Observations From Wisconsin

BY BRIAN J PAPE, AIA

Being back in Wisconsin with my siblings for the first time in a long time, I have been given the opportunity to learn about changes and traditions in the place where I grew up.

It's been delightful in many ways: Lake Michigan is clearer and bluer than I ever remembered it. I've been told some invasive mollusks are filtering the water now. The trees seem greener than ever, except for the ash trees, where invasive ash bores have decimated entire forests and landscapes, leaving dead, bare branches reaching for the sky.

Wisconsin communities are revolting against resource-hungry AI data centers, but there seems to be little to be undone once they are started, such as one mammoth development in Ozaukee County. Some architects are demonstrating that computational infrastructure does not have to be inherently extractive. Projects in Italy, Sweden, Finland, and Switzerland show how data cen-



YOU MIGHT THINK THAT THESE SIGNS ARE FOR CANDIDATES OF DIFFERENT PARTIES, judging by the colors. You'd be wrong; they are all Republicans, even though there is no indication of party affiliation on the signs or ads. Voters beware! Photo: Brian J. Pape, AIA.

ters can be buried underground, integrated into buildings, powered by renewable energy, and used to provide waste heat for apartments and even greenhouses. An article September 13, 2026, in *Architect Magazine* by Blaine Brownell argues that the real challenge isn't the data-center typology itself —

it's bad architecture and the failure to design computational infrastructure as something that gives back to its community.

But without a doubt in this election season, the roadside yard signs of all sizes, some as big as 4' x 8' each, and in multiples of different seats up for voting, really domi-

nate the views.

And here is the surprise. Where once one would expect the candidates to declare their party and choose their party's theme colors — red for Republican, blue for Democrat, something else for independents — that tradition has been upended here. In TV ads, social media, yard signs and billboards, there are the usual claims to cut taxes and make the economy strong, but there's something missing. The signs are everywhere — red, white and blue — but you won't know what party they represent, for nowhere is the party noted, and Republicans are using blue as a dominant color. Wouldn't you be confused too?

It seems to this observer that many candidates are so savvy to the damage Trump has done that they want to hide their connection to the president and his administration. Of course, there will be no mistaking which party each candidate represents on the ballots in November.

To Go

BY KEITH MICHAEL

Picked up my usual sandwich, small bag of chips, and a peach tea. Self-checkout. I'm outta here.

Frequently, I'm unwittingly asked the trio of "favorite" questions:

- 1) What's your favorite bird? (The one I'm looking at.)
- 2) What's your favorite season? (This one.)
- 3) What's your favorite place to see birds? (Where I am.)

Seriously though, I DO perk up for eagle and owl sightings. Confession: I'm more jazzed by seeing shorebirds, winter ducks, and sparrows, than warblers. I like the change of seasons best, and to be ornery, perhaps I really like winter most of all because that's the one most people complain about. When it comes to "where to see birds," that really could be wherever you happen to be, but, yes, I DO have a Top Ten List of NYC places that I return to again and again. Let's go!

One: Hudson River Park. Living in the West Village, the miles-long amenity of this riverfront ribbon of green, makes it a backyard destination for a few minutes or a full day's outing. As it has matured during its 25 years, my bird list for this neighborhood patch has escalated to 126 species. A roosting Eastern Red Bat was my latest excitement.

Two: Central Park. Don't want to travel too far? A short train ride takes you to one of the most unlikely, concentrated birding destinations in the country! More than 280 bird species have been seen in that urban rectangle. There's always a new part of it to be discovered or a familiar spot to return to often.

Three: Inwood Hill Park. There couldn't be a greater contrast on our fair isle of Manhattan than the difference between the sea level density of downtown skyscrapers and the cliffside topography and centuries-old towering stand of Tulip trees at the northern end of the island. I particularly love going there in spring for the ethereal yellow understory of Spicebush blooming and the carpet of the ephemeral wildflower Dutchman's Breeches, all accompanied by the

surround-sound of birdsong. Resident Screech Owls are the icing on an already very sweet cake.

Four: Green-Wood Cemetery. Vying for this spot-of-green favorite are Brooklyn's Prospect Park and Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx. Starting with the Monk Parakeet colony at the 25th Street entrance, any season provides an amiable wander amid this world-class arboreum with bucolic vistas and endless human histories to ponder. Make a circuit of the four bodies of water on the map and you will have had a lovely day with, likely, a tidy bird list.

Five: Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge (JBWR). This vast Queens division of the Gateway National Recreation Area is worthy of a "pop out" for Snowy Owls during a winter freeze or to wade the mudflats for fall shorebird migration. It's the place to go to catch Yellow Warblers galore in the spring or for your path to be crossed by nesting Diamondback Terapins in the summer.

Six: Fort Tilden. The Rockaway peninsula boasts this prime winter destination to see northern seabirds who call this stretch of sand "tropical." Long-tailed Ducks, Bufflehead, Northern Gannets, winter gulls, and loons are all worth bundling up for with the likely bonus of having miles of beach nearly to yourself amidst one of the densest urban areas on the planet. Imagine that. Oh, and in summer you can cheer on endangered Piping Plovers trying to raise their tiny families.

Seven: Plumb Beach. You've likely passed by this gem along the Belt Parkway in Brooklyn and never noticed it. The astonishing low-tide mudflats host foraging shorebirds, spurting clams, hordes of Fiddler Crabs, and in spring, the annual prehistoric egg-laying pilgrimage of Horseshoe Crabs.

Eight: Van Cortlandt Park. This is a vast urban forest at the end of the #1 train in the Bronx that's been, unfortunately, sliced and diced by a spaghetti plate of highways. Still, you can duck the traffic noise in magnificent oak woodlands where you might catch a glimpse of the resident coyotes or go at night with a UV flashlight in search of Southern Flying Squirrels!

Nine: Pelham Bay Park. The #6 train drops you off at this sprawling tract of forest, marshes, meadows, and rocky coastline. It would take days to walk all the trails, and depending on where you end up, you could feel like you are almost anywhere on the eastern seaboard—though you're still in the Bronx. I like to go in winter to look for owls and seals.

Ten: Mount Loretto Unique Area. I could go on and on about places worth repeated visits on Staten Island. First, the ferry, then the Staten Island Railroad (SIR), takes you to most of them. Like JBWR, I've gone there more times than I can count. Any season works. The combination of forest, swamp, ponds, grasslands, and ocean shoreline makes for a comprehensive day trip. Then throw in a few star regulars like Bald Eagles, owls, foxes, and seals. It's irresistible to me.

Bonus: Whale Watching. I know that I've rounded out my Top Ten, but NYC whale and dolphin watching is another weakness of mine. Most people don't realize that the New York bight is a prime feeding destination for Humpback Whales from May through December which means that we can easily see them. This summer, the 500th individual whale was identified within sight of the New York City skyline, only since 2012. Go out with American Princess Cruises from Sheepshead Bay for an unforgettable day on the water.

I hope that this has given you a few nudges about how to spend your next day off. Need more? I've got a hundred of them.



BARRED OWL. Central Park.

All Photos by Keith Michael.

THE BIRDS OF SEPTEMBER (TOP TO BOTTOM):

Lesser Yellowlegs. Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge; Ruby-throated Hummingbird. Fort Tryon Park; Glossy Ibis. Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge; Lincoln's Sparrow. Bryant Park; Bald Eagle. Mount Loretto Unique Area;

My Healing Journey

BY LYNN PACIFICO



RAIN ON THE LAWN inside the open air hospital. Photos: Lynn Pacifico.

At the end of summer 2018, instead of packing summer away, I packed my suitcase. I filled it with natural fiber hot weather clothes that cover calves and shoulders. I heard that a new Ayurvedic hospital, SDJ Ayurvedalaya, had opened in the Western Ghats of India. It was reported to be run by idealistic doctors — authentic, clean and inexpensive. I signed up for three weeks in October.

I did my first cleanse at an ashram in the '80s, where I learned about internal hygiene and other wellness practices used in Ayurveda to keep the immune system strong. It stopped my acute neuralgic pain. I intended to do another cleanse, but the time was never right. In 2018, I was retired with chronic health problems — and forgetting words and keys. It was time.

I flew into Mumbai and then to the tropical industrial city of Coimbatore. SDJ sent a cab to the airport to drive me up into the mountains to the hospital. India can be hot and dry,



IT IS BELIEVED that one who prays to Lord Dhanvantari can be released from all disease.

but in the mountains the weather is perfect.

The Western Ghats, among the oldest ranges in the world, is even older than the Himalayas. It has a unique ecosystem: 145 bird species, 29 of them endemic; 137 mammal species, 16 endemic; and a portion of its amphibians, reptiles and plants found nowhere else. The crickets and birds sing all night and elephants visit at night to eat the breadfruit. The jungle fowl begin their wakeup calls early. On my last walk, I watched two large mammals with huge horns grazing and a herd of antelope pass through.

The off-grid hospital complex occupies 16 acres nestled on the side of a low mountain. The campus includes fields of vegetables, herbs and arbors within a lush forest. SDJ grows much of its food and keeps cows for ghee, buttermilk and yogurt — the only animal products used. The organic freshly picked and prepared food is delicious.

Shoes are left outside the hospital as everyone, including the doctors, are barefoot. The terracotta tiled walkways that surround the lawn in the center of the open air hospital are mopped often. My bare feet never got dirty.

The treatment rooms use natural light from high windows. On overcast days the dim light provides an ethereal feeling. Each patient is assigned one main therapist and a second helper therapist. For each session there are two or more therapists who work in unison, one on either side, coordinating the massage.

While the treatment room is set up, my therapist, who began her career as a nurse, helps me into a small garment. She leads me to a wooden stool next to the treatment table and says "sit mum." Treatment tables, cut from one piece of Indian Kino Tree, can be very old. One of the tables used here was the personal table of the venerated guru Swami Dayananda whose legacy includes this hospital, considered a healing temple.

As little is more sacred than easing suffering, healing is a spiritual path at SDJ. During treatments therapists speak with lowered voices as there is a serious reverence for the transformative cures that take place in these rooms. Holy days are observed and guests are welcome.

In the treatment room, a depiction of Lord Dhanvantari, revered for the gift of Ayurveda, is positioned in a carved wooden niche. Lord Dhanvantari is worshipped in India as the god of medicine and physician to the universe. A butter lamp and offerings of grain, water and flowers are placed before him.

My therapist says "prayer mum" and everyone in the room stops what they are doing, puts their hands in the prayer position, bows and then chants to Lord Dhanvantari. Patients are welcomed to join. You hear this chant throughout the day as patients begin their treatment. Women's voices for women, men's for men.

Next, backdropped with recorded soft chanting, the therapist massages oil into my scalp. Facial massage follows, then neck and shoulders. I receive treatments every day, starting with loosening joints. Treatments focus next on internal cleansing. Last come the nourishing treatments. Oils and herb bundles were made just before treatment, individually for me.

Although the doctors prescribe the treatments, it is the therapists who see that each treatment is accomplished correctly. My therapist stops to wipe my eye when I've gotten oil in it. She checks if I am cold. She wipes stray hair off my face as a mother would. Everyone is genuinely helpful including the doctors who take time to answer questions.

I am helped to sit on the side of the treatment table where my head, ears, shoulders, stomach, hands, knees and feet are anointed with oil. My therapist bows before me with hands in prayer position, then cleans the soles of my feet and begins the 45 minute oil massage. I close my eyes and relax.

The session ends with my therapist removing the oil from my hair and the toxins that have been released through my skin. A gritty powder made from crushed peas is used, along



THERAPISTS, IN THEIR APRONS, next to a treatment table.

with a spray wand with warm water. Afterwards my skin is very soft and I am feeling very relaxed as I am escorted back to my room.

Too soon, it is my last day and I am melancholic about leaving. For three weeks I haven't washed my own hair, worn shoes, a bra, makeup or jewelry, cooked, washed dishes, cleaned, watched news, tv or movies, used the phone and did little social media. I did sleep deeply and woke up early, living within the rhythm of nature. This continued after I left but I live in downtown Manhattan where there is no nature and I have since slipped back. I opened the window to enjoy the mountain breeze during my last session, a 5,000 year old Ayurvedic foot massage. I am in heaven.

My 2018 treatment at SDJ was successful and I left with a clear working mind. I returned in 2023 for hearing loss which was also resolved. People travel from all over the world to SDJ for healing and renewal. Total hospital and medical expenses were \$1,040.

I am grateful to medical directors Dr. Parthasarathy and Dr. Saraniya for their knowledge, dedication, skill and kindness. Thank you to the hospital staff and a special thank you to my therapists. I have only forgotten my keys twice since.

Lynn Pacifico is a fourth generation villager who loves dogs, nature and New York City.

Sunflower

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Sunflower, sky-worshipper
And improbable garden goddess,
Innocent and fearless,
Do you struggle behind your jaunty jester mask?
Are you hiding ancient hurts,
Buried psychic treasure,
And aching to migrate
In your mind,
Like me?
Teach me, tutor me, take me along
In your clandestine travels:
I, too, long to be at once rooted and roaming.

THIS SINGLE SUNFLOWER at LaGuardia Corner Gardens captures the end-of-summer vibe in the Village. Photo by Susan M. Silver.

Becoming Love

BY JAN CRAWFORD

What if each of us already is what we couldn't even dare to dream we could become? What if there is reality that is free of conflict, free of the suffering, of trying so hard to be the person we are conditioned to believe we are supposed to be? And what if all we have to do is to learn to clear away the obstacles preventing us from living the truth that we already are?

For many years it's been my good fortune to enjoy meditations in the beauty and often tender calm in the St. Luke's Gardens at Hudson and Barrow streets. Three years ago, when I was 80, these emergent questions began to compel a number of shifts in my meditations there. I found myself engaged in two new practices I want to share with you.

Sitting in the gardens on one spring day, I became aware that I was habitually focusing on the colorful beauty of the flowers — but only the flowers. I was barely noticing the diversity and beauty of the lush greenery, the patterns of the shadows of light on stone pathways, the breezes and movements of trees or the behavior and songs of the birds. So, I decided to practice what spiritual teacher Jiddu Krishnamurti called "choiceless awareness," and I relaxed my eyes.

Slowly allowing my sight to take in the wider aperture of the whole garden, I became more exquisitely aware of many of the other lovely forms of nature that existed there. As I relaxed even more, I found myself breathing with the trees and the birds. And I gradually began to notice the general feeling of the garden from day to day. For example, some days it felt as if it was rushing to prepare for a storm, while other days as if it was just fully relaxing in the sun.

I also became aware how, throughout my adult life, I had often been drawn to people I could see as the equivalent of beautiful, exceptional flowers. Fortunately, given my particular childhood traumas, I understood why that was true of me. But with sadness I also acknowledged how many people I had hurt by not seeing them as distinctive and lovable presences in my own inner garden. I also faced the pain of accepting how much I had missed because of such narrowed vision, and I felt profoundly grateful to see the ways that is no longer true.

Another practice that contributed to further

opening to the love that is our true nature involved returning to my adaptation of a psycho-synthesis practice I had come upon years earlier.

In a quiet state, we explore our conditioning by first acknowledging an identity we possess. For example, if you are a lawyer, you might experiment with the identity of Successful Lawyer. Next, take some time to visualize yourself wearing clothing that represents yourself in that identity's persona. When you are ready, very slowly let that clothing fall to the floor around your legs. Then take some time to notice what you feel.

Earlier in this practice I had worked with my very positive identities as Woman, Feminist and Trauma Psychotherapist. When I stepped out of even these positive attachments, I felt a surprising relaxation. There was a clear sense that all of us are naturally something more vast than any identity — in truth, more vast than any concept.

In the gardens, I now began to explore other identities and culturally dictated concepts. I found that when I visualized myself in the clothing for Human, my body subtly contracted. When I began to perceive Human as a concept rather than absolute truth, as that clothing fell gently to the floor, I noticed another relaxation. I was still Human for practical purposes, but without that identification there was a sense of freedom and more connection to all other forms of life. The same was true when I shed the concepts of Time, Space and Death. I felt a profound expansiveness, a sense of being a part of everything, and everything an inseparable part of me.

As my mind allows these and other experiences of greater spaciousness, there is a deepening silence within me, a natural ease of being that tends to make me a more loving person. Of course, there are still parts of me that, thinking they are protecting me, automatically object to any perceived threat to the Successful Separate Self. However, as I begin to recognize that they are actually "protecting" me from nothing more than a truer reality, I find myself laughing in relief. In those moments there is not just feeling love but becoming love itself.

I hope that, in the Gardens of St. Luke's or wherever your path guides you, you increasingly experience the freedom, beauty and wisdom of your own loving heart.

The Joys of Life— Getting Older in The West Village

BY JOY PAPE

I received this email from my 84-year-old friend and neighbor who lives alone in a West Village apartment. I laughed as I read it and wanted to share this with you knowing many of you can relate and laugh too.

"My scooter ride (a small 4-wheel electric mobility device) into the throngs of people in Sheridan Square was quite an adventure. I ended up in CVS miscalculating an aisle and knocking over a big rack. Fortunately, what it had on it was bags of chips, so I didn't break anything.

Then in Brooklyn Fare at the check-out, a man had a big dog blocking my way, and I

asked the man nicely if he could pull the dog aside. He did, but unfortunately, I ran over the dog's toe, but the dog didn't seem to notice it, thank God, so I think I just touched it.

So I'm a 'Holy Terror' unintentionally. I got stuck on some bad sidewalks (which there are much more of than I realized) and someone helped me there, and others helped with doors. However, I must say 90% of people were utterly self-involved on their phones or just plain impolite. Thank goodness many were quite sweet.

So that is my adventure for the day!"

The Tao of Pickleball

BY GENA GERBIER



JJ WALKER COMMUNITY Pickleball courts. Photo credit: Gena Gerbier.

I first heard of pickleball about 15 years ago from my neighbor Mark, who was an avid player. He would make the trek from the West Village to Stuytown regularly to play on what were probably the only courts in town at the time. He described the game and invited me to join but I couldn't get past the name "pickleball." Back then I didn't have a minute to myself, managing two small businesses along with playdates and activities for two children. I could not imagine anything recreational for anyone over 40. Today, the businesses are a part of my experience and my children are adults. I'm no longer in charge of playdates or spending hours in the playground. Today, I'm older, and wiser. Hi, my name is Gena and I am a pickleball addict.

Although pickleball was invented in 1965, most people didn't "stay out of the kitchen" until the need for outdoor, socially-distanced, activities came to play during the COVID pandemic. Since then, it's become the fastest growing sport in America and gaining popularity worldwide. What other sport or social activity can one enjoy just by showing up? I can travel easily with my paddle and join open play wherever I land. Meet and make new friends of all ages — I've played with players between the ages of 8 and 78 (maybe older but I don't ask). As long as there's a will to learn and a will to play, pickleball brings people together.

Today, there are over 100 public and private courts all over NYC. Here in the Village there are two courts in J.J. Walker Park, tucked behind the pool and the sacred Keith Haring mural at the Tony Dapolito Center.

The area is designated specifically for pickleball. Players are welcome to use the courts anytime by bringing their own equipment or by joining the almost 900 members on WhatsApp who meet through community play and use the nets stored on-site. The courts have been well-loved and well-played for a few years but this use started to show with multiple cracks, patches, and chips, all of which interfered with safe and fair play. When the Parks Department refused to invest into the site due to the pending status of the Tony Dapolito Center, community members came together this spring and raised more than \$8,000 for the repair with blessings from the Parks Department. Thanks to the grassroots effort and tactful proposals, the decaying courts have been transformed into courts where players can dink with confidence once again.

Why is there so much dedication to this sport? It can be divisive as the mere mention of "pickleball" can cause eye-rolling and arguments over its depiction as a "real sport." I've heard it said that you can play tennis for decades and remain mediocre, but with pickleball you can start learning to play at 9 a.m. and feel like an expert by noon. Pickleball, like its name, is whimsical and fun. It gives players hope that they can improve and level up. Once a skill is mastered, strategy develops and players get excited to engage more and push each other to be better. It's a great example for living life well. Pickleball serves up connections across all demographics and allows players, once adversaries, to walk away amicably with a paddle pat and acknowledgment of a "Good Game."

MEMORY MUST NOT BECOME A PRISON

New Yorkers of All Faiths Come Together to Encourage Solidarity on the 25th Anniversary of Sept. 11

BY HELENA MILBURN



SENIOR MINISTER REV. MICAH BUCEY speaking at Judson Memorial Church.



RABBI ELLEN LIPPMAN AND DR. DEBBIE ALMONTASER at the Hebrew Union College. Photos: Helena Milburn.



PARTICIPANTS WALKING between Judson Memorial Church and The Islamic Center.

On the evening of Thursday, Sept. 10, dozens gathered in the Village to stand together and urge fellow New Yorkers to let their memory of September 11 be in service of creating a better, more inclusive future.

Jewish, Christian and Muslim religious leaders met in an interfaith march to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks, and stand in solidarity against the decades of Islamophobia that followed. The walk had three stops: the Hebrew Union College, Judson Memorial Church and the Islamic Center. It brought together participants from throughout the city, and featured speeches from religious leaders, community activists and politicians, including Congressman-elect Brad Lander and Mayor Zohran Mamdani.

The march was organized by longtime activists Rabbi Ellen Lippmann and Dr. Debbie Almontaser, an educator and board president of the Muslim Community Network. Lippmann and Almontaser spoke about conversations they had in each other's homes in the wake of 9/11 that led them to hold the first Children of Abraham Peace Walk in 2003.

The walks were held yearly until 2017, making this the first Children of Abraham Peace Walk in almost a decade. Lippmann and Almontaser felt the current climate of rising hate, antisemitism and Islamophobia necessitated its return.

"A change happens one person at a time talking at the dinner table," Almontaser said in her speech at the start of this year's walk.

Many participants looked back on where they were 25 years earlier. Though he'd lived in New York City for decades by 2001, Khalid Rehman was far from home on Sept. 11. "As a Muslim, I was on my way with my wife and my in-laws to go to Mecca for pilgrimage.... I was in the taxi when I heard this crackling news on this broken-up radio in the taxi. It sounded important but I couldn't figure out what it was. When I reached my hotel, I turned on my TV and saw the towers fall."

Rehman said that both his sons worked in downtown Manhattan but he was not able to reach them. "We were very, very distressed," he added.

His sons were unharmed, but when Rehman returned to New York in November, he drove to his home on Staten Island to find a city forever changed. "Always as you drove down the hill you could see the Twin Towers," he said. "That day there were no towers. And we literally stopped the car. I still remember that moment. We came into the city and the site was still smoldering."

It wasn't just the physical landscape of the city that had changed. For Rehman and many Muslim New Yorkers, the memory of Sept. 11 carries not only the painful reminder of the attacks themselves, but also the

racist and Islamophobic harassment that followed.

Rehman said his son, born and raised in New York City, who ran across the Brooklyn Bridge to escape clouds of dust after the towers fell, was told to "go back from where [you] came from" as he entered the mosque for Friday prayer shortly after Sept. 11.

"I'm an immigrant but a New Yorker, for more than 53 years I've lived in New York," he said "And our children are born and raised American and New Yorkers, and you know this is as much their city, as anybody else's city."

The 25th anniversary proved particularly difficult for Muslim New Yorkers as former Mayor Rudy Giuliani and Councilwoman Vickie Paladino said the city's first Muslim mayor should not go to the memorial for this year's ceremony.

Brooklyn Councilwoman Shahana Hanif, the first Muslim woman elected to the city council, choked up during her speech as she spoke about how these attacks on Mamdani affected her. "I'm getting teary because of how people are treating our mayor...It's been breaking my heart all week," Hanif said. She went on to emphasize the importance of coming together saying, "There is safety in solidarity."

Lander was proud to stand with Mamdani at the memorial. He said, "What a beautiful

thing that 25 years after 9/11 this city has its first Muslim mayor...And honestly that's part of New York City's answer to 9/11 and what it means to build a city that doesn't compromise on anyone's humanity."

In his speech, Mamdani urged the audience to remember not just the horrors of Sept. 11, but also the way the city came together to help those in need, and to carry the memory of those actions into the future. He said, "I come here today...to ask that this evening serve to renew commitment to love one another and renew our commitment to building a city worthy of those who were killed that day and those who lost their lives in the years since."

"Memory must not become a prison," Khalid Latif, imam and co-director of the Islamic Center, said during his speech. "The victims of 9/11 cannot be remembered by creating new victims in their name."

Senior Minister at Judson Memorial Church Rev. Micah Bucey recited a prayer he wrote to commemorate Sept. 11. In it, he too suggested looking to the past is useful only if we let it guide us to a brighter future. He said, "Until memory is not just a thing we pray to never use, but a gift that is gained every time our prayers push us to become more than memorials, more than a mourning, more like a morning light that not only promises a new day, but sticks around to see it through."

ICON *continued from page 1*

with ICE activity across the city, and combing garages in lower Manhattan where agents at ICE offices at 201 Varick and 26 Federal Plaza could conveniently access them.

In May, a garage on Morton Street in the West Village owned by technology company Metropolis evicted nine ICE vehicles after coalition protesters rallied to call attention to the issue. A spokesperson for the company told *Gothamist* that they had been unaware of the issue and took immediate action to have them removed.

The September protest against the ICON Parking garage at 35 Harrison was one of two organized after the coalition said they were able to confirm that a fleet of vehicles in the

garage was linked to ICE. At least one of the unmarked black SUVs had been seen prowling with other known ICE vehicles. Delaurier said it was later involved in an alleged Sept. 17 kidnapping in Corona, Queens, though she was unable to provide specifics.

In a confrontation with coalition activists posted to Instagram, ICON Parking CEO Jerry Skillet denied that there were any ICE vehicles parked in his garages. After they announced their suspicions in early August, the door to the garage at 35 Harrison was fitted with a plastic covering that obstructed the view inside.

Against a backdrop of rising ICE presence in the city and nationally, many at the Sept. 14

protest said they saw direct action in their neighborhoods as the best way to fight back.

"Big picture, they're murdering people," Manhattanite Michael Handy said of ICE. "They are kidnapping people off the streets. Many of them are not getting any kind of due process." In response, Handy said New Yorkers have been organizing. Oftentimes, groups are being formed by people talking to others in their neighborhoods, or even just in their buildings. Handy himself belongs to a group in East Harlem that pushes back against ICE whenever they see them.

And the coalition certainly continues to be a thorn in the side of ICE. Delaurier said that aside from bigger rallies, smaller

groups will sometimes surround alleged ICE vehicles parked on the street and call them out to passersby. But in order to enact wider change, she said that political leadership is needed.

After ICE announced they were seeking 250 parking spots in downtown Boston, Mayor Michelle Wu urged parking lot owners in the city not to rent to the agency. More recently, the city of Buffalo announced that they would be revoking free parking privileges for a number of ICE vehicles in the area.

"This issue of municipalities not allowing, not collaborating with ICE is gaining traction," Delaurier said. "And Mamdani is frankly behind the curve."



COMMEMORATING THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF 9/11, the annual Tribute in Lights shines over the city in remembrance of those we lost and those who rose to the moment. The light from the annual tribute can be seen up to 60 miles away. As seen from EdgeNYC. Photo: Bob Cooley.

The World Trade Center Attack: A Remembrance

BY ROGER PARADISO



THE EAGLE ROCK 9/11 CEREMONY 25TH ANNIVERSARY; 57 people from Essex County died that day. Photo by Roger Paradiso.

One day, the unthinkable happened. On September 11, 2001, two planes flew into the World Trade Center. I was driving through Hoboken, trying to get to the MGM office that morning. I stopped twice and pulled over. The first time was when I was listening to *Imus in the Morning* and he turned the spot over to Warner Wolf, the *Imus* sports guy. Wolf, who lived in an apartment building near the World Trade Center, said he was looking out the window and saw a huge gap in the side of the WTC. He said he heard a plane and then a crash. Reports circulated saying it was a small plane, which made sense. But Wolf said, “Oh no, that

was no small plane to make this huge gash into the side of the WTC.” I listened carefully. The WTC had been attacked in 1993. A bomb went off in the basement and caused death and destruction. The militants from the Middle East were trying to hurt us again.

I started driving away when my friend and partner Michael called me. He was watching the devastation from his Manhattan apartment and said, “Don’t go in.” Then he told me something being echoed by Imus and Wolf — a large commercial airliner has just crashed into the second WTC tower. This was war.

I turned the car around and raced back home. I called the office and made sure everyone was getting out and locking up. My son’s school called and asked if I was safe. I said I would be there shortly and to tell Anthony I was OK. My wife called and I filled her in on Anthony.

My niece, who was attending Fordham, was calling and freaking out. I told her to close her windows and to stay in the apartment.

We just weren’t sure what else was going to happen. The word came out that they were closing all bridges and tunnels to Manhattan. Nobody was getting in or out.

Thank God for Wolf and Imus on the car radio or I would have been stuck in the city. So, as I’m picking up Anthony, my friend Andy calls, and I tell him to come over. When we get home, I let Anthony play video

games, and Andy and I watch the devastation on TV. Bob Relyea calls from MGM in L.A. to find out if I’m OK. He says to keep him posted so he can tell the studios what was going on. Some other friends call during this horrible moment in history. And then we were watching the buildings come down on live TV. It was unreal.

Our friends at the Mayor’s Office for Film called to ask if Michael and I were all right. Nobody could believe what was happening. I got a call from my niece, and she was still not doing well. I told her to get her brother home and to call friends and not to worry. I spoke to her until she calmed down.

The Mayor’s Office asked me to convey to the studios that most of the city is open for now. But anything south of Houston Street and the entire West Side Highway is closed. I called friends and they say people are walking around doing their business north of Houston Street, about a mile from the WTC. The Mayor’s Office calls back later and says they anticipate that Canal Street, about ten blocks from the tower, will be closed indefinitely. But productions shooting north of Houston would be shut down today. They will be allowed to shoot in a few days whenever the federal government gives the OK.

The Feds wanted all troops and emergency personnel to have clear sailing to and from the site. I convey this to Bob. The rest of the

day was spent with friends and family. It was a nightmare, and we were glued to the TV.

We all got to sleep out of exhaustion. Sometime that night, I had a distant memory awakened. It was when we had just moved into the Lois Avenue house when I was five years old. We had big picture windows, and one of them, in the dining room, had a gorgeous view of the Manhattan skyline. I had been watching King Kong a lot on the Million-Dollar movie series.

These were Hollywood classics that were out of circulation, and the studios got another payday by selling them to TV. You remember King Kong climbing up to the Empire State Building and being harassed by planes. Those were the dreams I had for several days. I woke up in a sweat and looked out at the window. It was just a nightmare.

Many years later, I was reminded of those nightmares when the World Trade Center was attacked by planes crashing into the towers. When I woke up on 9/12, I remembered that old dream. I had not thought about it for decades. It came back, and it was real in some respects. I never told anyone about that dream. It only came back to me again as I was writing this book.

This is an excerpt from Paradiso’s book, My Hollywood Circus, which is coming out this month.

FOOD: A SURVIVOR

Lavagna: An East Village Italian Restaurant That Blew My Mind

BY ARTHUR SCHWARTZ

Last month Kelly and I headed east to find some good, but affordable Italian food for my son's 39th birthday. We not only found an affordable place, we found a gem, well worth a walk across to 5th Street between A and B.

Lavagna, opened in 1999, is a family-run restaurant, including the chef. The restaurant is known for its handcrafted pasta, seasonal ingredients, and many more delicious Italian dishes. The idea of Lavagna (Italian for lasagna) was to serve traditional Italian dishes made with clean, high quality ingredients. When Yorgo, who was present all evening, took over the restaurant a few years later, it saw success almost immediately. "It started very busy," Yorgo says. "There weren't many restaurants in the East Village at the time, so people embraced it."

Part of the quality is due to its wood oven; only a handful of restaurants in Manhattan have one. Signature dishes include the wood fire fish for two, wood oven made pizzas, and a pasta dish, pappardelle with rabbit ragu and rigatoni with crumbled sausage, cream, tomato, and peas, which is the restaurant's most popular dish.

Lavagne feels slightly removed from the chaos of the East Village without ever losing its connection to it. The air carries garlic, to-



Photo: Lavagna's Facebook page.

mato, and slow-simmered sauces, signaling a kitchen built on comfort and care. Nothing is rushed and nothing was overdone.

The kitchen focuses on doing a smaller number of things exceptionally well, allowing the quality of ingredients and tech-

nique to carry the meal. The pasta program, in particular, stands out for its texture and consistency, delivering that unmistakable handmade feel. Pricing sits within the mid-to-upper range for the East Village, reflecting both quality and demand. My recommenda-

tion: try a pizza as an appetizer, then order a pasta, something simple and well-executed, and build the table from there with a few additional dishes if you're sharing. This is not a rushed dinner; it benefits from taking your time and letting the space settle around you. It's especially well-suited for smaller groups or quieter evenings where conversation and food take center stage.

I can't wait to go back.



Photo: Lavagna's Instagram page.

Blather, Bombs, Bodies and then ... A Bribe?

BY SIGGY RAIBLE

Well it's that time of the year ... mid-term elections. I sure do hope all dem democrats — including Republicans, Democrats and independents — vote for a democrat/Democrat. I say this because the Republican Party seems to have lost its way.

How can any right thinking (both sane and conservative) voter vote for anyone/party that started a war, raised prices and believes that bombing a civilization into the dark ages is a good thing? I ask this in all sincerity.

Our Blather-in-Chief rails against anyone who disagrees with him. He belittles people — calling his perceived enemies "piggy," "Newscum," "dumocrats," and other half-witted inanities. He lies so often he has to worry that he might accidentally tell the truth. But worse than bullying and lying, he has taken on the duties of the almighty ... judge, jury and executioner. He bombs boats and countries on a whim.

On September 1, 2025 the Trump crew started a bombing campaign they called Operation Southern Spear. The Republican administration condoned the bombing of these boats in the Caribbean Sea and later in the Pacific Ocean declaring that those ships were carrying drugs. There is no proof that these vessels were carrying drugs because any proof

was blown away. In the process the Bomber-In-Chief has killed 207 or so human beings. I say "or so" because we really don't know how many people were on onboard since they were blown up along with the boats. These narco-terrorists, described as such by the administration, were not prosecuted, but were judged, found guilty and executed without a trial. So much for law and order.

Then he invaded Venezuela on January 3, 2026, abducted that country's president and his wife in a stealth invasion called Operation Absolute Resolve. Thinking this was such an easy win, he then — without the consent of Congress but with the help of Israel — began a "small potatoes" campaign in a Middle Eastern country. In so doing, he broke a promise he made to the U.S. in his run for the 2024 presidency. He promised that he would avoid our involvement in another forever war. Well, I guess starting a war doesn't count.

In June 2025, he bombed Iran in a two week operation called Operation Midnight Hammer. He claimed to have "completely and totally obliterated" Iran's key nuclear enrichment facilities. But on February 28, 2026, in an "excursion" called Operation Epic Fury — which continues to this day — he again bombed Iran, essentially saying he was pre-

venting Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. Now, if we destroyed the nuclear material in 2025, I would like to know how Iran was able — in just eight months — to produce enough fissionable material to create a nuclear bomb. As a result of our excursion the free shipping zone called the Strait of Hormuz is now closed t causing oil prices and everything else to rise. And so we continue to bomb Iran. Since it still hasn't cried "uncle," the president has declared an economic war against Iran's 90 million civilians in the hopes that he will strangle Iran into submission.

I checked Wikipedia for the latest numbers of American soldiers and Iranians killed and wounded in this "small potatoes" excursion in Iran. The number of American service members killed is 19 and the number injured is 820. The number of Iranians killed is 3,528 which includes the 156 elementary school children blown away when their school was obliterated on the first day. The wounded count is 27,170. We all feel terribly for the families of those who were killed. What about the injured? I have personal knowledge of the catastrophic effects of war. My brother, a healthy 18-year-old believer in his country, joined the Marine Corps and volunteered to be sent to Viet-

nam. At 20, he returned a quadriplegic. He spent nine years in a poorly run VA hospital. His life was drastically changed forever, but he managed to make the best out of his new life. The effect on my mother and father was devastating. In their old age they became my brother's keeper (saving that cost to the government). How many of the 820 wounded veterans suffer with similar effects of this "small potatoes" excursion? How many wounded Iranian civilians face a world with new encumbrances?

And to wrap up this essay we'll look at the Trumpapalooza convention held on September 9 and 10 in Dallas, Texas. I ask you: do you think the president — by offering to pay each adult American citizen \$5,000 if Republicans still hold both houses of Congress after the election — is the same as offering a bribe? Some say that an offer made in public is not considered a bribe. I ask you: can your vote be bought for \$5,000? Me, I'm holding out for six grand.

Well, as I said earlier, after two years in power, no right thinking person would think this is the best possible outcome for this U.S. president and his Congress. And another two years with a Republican Congress doesn't look any more promising.

THE PINT SIZED PALATE — A KID'S TAKE ON NEW YORK FOOD

Date-Night Vibes, Kid-Approved Fries

BY CHURCHILL STONE

Capitaine
684 Greenwich St.

I was a little bit nervous when I was walking in with my mom and my sister. We had a Tuesday 7 p.m. reservation and the restaurant was quite full. Plus, the whole place gave complete date night vibes. Couples on dates. Girls with friends. I saw no kids in the whole place. But when they led us to our seat, thankfully I spotted a family next to us with two children.

It was dark inside, with an amber bronzy light. That's because there were candles on the tables, on the walls, and in chandeliers above us. At the front was a huge bar. We sat in a booth with soft comfy couch-like seats next to the window where we could see other people dining right outside. Paintings and photographs on the walls semi-circled us.

The menu was very fancy and quite expensive. Most items were also quite adult but they did have a few things that caught my eye. I started off with the Yuzu lemonade, my sister with the plain lemonade. Yuzu is a type of Asian lemon which tastes tart and sweet at the same time. I know that doesn't exactly make sense, but you'd get it if you tried it yourself. It was very good and different from other lemonades, but still with that flavor and color of the classic lemonade we all know and love.

The sourdough bread and butter was fantastic. The bread was amazing (I have spent time in San Francisco so I know sourdough bread) and the butter so creamy, soft, and rich! It was from Normandy, which is in France. You can never put on too much good Norman butter!



STEAK, BURGER, and the best fries ever! Photo: Katrina Robinson.

The food took a while to get to us. We started with American Wagyu Bavette steak. Wagyu is a special cow from Japan that we also have here in the U.S. Bavette is from further back on the cow, closer to the butt, so it is not fancy; it's more like sirloin. The steak was cooked perfectly and tasted soooo good. It did have some green sauce on the bottom which tasted just like raspberries and it was phenomenal! Only, for \$52, the

portion of steak was quite small.

But the steak came with fries and those were definitely worth \$52! They were duck fat fries so they fry them twice! They come with Calabrian aioli which was good, but I just had them with ketchup and mayonnaise combined which I like. My sister said, "These French fries are so good, I can eat them without ketchup!" They were the best French fries I've ever had. Period!

We also ordered a cheeseburger. I did not realize that it had pickles and "lyonnaise" onions (which just means they cook them in butter). I did not like the pickles, but actually really liked the onions — it was my first time with onions on a burger so that was new. The cheese was American which I love and always melts well. The burger was so tender that it kept falling out of the bun which made the process of eating it quite tricky. The burger was great and cooked perfectly, but it was sooo rich I only ate half of it. My mom ate the rest because she didn't get much steak since it was so small.

My mom also got the oysters and she said they were very good. My cousin got the crab cakes which I tried and liked because they were a little salty, cake-y, crunchy, but soft inside. I was surprised I liked them.

The dessert was not very good. The ice cream cake had too much cake and not enough ice cream. The ice cream tasted bland and the pound cake was dense and bitter.

The raspberry sorbet was very rich and tasted just like raspberries. So that was the perfect end of the meal for me. Plus, it's probably healthier than other desserts.

Overall a great restaurant and a surprising number of kid friendly dishes. If you order the Yuzu lemonade and the fries, it would only cost \$18!

Thank you so much for the fancy experience, Capitaine!

3.6 stars

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VILLAGE PET PAGES

BY JOY PAPE AND BRIAN PAPE

Autumn Safety Tips



Here are some helpful excerpts from articles by the ASPCA and the AMVA.

Autumn Safety Tips From ASPCA

There’s nothing like the crisp, cool air and luscious foliage to get you excited for the changing seasons. But fall is also a time of lurking dangers for our furry friends. From household poisons to cold weather hazards, there are important safety issues to consider to keep your pet safe, happy and healthy during the autumn months.

Be Cautious of Rodenticides and Cold Weather Poisons

The use of rodenticides increases in the fall. They are highly toxic to pets and, if ingested,

the results could be fatal. If you must use these products, please do so with extreme caution and put them in places inaccessible to your pets.

Many people choose fall as the time to change their car’s engine coolant. Ethylene glycol-based coolants are highly toxic, so spills should be cleaned up immediately. Consider switching to propylene glycol-based coolants — they are much less toxic.

Keep School Supplies Out of Paws Reach

Those with young children have stocked up on items like glue sticks, pencils and magic markers. Although these items are considered low toxicity to pets, gastrointestinal upset and blockages can occur if ingested. Be

sure your children keep their school supplies and backpacks out of paws reach.

Steer Clear of Mushrooms

Fall is mushroom season and while 99% of mushrooms have little or no toxicity, the 1% that are highly toxic can cause life-threatening problems. Keep pets away from areas where mushrooms are growing.

If you suspect your pet may have ingested a toxic substance, please contact your veterinarian or call ASPCA Poison Control at 888-426-4435 immediately. Read the whole article here: [aspcapetcare.org/pet-care/general-pet-care/autumn-safety-tips](https://www.aspcapetcare.org/pet-care/general-pet-care/autumn-safety-tips)

Halloween Safety Tips From AMVA

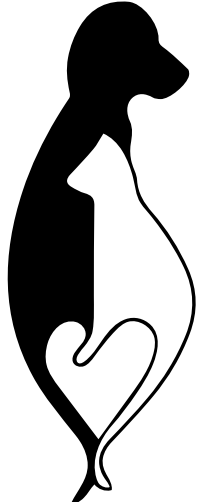
Halloween can be a downright spooky experience for pets. You can take these steps to reduce the risk of them being hurt, poisoned, or lost.

- Don’t feed pets Halloween treats. Raisins can cause your pet’s kidneys to fail, and candy may contain substances toxic to pets, such as chocolate or xylitol (a common sugar substitute).
- Make sure your pets have identification (microchip, collar, and ID tag) that will make it easy for someone to contact you in case they escape through an open door while you’re distracted with trick-or-treaters.
- Keep lit candles, jack-o-lanterns, and other Halloween decorations out of reach of pets.
- Keep all human costume pieces away from pets, along with glow sticks,

- decorations, batteries, and other holiday items. They might cause choking, internal injury, or illness.
- If you plan to put a costume on your pet, make sure it:
 - Fits properly and is comfortable.
 - Doesn’t have any pieces that easily can be chewed off or cause choking.
 - Doesn’t block your pet’s sight, hearing, breathing, mouth or movement.
 - Take time to get your pet accustomed to the costume, and never leave a costumed pet unsupervised.
 - If your pet is wary of strangers or has a tendency to bite, put them in a room away from the front door during trick-or-treating hours.
 - Keep your pet indoors.
 - Learn more here: [AVMA-Animal Health and Welfare](https://www.avma.org/animal-health-welfare).



ROCKY, A WEST VILLAGE DOG who shared his Greatest Hits with us in the September 2025 issue, dressed up and ready for Halloween. Credit: Rocky’s mother, Erin.



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vets and great staff! Friendly, kind
and compassionate.”
Susan F, client

Make your pet part of your plan

BY MARISA CALA-KECK

When disaster strikes, there is no time to debate what matters. Families scramble to grab children, medications, records, and whatever they can carry before heading for safety. For two-thirds of Americans, there’s another family member who also needs to be saved – a pet.

Recent wildfires, floods, hurricanes, and other disasters have shown how quickly unsuspecting families can be forced from their homes. However, evacuating with pets is often complicated, as many emergency services aren’t prepared to accommodate animals.

No one should have to make an impossible choice between protecting themselves and protecting their precious animal who’s depending on them.

This Disaster Preparedness Month, please remind your lawmakers that preparedness means planning for the WHOLE family. I urge my federal lawmakers, Senators Gillibrand and Schumer and Representative Espaillat, to support the bipartisan PETSAFE Act (H.R. 7438/S.4558), to strengthen communities’ ability to prepare for and respond to disasters that involve companion animals.

The Album and the Garage

BY PAUL MORRIS

There is a postcard on the table in my Bank Street studio. The Detroit Publishing Company printed it in 1912 and it shows a sea horse at the New York Aquarium — back when it was at Castle Garden. Walk south along the Hudson River Greenway from the end of this street and you arrive at the spot. The building is still standing, back under its older name, Castle Clinton. You can buy Statue of Liberty ferry tickets inside it now. I also have a 1920s postcard of the Statue. That one became a scarf.

I find pictures like these, confirm they are in the public domain, and compose them onto silk. The scarves go out under the name Leeloo + Zohan, after my two cats. Each one carries a printed credit naming its exact source, and that credit is the part I care most about getting right. The reason has to do with a garage in New Jersey.

More than 5,000 glass-plate negatives still exist, made by photographer Gustavus Pach and by my great-grandfather, George Augustus Mengis Morris, who worked alongside him, then after him. Each is a sheet of glass, the picture silver in a gelatin coating on one side, kept in a translucent paper sleeve. They sat in my great-grandfather's garage in Long Branch, New Jersey, until historian George H. Moss Jr. acquired them in 1963. Many are now in the Monmouth County Historical Association's Pach Collection, and they appear in Moss and Karen L. Schnitzspahn's 1993 book, *Those Innocent Years*, and in her 1995 *An Album of Animal Companions*.

My great-grandfather kept a ledger, and every image was listed in it. He developed and printed in a darkroom on the second floor of the house, and the plates went out to the garage.

I think about the garage more than the pictures. Nobody threw them out. My grandfather kept them for years, then let them go to a historian. None of it was done with me in mind. The glass-plate negatives survived because somebody could still say whose they were.

My great-grandfather came over from Germany as a boy, with his mother. She died when he was six, and he grew up in an orphanage in Elizabeth, New Jersey. He met Pach who was photographing at Princeton, and by 1898 he was working at the studio in Lakewood, New Jersey. He photographed George Jay Gould and his family for a decade and took over the New Jersey business after Pach died in 1904.

My grandfather was George Jay Morris,



PAUL MORRIS, above.



SEA-HORSE, NEW YORK AQUARIUM, composed on silk from a 1912 Detroit Publishing Co. postcard in the Library of Congress. Images courtesy of Paul Morris.

an advertising photographer. His noticeable pictures are Kodachrome silhouette portraits from 1942, made for Chesterfield. *U.S. Camera* 1942 called them “undoubtedly the most effective ‘service’ advertisements in America.”

Then my father handed me a 1959 Nikon F. I learned the art of photography on that camera and in the darkroom.

Three of the four of us worked in New Jersey. Parsons School of Design brought me across the river in 1994 and the magazines kept me here. I worked as a senior designer on the editorial side of *George*, a promotion designer at *The New Yorker*, a design director at *Rolling Stone* and *The Advocate*, later creative director of *Maui Nō Ka 'Ōi*. Sometimes I directed a picture being made. Sometimes it arrived finished and the job was to place it right.

I do both now, with the page taken away. The sources stay specific and the scarf says so. Grand Central Terminal, from an early 1900s American Art Publishing Company card. The Chrysler Building, from a 1945 card by Alfred Mainzer. And the sea horse.

Postcards are the largest part of it but they are not all of it. Mary Vaux Walcott's botanical watercolors and a Twachtman pastel, both held at the Smithsonian. Chromolithograph plates from an old Haarlem flora. And six of the 34 designs are photographs I took, credited the same way. Red Hook, Brooklyn; moonrise over Haleakalā; the Vatican beside the Breakers.

Why postcards? My parents gave me an album of them for my 25th birthday. They spent time at flea markets and antique shows in the Northeast, buying New York City cards because that is where I live. Everything since has been a

way of giving those cards a new purpose.

The postcard is also the version that survived. It was printed in the tens of thousands, mailed, sold off a folding table on a Saturday morning, usually with a line about the weather on the back. A century later that card can be the last good picture of a building that came down.

A postcard is about 3 by 5 inches and the largest scarf is 50 inches square, so the source travels a long way up and its own printing comes forward. The registration sits a hair off and you can see how the ink took. That is not damage to be cleaned off — it is the date, printed into the picture.

The work is a long argument about how much to fix. I recolor and rearrange and crop, then stop, because past a certain point I have made a modern picture of an old thing and the reason to start with a 1912 card is gone. Each design is an edition of 100, and at 100 it retires. My great-grandfather's negatives are old enough to be in the public domain. I have started going through them and nothing has come out the other side. I have worked from other people's surviving pictures for a dozen years, and the hardest archive to be careful with is the one with your name in it.

That is the inheritance. Not a business, not a box of dusty glass negatives. A way of working. Use what survived, find it a second purpose, and be exact about the source. I can change the picture. I cannot change where it came from.

Paul Morris works out of his studio on Bank Street in the West Village. His artwork and designs can be found at leeloozohan.com.

Democrats *continued from page 11*

which is in Brooklyn, some of the Northern parts of Staten Island, and with independent voters who national polls indicate are hostile to Republicans. Several city-wide Democratic clubs like Jim Owles, Stonewall Democrats, and young Democrats have endorsed him.

Although he has been a strong supporter of unions, I'm not sure if the civil service-related unions have endorsed him. His background as an EMS worker, police officer, and teacher should have gained some union support — maybe from members and not necessarily the union hierarchy. I imagine there are many city employees who live in Staten Island, including the Republican areas, who might consider him to be an alternative to Malliotakis and the union-hating party she represents.

Finally, for now, DeCillis' Italian American heritage should be taken into account. Although they favor Republican candidates, it is not overwhelming and there are many who vote as independents. Staten Island has the highest percentage of Italian Americans (25-40%) of any county in the U.S. His Facebook page has many posts about attending Italian neighborhood feasts, and he seems to be proud of this heritage. Even Republican, independent, or apathetic Italian Americans can be proud of their heritage and display symbolic ethnicity (See “The Symbolic Ethnicity of San Gennaro” September *Village View*) by voting for one of their own.

There is a lot at stake in this election besides the chance to flip the House of Representatives. Malliotakis is the only Republican representative of New York City. If the election actually flips this district to the Democrats, it is the type of story that can make the *NY Times* or other major media (aka “legacy” media) finally pay attention. If this Trump over Harris margin of more than 30% in 2024 can be changed to a Democratic victory, and get the corresponding media attention, it will encourage Democrats throughout the country, even in the deep Republican areas, to join the fight and run in their areas. The presidential election of 2028 will come quickly and a dramatic Democratic victory can build the momentum we need for that race.

The possibility of flipping this district joins many other races occurring throughout the region. My political club, the Village Independent Democrats (villagedemocrats.org), is working with Vote Blue (votebluenyc.org) to support about a half dozen contested districts. This involvement can include boarding buses to travel to contested districts and canvassing for local Democratic candidates. Knocking on doors and discussing issues one on one with voters is one of the most grass roots methods of political organizing. These websites have information about this election cycle and may also be helpful for the next cycle in 2028. Get involved.

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Kenny Aronoff: The Drummer Who Refuses to Stop Improving—The Beat Behind a Lifetime of Hits

BY KAJU ROBERTO

For Kenny Aronoff, greatness is not a destination. It is a daily obligation.

“I’ll never be as great as I want to be,” Aronoff said recently. “But I’ll spend the rest of my life trying to be as great as I can be.”

At 72, the veteran drummer is still living by that philosophy. Currently touring with Sammy Hagar, Aronoff remains one of rock’s most sought-after musicians, with a career spanning nearly five decades and including work with artists ranging from John Mellencamp, Bob Dylan and Elton John to the Rolling Stones, Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr.

His résumé is staggering: more than 60 Grammy-nominated recordings and hundreds of millions of records sold. Yet, Aronoff insists there is no secret formula behind his longevity. “There’s no genius code,” he said. “Just work your ass off.”

The Relentless Pursuit of Improvement

That work ethic was established early. Aronoff began playing gigs with local bands in Massachusetts at 13, inspired by the Beatles’ historic 1964 appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. He immediately told his mother he wanted to grow his hair and become a drummer.

But he soon realized raw enthusiasm was not enough. As a teenager, he studied with Arthur Press of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, who introduced him to mallets, timpani, reading and classical percussion. Aronoff responded by practicing as many as eight hours a day, seven days a week. That relentless preparation became his trademark.

He describes his philosophy as “RPS” — repetition of any skill is the preparation for success. Even now, while on tour, he practices late into the night. For Aronoff, practice is not punishment. It is freedom.

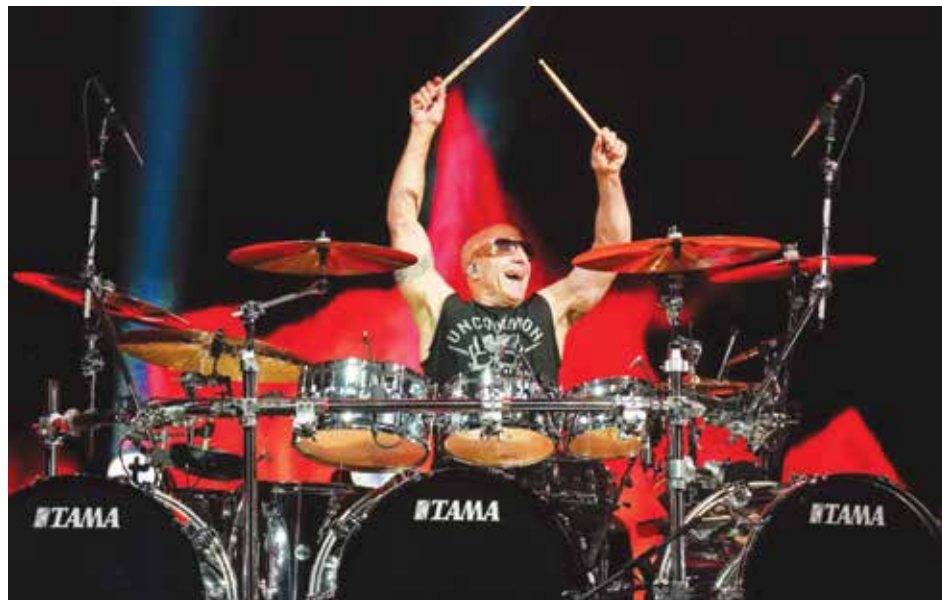
The Moment Everything Changed

His career has repeatedly rewarded that preparation. After joining John Mellencamp’s band, Aronoff became part of one of America’s biggest rock acts. He played on “Jack & Diane” and “Hurts So Good,” both Top 10 Billboard hits from the same album, and experienced the dizzying world of arena rock.

Then came one of the most difficult moments of his career. While making a Mellencamp record in Los Angeles, Aronoff was fired from the recording session after two days. The producer needed the album completed quickly, and another drummer was brought in.

Aronoff was devastated — but refused to walk away.

“I’m not,” he told Mellencamp when the singer said he was fired. Eventually, he agreed to remain with the band and watch the replacement drummer record. “I’ll learn from them,” Aronoff said at the time. “And I’ll get better.”



KENNY ARONOFF, voted by *Modern Drummer* to be the Number 1 Pop Rock Drummer for five consecutive years, and owner of Uncommon Studios in LA. Photo by Kaju Roberto.

That humiliating experience became a turning point. When Mellencamp later took several years away from recording and touring, Aronoff realized he needed to build another career. He began relentlessly pursuing session work.

That led to Don Was, and then an extraordinary succession of recording opportunities. Aronoff recalls days when he would fly from one session to another with virtually no time between them: Bon Jovi’s “*Blaze of Glory*,” Elton John, Bob Seger and Willie Nelson.

Serve the Song

He also found himself in rooms with musical legends. During one late-night recording session, Was invited him to see the Rolling Stones. Aronoff ended up meeting Charlie Watts and playing percussion during sessions that became part of the Stones’ “*Bridges to Babylon*” era.

One moment stayed with him.

While Aronoff was playing percussion,

Mick Jagger approached him with a simple instruction: don’t interfere with Charlie Watts’ hi-hat. Jagger understood that the band’s sound depended on every component, including the seemingly small details of Watts’ playing. “That is so badass,” Aronoff recalled thinking.

His philosophy of teamwork comes from music and sports. He grew up playing lacrosse, soccer and downhill skiing, and has an identical twin brother. He learned early that success is not about one individual. “In a band, it’s not about me, it’s about we,” he said.

For Aronoff, the drummer’s ultimate responsibility is to “serve the song.” His job is not to prove how much he can play, but to contribute whatever is necessary to make the music successful.

Adapt or Die

That mindset has also helped him adapt as the recording industry has changed. As budgets shrank and technology transformed studios, Aronoff moved to Los Angeles, es-

tablished his own studio and developed a career recording remotely.

He even sees a parallel between the rise of programmed drums and today’s artificial intelligence. When technology threatened to replace human musicians, Aronoff adapted rather than resisted. He found ways to add the human feel technology could not reproduce. “Adapt or die” is one of his recurring principles.

Another is what he calls “fight or flight,” rather than fight or flight. Aronoff acknowledges that taking risks can be frightening. What keeps him moving forward, he says, is purpose. “I’ve got to do this,” he said.

That determination took him back to Tanglewood four times after initially failing to gain admission. Eventually, he was accepted and had the opportunity to work with figures including Leonard Bernstein and Aaron Copland.

From the Beatles to Ringo Starr

Decades later, that same persistence took him onto a stage with his childhood heroes. In 2014, Aronoff performed with Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr during the television special *The Night That Changed America*, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Beatles’ *Ed Sullivan Show* appearance.

Fifty years after watching the Beatles on television and telling his mother he wanted to become a drummer, he was playing alongside them. “It was not intimidating, he said. “It was exhilarating.”

Still Practicing, Still Pushing

Today, Aronoff is still preparing, practicing and adapting. His schedule includes touring, recording, motivational speaking, podcasting and other projects. He has expanded his career far beyond the drum kit, but the philosophy remains unchanged.

Follow your passion. Work relentlessly. Serve the team. Adapt when circumstances change. And never stop improving.

As Aronoff put it, “You’ll either keep improving or die trying.”

For a drummer who has spent nearly 50 years playing perfectly in time for the greatest musical acts in the world — and beating time — the clock keeps ticking.

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



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Best of the Best: Jazz from Detroit

BY MICHAEL JACOBSON



PRODUCER ROBERTA FRIEDMAN AND DIRECTOR DANIEL LOEWENTHAL. Photo credit: Michele Zarbafian.

As a film columnist who does not generally use ratings, I can only say that *Best of the Best: Jazz from Detroit* comes as close to a perfect score as any documentary can. The film was a joy to watch, this comprehensive dive into the history of jazz in Detroit. Director Daniel Loewenthal and producer Roberta Friedman had me glued to the screen. The full-length documentary is a cinematic joy. For the price of admission you get a comprehensive look at the last century of jazz in Detroit, and you get a lesson of how a mighty city like Detroit has coped with its fortune and, sadly, misfortunes.

Best of the Best: Jazz from Detroit celebrates Detroit's extraordinary contribution to jazz, linking generations of groundbreaking musicians to the city's industrial rise, decline, and resilient African American community. Featuring legends and contemporary artists, it explores mentorship, musical innovation, and cultural pride, arguing that the history of American jazz cannot be told without Detroit's story. Jazz giants Ron Carter, Yusef Lateef, Elvin Jones, Barry Harris, and Geri Allen represent Detroit's historic legacy. Regina Carter, James Carter, Karriem Riggins, and Rodney Whitaker carry that tradition forward. Terence Blanchard, Christian McBride, Pat Metheny, historians, and writers add perspective on the city's enduring influence, mentorship, and musical excellence.

Beginning with Detroit's early 20th-century growth, the documentary follows the city's transformation into an automobile capital. Its factories attracted thousands of African American migrants from the South, whose communities created a thriving musical culture. Jazz flourished in Black Bottom and Paradise Valley neighborhoods, then developed through strong public schools, clubs, and a remarkable tradition of mentorship. As segregation, urban renewal, factory losses, racial conflict, and economic decline reshaped Detroit, musicians carried its sound nationwide. The film concludes with the city's cultural revival, showing younger artists sustaining Detroit's jazz legacy today amid new challenges, renewed civic pride, and continuing Black musical creativity.

Loewenthal and Friedman live and work out of their lofts in Chelsea. I had a chance to sit with them and learn more about the making of *Best of the Best: Jazz from Detroit*. Loewenthal's interest began when he read the galleys of Mark Stryker's *Jazz from Detroit*. He called Stryker, proposing a film; Stryker wound up writing the documentary. Loewenthal and Friedman, already "had a feeling for the city." In 2013, they had filmed *49 Waltzes for The Motor City: Detroit*, visiting 147 locations and falling "in love with the city and the people." During the pandemic, Stryker arranged four initial interviews. Loewenthal created a five-minute promotional reel, securing foundation support. Over four years, they continued interviewing, researching, and raising funds, completing

what Loewenthal called "quite a feat": licensing 101 musical cues and extensive archival material.

They shared the challenges to the making of such an ambitious documentary. It demanded persistence and money. Production began during the pandemic, complicating interviews and travel. Many musicians were elderly, requiring accessible locations and careful scheduling. With budgetary constraints, Loewenthal and Friedman searched for a local crew in Detroit and were lucky to find a talented cinematographer with Shane McMurphy. Financing arrived gradually from foundations and individual donors; each stage depended upon proving their commitment and ability to finish. Research and editing expanded as every interview suggested another direction. The greatest expenses came afterward: securing extensive archival footage and licensing 101 music cues. Completing this historically rich independent film became, as Loewenthal said, "quite a feat."

A look at Loewenthal and Friedman's film backgrounds reveals why this film is so wonderfully produced. Friedman's filmmaking career began with childhood 16mm movies and photography, followed by graduate study at CalArts. Her optical-printing and special-effects skills led to work on *Star Wars* and *The Empire Strikes Back*. While employed on Hollywood features, she continued making experimental films and exploring music. Returning to New York, she post-supervised documentary series, including Michael Moore's *The*

Awful Truth, taught filmmaking, and formed a partnership with Loewenthal, producing documentaries and experimental projects together. Loewenthal began in documentary filmmaking as an assistant to Albert and David Maysles, learning 16mm cinéma vérité production and editing. Seeking steadier work, he moved into feature films, editing around 50 movies, alongside commercials, promotional reels, infomercials, and television programs. His partnership with Friedman drew him back toward independent and historical documentaries. Together, they formed Magic Circle Productions, combining complementary skills to make major films, including *Power to Heal* and *Best of the Best: Jazz from Detroit*.

Loewenthal and Friedman's documentaries reflect an interest in civil rights, social history, and communities whose contributions are often overlooked. *Power to Heal* examined how Medicare helped desegregate hospitals, connecting federal policy with the courage of Black doctors, organizers, and activists. *Best of the Best* similarly places Detroit jazz within the Great Migration, segregation, Black enterprise, and industrial change. Rather than separating art from history, they ask how social conditions shape lives, creativity, opportunity, and memory.

As longtime teachers, Loewenthal and Friedman have encouraged young filmmakers to remain passionate while understanding the realities of an uncertain profession. They emphasize that cameras and phones may make production easier, but technology alone cannot create a compelling story. Storytelling and collaboration still take years to develop. Friedman advises students to master practical skills: editing, shooting, or gripping that can support them while they pursue personal work. Both acknowledge that documentary funding and distribution have become difficult. Nevertheless, they continue making films because independent documentary remains a vital way to preserve history, illuminate overlooked communities, and bring stories into the world.

To learn more about *The Best of the Best: Jazz from Detroit* go to the film's website: jazzfromdetroitfilm.com/?utm_source=chatgpt.com. The film is available for watching on Amazon Prime Video, YouTube, and Tubi.

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 in late October.



BEST OF THE BEST JAZZ FROM DETROIT film poster.

Art Work: Whitney Staff Make Art

BY J. TAYLOR BASKER



JAZMIN BORDA, "Safe Travels" Watercolor, 10" x 14", 2024.



JEHAD ABU-HAMDA, "Resistance IS Existence!" Traditional headscarfs formed into a map, 2026.

The Whitney Museum, with 369 employees, is a large complex of many departments, missions and roles. It mounts an annual exhibit of its employees' work at Westbeth Gallery, its neighbor in the far West Village. In September, diverse types of art were exhibited by workers from 18 departments as different as Accounting to Art Handling. Artists usually cannot live off their art so they develop other skills for survival, some of which are useful for museums. We will examine an artwork from each department at the Whitney.

The delicate gelatin silver print "An Intimate Conversation" by Isabella Ruiz, from the Advancement Department, depicts an advancing profile of a breast as an abstract element conveying the vulnerability of skin and longing. Artists are not known for their mathematical skills, yet Sean MacDonald of the Accounting Department produced multiple



ALYSSA ANDREWS, "The Entire History of You" Colored pencil, ink and marker on paper, 5.75 x 7.75 in., 2024. Photos: J. Taylor Basker.

images of black and white inkjet prints. Entitled "Deconstruction of Abeyance," it depicts semi-abstract images from his personal life journey. Abandoning his technical skills, Jehad Abu-Hamda of the A/V Department turned to real life tangible objects for his artist statement. Folding traditional kufiyahs into a type of map, his work "Resistance IS Existence!" was created for this year of ongoing pain for Palestinians. It expresses a large, visually compelling protest statement. Art Handling's Julian Gilbert-Davis' appreciation for moving objects produced "Associated," a sculptural replica of a grocery store checkout counter. From the Carpentry Department, the skillful hands of Vaishu Ilankamban crafted handsome "Mirror Cabinets" based on the Persian tradition. Mirrors in many cultures traditionally were believed to hold access to other worlds and dimensions.

Multiple types of media appear in this exhibit, including book art. The zine of Mary Noe O'Sullivan of the Curatorial Department is a photo-essay of a military base in Seoul where she grew up. It is now caught between a ghost town and redevelopment. She reflects on the transience of geopolitical borders, occupation and urban reintegration. Ironically, before joining the Whitney, Giulia Nicita of Development created a prescient collage "Georgia" that featured the words "Plan Or Fall." The skillful use of chiaroscuro in the semi-abstract enigmatic painting by Christine Zheng "I am learning to be less terrified of the remnants of my desires" is a traditional tour de force of oil on canvas. Zheng's trained eye no doubt enhances the aesthetics of the Digital Department.

From the Education Department, Alex Syrenova installs an open suitcase filled with concrete along with an enlarged passport photo of the artist on fabric covering the stones. He tutors the viewer on the Sisyphean plight of the immigrant, victims of ICE and bureaucracy. Matt Larson of Exhibitions' "Help, I'm a Rock," an intricate complex tramp carved wall sculpture of milk, paint and rock on carved basswood, may reflect the daunting challenge and visual dilemmas of mounting exhibits at the Whitney. The colorful, chaotic and cheerful painting "All you can eat shrimp is back at Red Lobster / when will it be my turn to go home?" is a cacophony of unrelated forms that somehow converge and connect. Produced by Alexa Walkovitz of Facilities, it may convey the herculean task of managing the large, convoluted multi-part plant of the Whitney. Angela Dizon of Membership perhaps found relief from dealing with humans in her startling sculpture "Ophanim (rotting, blooming)," a glazed stoneware vessel with wheel-like handles crawling with dynamic organic protrusions, conveying the ophanim — Biblical mysterious celestial beings. From Research Resources, the torso and upper legs of an earth-bound sun worshiper appear in Emily Roz's photorealistic painting "Scorcher." It carefully examines the

curves and crevices of the reclining female form in a bikini. Nathan J. Smith freely paints wild curved black lines over colorful abstract forms as an enigmatic autobiographic statement. Smith, from the Retail Department that stacks items in neat rows on shelves, asserts human freedom from imposed rational order in this image. Another polarity between work and art is seen in Elisa Flynn of Registration, who painted "Our Lady of Antifascism," a wolf as a religious icon, standing in teargas, blessing protest. Registration of people for citizenship, voting, education, health care (especially for women) is the hallmark of the growth of fascism.

The heavy work of Security Department's Jazmin Borda is relieved by the lightness of watercolor. "Safe Travels" blithely depicts an African-American woman on a subway. It received an award from the Art Students League. The most dramatic artwork in the exhibit is by Rob Reese of the Theater Department. "Proscenium" is an impressive installation of 36 four-inch lenses from theatrical lighting and other hardware, hanging, moving and bending light as one passes by, so the artwork appears as if viewed through a kaleidoscope. "The Entire History of You" is presented by Alyssa Andrews of Visitor and Member Experience, on bright yellow paper with hands decorated with intricate lines and symbols. Using her own hands, she guides the visitors to follow creases in palms to explore experience, self-identity and personal growth.

The museum's Library Lunch Craft Hour group has members from various departments. They created a collaborative artwork inspired by what craft means to each of them. (Shalissa Aquino, Theda Berry, Taylor Beyrer, Ivy Blackman, Heather Cox, Angela Dizon, Abigail Hack, Micah Musheno, Clara Rojas-Sebesta). This visually striking mixed media piece is composed of individual squares combined into a type of quilt, showing a range of mediums and art practices.

The relationship of the work artists do, and the art they produce may be an unconscious dual dynamic. Their creativity enriches their work and their work may influence their art. Idioms such as "It may be a stroke of genius, back to the drawing board, paint a picture of what is needed and get something down to a fine art" demonstrate that the language of art influences the language of work. The exhibit Art Work shows that work can also successfully inspire art.



ROB REESE, "Proscenium" Thirty-six 4" convex lenses salvaged from decommissioned Strand Lekolite ellipsoidal reflector spotlights, and sundry theatrical and household hardware, 78 x 36 x 18 in, 2026.

Felix Morelo: “Good Luck Spot” Artist

BY JACK LOURIE

When I met Felix Morelo, he was sitting on one of the benches that connects the center of Washington Square Park to its Northeast corner. His legs were stretched into a chalk-drawn circle, containing the declaration: “Good Luck Spot.” Under his right arm was a box of cardboard slabs, each with their own miniature scrawled Good Luck Spots for sale. Don’t ask me how I knew, but I went up to him and asked if he was the guy behind these installations. My intuition didn’t fail me; he said yes.

Good Luck Spots are a street art series drawn by Morelo. With the pavement as his canvas, he chalks circles across Union Square, Washington Square Park, and Tompkins Square Park, inviting oncoming pedestrians into a moment of decision: step in, or avoid. Each one of these circles holds declarations like his classic “Good Luck Spots.” Other circles say, “Bad Luck Spot” or “Kissing Spot.” Over the past few years, Morelo has added “Charlie Kirk Spots,” “Israel/Palestine Spots,” and “Suicide Spots.”

“Sometimes I see it like Clark Kent and Superman,” said Morelo. “I have this public life, you know; I’m provoking and I’m being loud about it. Then there’s the private side, where I live in Queens, in the small little room, and it’s quiet out there and I just try to be lowkey. Many times, I need to force myself to go out and be social, just to stay healthy and balanced enough.”

Morelo has overcome homelessness five times, and his main financial expenditures are supporting his mother in Miami, and his dad in Colombia. His sister, based in the Bronx, helps too. He wishes that they would make more of an effort to see each other.

Through Morelo’s personal resiliency, artistic intuition, and desire to connect, Good



FELIX MORELO pictured with his art. Photo: Jack Lourie.

Luck Spots were born. He doesn’t just draw circles. He transforms the pavement — the literal shared ground we all walk on — into a moment where we make a choice. Morelo makes all who see his work, from the apolitical to the activists, engage in performance art. Because of this, I believe his installations may be some of the most complex street art of our time.

We first interact with his spots through our eyes. We see his words and have an immediate — often visceral — reaction. This confrontation, either positive or negative, continues down to our feet when we face our own superstitions around how we engage. We make a personal decision on whether stepping in or walking around the circle symbolizes en-

dorsement or refutation. Then we continue onward, reflecting on Morelo’s decision to write those words on the pavement, and our perception on how we reacted.

When Morelo wants to spread positivity, he draws spots that bring joy. Kids will enthusiastically jump into his Good Luck Spots, and people who pretend they aren’t superstitious will slyly angle themselves to at least get one foot in the circle. When he’s doing these installations, Morelo is manifesting happiness. They appeal to a broad audience, and when he talks about them, he smiles.

But such lighthearted call-and-response sketches represent one portion of his general intent. Morelo also draws Suicide Spots.

Who is he to evoke either someone’s worst memory, or most desensitized fear?

These controversial spots, and others, have one linkage: they point to a topic that is taboo. When we see a Suicide Spot, we may assume he is talking to us, rather than commenting on what he is noticing in the world, or experiencing himself. Morelo’s outcries speak to that isolation that we seem to be generating, (and neglecting), as a society.

“I empathize, sympathize, on how it is to feel despair, you know, and loneliness and hunger and anger and injustice, right?” Morelo said. “But I do it out of spite. Because people are not listening. People are ignoring. People want to look away. They don’t want to see your pain.”

Once chalk hits pavement, his viewers get the opportunity to share in how it is interpreted. Morelo hopes his spots will make people more likely to reach out for help. But, he gets death threats from those who feel differently. The truth is that both he, and his critics, are likely generalizing an estimated outcome that neither can control.

When Morelo started making Good Luck Spots 17 years ago, it was just about spreading the love. It was easier to understand. But now that we know him, he is asking for more from us. He’s asking for us to reflect on our presuppositions, our sadness, and our anger, even if it is directed at him. Why? Because it is honest.

“Bad things are going to happen,” said Morelo. “When do you stop telling an artist what to do and not to do? And what harm is there from censoring an artist? Shouldn’t we be thinking that there’s a reason why this art is being made by this artist at this particular time? Nobody has ever done this before, but it is here now, and we have to confront it.”

Wax Poetic: A True Halloween Tale

BY DUANE SCOTT CERNY

The following occurred several years ago near an apartment where I once lived. Perhaps a mere dozen stories tall, my neighboring building offered eight studio apartments per floor. Over the decades, time and rental wear and tear would take its toll, and by the early 1970s new owners had cleaned up the old girl, painting her decorative facade like the belle of a ball to which she was never invited.

Lilly, a young professional, moves in later that decade. She has chosen a front, street-facing studio with jutting three-bay windows, the light filtering through tree top views of the ever-changing streetscape below. Later, she will recall sitting at night inside those triptych windows and feeling transported to another time. The white window moldings were then a rich brown oak, the cars and people she saw below were seemingly from the ‘20s, the era of the building’s construction.

One evening while relaxing in her favorite chair and after a particularly difficult work

week, she hears a tiny thud. The sound requires a near silent city moment to be heard. After a minute or so comes another light thud. The sound comes from behind her and as she jerks around, the creak in her chair matches her own inner eek.

Lilly’s dash to the light switch floods the space and she scans the small room as if she were an Upper East Side building inspector. But nothing. Lilly’s mind flashes to mice, but the sound is not the nervous scratching scramble of those unwelcome pests. No, this is a thud.

She stands silently near her chair, windows closed and pauses for the street to quiet. She waits — unsure of what, who, or something. And then comes another thump, this time echoing down from an obvious height.

To Lilly’s ears, the sound is that of a constant drip, and suddenly the explanation seems all too obvious. From the very middle of the carpeted room she notices a stain, a blemish no more than the size of a half dol-

lar. She slowly looks up, half expecting to find a crack in her ceiling. Instead, it looks as if a thickened water is filling the cut glass saucer shade of her ‘20s ceiling light, the ooze trickling off the fixture’s bottom finial and to the carpet below.

Her fear quickly turns to anger as her call to the building’s super is answered by his machine. Lilly’s gaze returns to the stain, it’s size unchanged. She throws down an old towel, gives it a rub with the toe of her shoe — the apartment’s stagnant smell explained and resolved with the opening of a window.

The next morning the super stands atop an old wooden ladder and mumbles, “Eats not vater. Eats some ting else!” He holds a bucket to the side of the glass shade and slowly pours what Lilly would later refer to as “a waxy goo” into a metal pail. He wipes the shade’s interior with a rag from his back pocket, then pulls his face away. “Zeet stinks! Must be upstairs lady. Leak in her apartment. I be back.”

Another day passes. Lilly opens another window, the cold, late fall air cleansing the smell, then sits wrapped in a blanket, fuming at the situation. The super no longer answers her questions. Her phone calls to the management company are equally unhelpful.

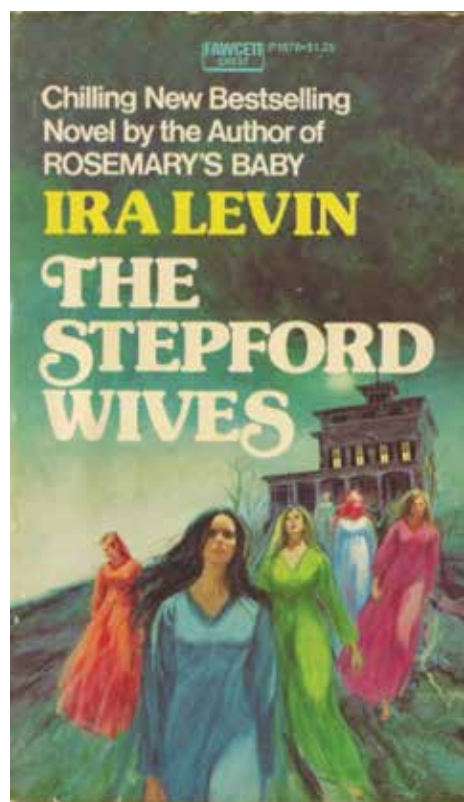
Slowly the ceiling fixture begins to refill with the translucent fluid. The super returns, only to resolve the matter by draining the contents into the same bucket. However, this time he wears a mask and skips wiping the shade. And the smell, though somewhat diminished, seems to have seeped into Lilly herself.

Further management calls will go unanswered, and the super continues to ghost her. Now the stain on her carpet grows wider and rounder, the odor stronger each passing day. Frustrated, Lilly ventures upstairs multiple times to confront her neighbor but there is never an answer at the door. Only that same sickly scent.

continued on page 26

Jefferson Market Library

BY CORINNE NEARY:



THE STEPFORD WIVES, by Ira Levin.

Last month, in our novella discussion, we talked about a book recently translated into English, and shortlisted for the 2026 Booker International Prize: *The Witch* by Marie NDiaye. This novella, originally published in French, in part uses the loose framework of magic and witchcraft to explore the limitations women can feel in family life. Many of us at the meeting saw a commentary on marriage, children, and suburban life represented in the pages, wherein husbands fear the magical power of their wives, leaving the women isolated.

Continuing a bit on these lines, and keeping in mind that we are in Halloween season, this month we will be reading Ira Levin's 1972 classic of satirical, feminist horror, *The Stepford Wives*, as well as showing the 1975 film adaptation, starring Katharine Ross.

The premise of Levin's novella, which became a bestseller with enormous cultural impact, describes the married men of the fictional town of Stepford, Connecticut and their fawning, submissive, impossibly beautiful wives. The protagonist is Joanna Eberhart, a talented photographer newly

arrived from New York City with her husband and children, eager to start a new life. As time goes on, she becomes increasingly disturbed by the wives of Stepford who seem to lack free will, especially when she sees her once independent-minded friends turn into mindless, docile housewives. All the women, and Joanna's own husband, deny anything is wrong, but there is something sinister beneath the perfect surface.

We'll be discussing this book on Wednesday, October 21 at 4:30 p.m., in our third floor Mae West room. We have copies available to borrow at our second floor circulation desk, so stop by to pick one up before they are all gone!

The 1975 film, directed by Bryan Forbes, became a cult classic and brought the term "Stepford Wife" into the cultural lexicon. Roger Ebert wrote in his 1975 review of the movie, "if television affects the way we think, dress and behave — and, heaven help us, I'm afraid it does — then someday we may all be a nation of those perfect plastic robots on TV." Ebert couldn't have known then about the culture of influencers now driving peo-

ple even further in the pursuit of an impossible perfection.

In the 50 years since the film's release, our world has changed in so many ways, but with popular influencers celebrating the "Trad-wife" ideal, and mommy bloggers showing carefully curated content, the pressure to be perfect still haunts us. We'll be screening the movie on Monday, October 26 at 5:30 p.m. in our first floor Willa Cather room.

In other movie programming, we'll be finishing the month out with a truly horrifying film, the 1969 *Pigsty (Porcile)* written and directed by Pier Paolo Pasolini. This Italian allegory, with the tagline "I killed my father. I ate human flesh. I quiver with joy," shows two parallel stories, one in the year 1500, and the other set in 1967. Both stories involve unspeakable and taboo acts of humanity, and have been interpreted as commentary on the horrors of hidden fascism, consumerism, and moral decay in postwar European society. This movie will be shown on Thursday, October 29 at 6 p.m. in our first floor Willa Cather room, and is in Italian with English subtitles.

Myrtle

BY NANCY DAVIDOFF KELTON

I got my turtle in the pet department of W. T. Grants when I was in kindergarten and put her in a plastic bowl on the kitchen counter next to the sink. I wanted a parakeet or a canary, but my mother said a bird would make too much noise and fly around every time someone opened the cage door. I also wanted fish in a bowl like my cousins had but my mother said that fish bowls took up too much space. She definitely did not want a dog or a cat — or any pets really. She was not thrilled with animals — or people. She could not be bothered by them.

I wanted something to care for. To love. To talk to. I wanted a close friend in the house. I would take care of little Myrtle.

The reason I put Myrtle in her bowl on the counter very close to the sink was because when my mother was in the kitchen, she was usually standing at the sink making herself a highball, drinking it, washing vegetables, and getting the chicken or fish or lamb chops ready for dinner. Our dinners were often overcooked

and dried out. And definitely over seasoned. Mom put too much paprika on everything. I was concerned she would season Myrtle.

My mother talked to me when I initiated the conversation. Mostly she ignored me. She definitely ignored Myrtle. She had a nervous breakdown when I was in second grade, had weekly sessions with a psychologist and then was institutionalized.

Until I was in first grade, we lived on Crescent Avenue one and a half blocks from the Buffalo Zoo. The closest entrance was on Parkside Avenue. The children's train was right inside. So was the elephant house that had one elephant. On Saturdays and Sundays, I went there with my parents, mostly with my father alone.

One Friday morning when I was at Myrtle's bowl about to feed her, she did not move. I put her in my hand. Nothing. My sister and mother paused and said Myrtle must be dead. My father joined us and agreed. "We should probably wrap her up and throw her out," he said, getting a big white paper napkin.

"No," I said. I was crying. I asked if we could wait until later that evening or the next day. My parents consented.

On Saturday my father took me to the zoo without throwing out Myrtle first. My

parents agreed to discuss how we would dispose of Myrtle later. I was sad and we decided that cotton candy from the zoo concession stand was what I needed first.

When Dad and I got to the zoo, Jimmy — the man who ran to concession stand and Dad's pal — said that the elephant died the night before and would have a funeral and be buried. We told Jimmy about Myrtle. He made me a huge cotton candy.

"I'd like Myrtle to have a funeral, too," I told Dad.

My father said okay. It would be Sunday at 1:00 pm. When we got home, my mother was less than thrilled with our funeral plan, but she went along with it. I called Grandma Cohen and invited her. I asked my sister to get dressed up. Knowing what Myrtle meant to me, both Grandma and Susan agreed. My father got the snow shovel from the garage. He said he would dig a hole on Sunday.

On Sunday, I consulted Susan about where to bury Myrtle. She agreed with me that near our swing set — but not super close — would be good. She said she would wear a plaid pleated skirt and a white blouse. I wore the same thing. My skirt had straps. I loved dressing like Susan.

Grandma arrived wearing a navy-blue dress. She parked in the middle of the street.

Lilly falls back into her chair. "All that ... that waxy goo was my neighbor's ... remains?"

"Liquified remains," corrects the officer. "Management believes your neighbor was registered for direct deposit and auto bill pay. So long as the electricity bill was current, the melting continued."

Lilly flashes back to the little thuds, the drips, and the liquid terror of their contents. An odor she has inhaled, the slime that has drenched her, a sick slickness that even a dozen showers can't erase.

She was not a good driver or parker. My father reparked her car by the curb.

I put dandelions around Myrtle's bowl. We had plenty of those. We also had some daisies that I put around the dandelions. My father began to shovel the dirt on top of the bowl and suggested we begin.

"We have to wait for Mommy," I said.

"I don't think Mommy's coming," Daddy said.

I kept looking inside the kitchen. She wasn't there. I didn't think she was coming out either. I didn't ask why, but more tears fell than I expected. I spoke first. I said Myrtle was a delight to feed and play with until her death. And she made me very happy. Susan and Daddy were pleased that I had a sweet pet. Daddy shed a few tears.

We took turns shoveling the dirt onto Myrtle's bowl and went back into the house. No signs of Mommy. I checked upstairs. She was in her bedroom lying across the bed. I made myself chocolate milk. I was angry at my mother for not asking about the funeral, attending it, or making me chocolate milk.

I did not talk at dinner. After I went to my room and drew pictures of Myrtle.

Years later, I got another pet. I am not sure I ever got over my mother not participating in Myrtle's funeral.

Yes, the horror arrived in her neighbor's form, coming to visit one slow, waxy drip at a time.

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

Halloween *continued from page 25*

This slow-motion ceiling flood will continue for weeks, culminating in one particularly disastrous incident: While Lilly attempts to empty the shade's liquid by use of an unwieldy broom and her own bucket, sans ladder, the shade tilts and the "goo" pours down like candlewax, covering Lilly's hair, her clothing, the inside of her slippers. She gags, retching as she runs to the shower where she stays under the hot water's salvation for nearly an hour.

Shockingly, the following day the police are

at her door. Did she know her upstairs neighbor? How long had this leak been occurring? Why hadn't she called the police earlier?

"I don't understand!" Lilly fumes, half angry, half terrified. "What type of leak would cause this?"

"Well," the policeman stammers, "your neighbor, she um, she um, melted. The coroner will determine time of death, but she probably died many months ago, perhaps even years. And not to be disrespectful, but there's little of her left."

October 2026

EVENTS

in and around the West Village



Day Of The Dead
Public Altar Decorating
Saturday, October 31, 11 AM-4 PM
Aztec Dance Performance
Sunday, November 1, 3:30 PM
Campos Community Garden
644 East 6th Street
(between Avenues B and C)
camposcommunitygarden.org
Campos Community Garden invites you for its 16th year viewing of the DAY OF THE DEAD community altar and to watch the indigenous Cetiliztli Nauhcampa-Aztec dance performance. Mexican hot chocolate and sweet bread; hot cider for sale.

THEATER

Elf Lyons: THE WOMAN ON THE EDGE
October 1-18; performance times vary
SoHo Playhouse, sohoplayhouse.com
British comedian and performance artist Elf Lyons continues her acclaimed solo engagement.

Mark Simmons: JEST TO IMPRESS
October 21-28
SoHo Playhouse, sohoplayhouse.com
British one-liner specialist Mark Simmons begins an eight-day New York engagement. SoHo Playhouse

MUSIC

RAVI COLTRANE CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION
October 13-18
Village Vanguard, villagevanguard.com
Ravi Coltrane leads two configurations across six nights, marking the centennial year of his father, John Coltrane. Village Vanguard

ART

ROY LICHTENSTEIN: LIKE NEW
Opens October 11
Whitney Museum, whitney.org
Major new Whitney exhibition devoted to Lichtenstein and the artist's radical reworking of familiar images and visual conventions.

VESSELS: BODIES, TALES & MACHINES
October 16-31; Wed.-Sun. 1-6 PM
Westbeth Gallery
55 Bethune St., westbeth.org
Jeanne Verdoux, Fanny Allié and Nicolas Tournon/Amy Lemaire examine bodies, memory and the idea of the vessel through ceramics, 3D printing, painting, textiles and mixed media.

WAVERLY MIDNIGHTS: EVERY DAY IS HALLOWEEN 2026
October 2-31; late-night screenings
IFC Center, ifccenter.com
IFC's month-long horror series returns with four repertory favorites timed to spooky season.

THE BOWERY BOYS: GHOST STORIES OF OLD NEW YORK
October 28-31; 7 & 9:30 PM
Joe's Pub, publictheater.org
The Bowery Boys Podcast turns real New York ghost stories into its annual Halloween cabaret, with music director Andrew Austin and vocalist Lisa Karlin.

BOOGIE BABY NYC: FAMILY HALLOWEEN DANCE PARTY
October 31, 11 AM-3 PM
Whitney Museum, whitney.org
Halloween-day family program combining costumes, music, movement and art-making at the museum.

BOO! THE PLAYERS THEATRE SHORT PLAY FESTIVAL 2026
October 8-25
The Players Theatre, 115 MacDougal Street, theplayerstheatre.com
Short horror plays and dark comedies to celebrate the spooky season.

SPOOKTACULAR CONCERT
Saturday, October 24 | 10 and 11:15 AM
Greenwich House Music School
46 Barrow St, greenwichhouse.org
A high-energy live musical adventure blending spooky classical favorites with jazzy tunes. It includes a costume parade, an instrument petting zoo, and treats.

WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK DOG HALLOWEEN PARADE
Saturday, October 25;
Registration at 9 AM, Parade at 12 PM
Washington Square Park
Watch local dogs parade in incredibly creative and elaborate costumes competing for prizes. Free to spectate.

SPECIAL EVENTS

NEW YORK BURLESQUE FESTIVAL — GOLDEN PASTIE AWARDS
October 4, 8:00 PM
Le Poisson Rouge, lpr.com
The 24th annual New York Burlesque Festival closes with its irreverent awards ceremony and supper-club stage show.

HABIBI FESTIVAL 2026
October 8-11, 7:00 PM
Joe's Pub, publictheater.org
Four-night flagship festival showcasing traditional, reimagined and contemporary music from the Arab world and SWANA diaspora.

DISCOVER POTTERY OPEN HOUSE — OPEN HOUSE NEW YORK FESTIVAL
October 18, 11:00 AM-5:00 PM
Greenwich House Pottery Chelsea
80 Eighth Ave., 6th Floor
greenwichhouse.org
Free demonstrations, studio tours, community art-making and hands-on opportunities to try the pottery wheel.

LECTURES

SERIOUSLY ENTERTAINING — THE NEW YORKER: FROM COVER TO COVER
October 6, 7:00 PM
Joe's Pub, publictheater.org
Literary cabaret celebrating *The New Yorker's* cover art with Barry Blitt, Grace Lynne Haynes and Anita Kunz.

WALTER ANNENBERG LECTURE: ALEX DA CORTE



October 29, 6:30 PM
Whitney Museum, whitney.org
Artist Alex Da Corte delivers the Whitney's Walter Annenberg Lecture, one of the museum's headline fall public programs.

DANCE

LIMÓN DANCE COMPANY — 80TH ANNIVERSARY
October 6-11
The Joyce Theater, joyce.org
The historic American modern-dance company marks its 80th anniversary with landmark repertory, new commissions and live music.

LONDON CITY BALLET
October 27-31; through November 1
The Joyce Theater, joyce.org
The revived London City Ballet returns to New York with two mixed programs combining new ballets and legacy works.

THE 36TH ANNUAL CHILDREN'S HALLOWEEN PARADE
Washington Square Park and West 3rd Street
between LaGuardia Place and Mercer Street
Saturday, October 31, 1-4 PM
http://bit.ly/4iuq31b

Join Manhattan Community Board 2 and New York University for an afternoon at one of the city's largest free children's events on Halloween! Marchers will gather at 1 PM at the arch in Washington Square Park and the parade will start at 1:30 PM. After the parade, FREE trick-or-treat bags, rides, and entertainment will await families and children on West 3rd Street between LaGuardia Place and Mercer Street.

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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