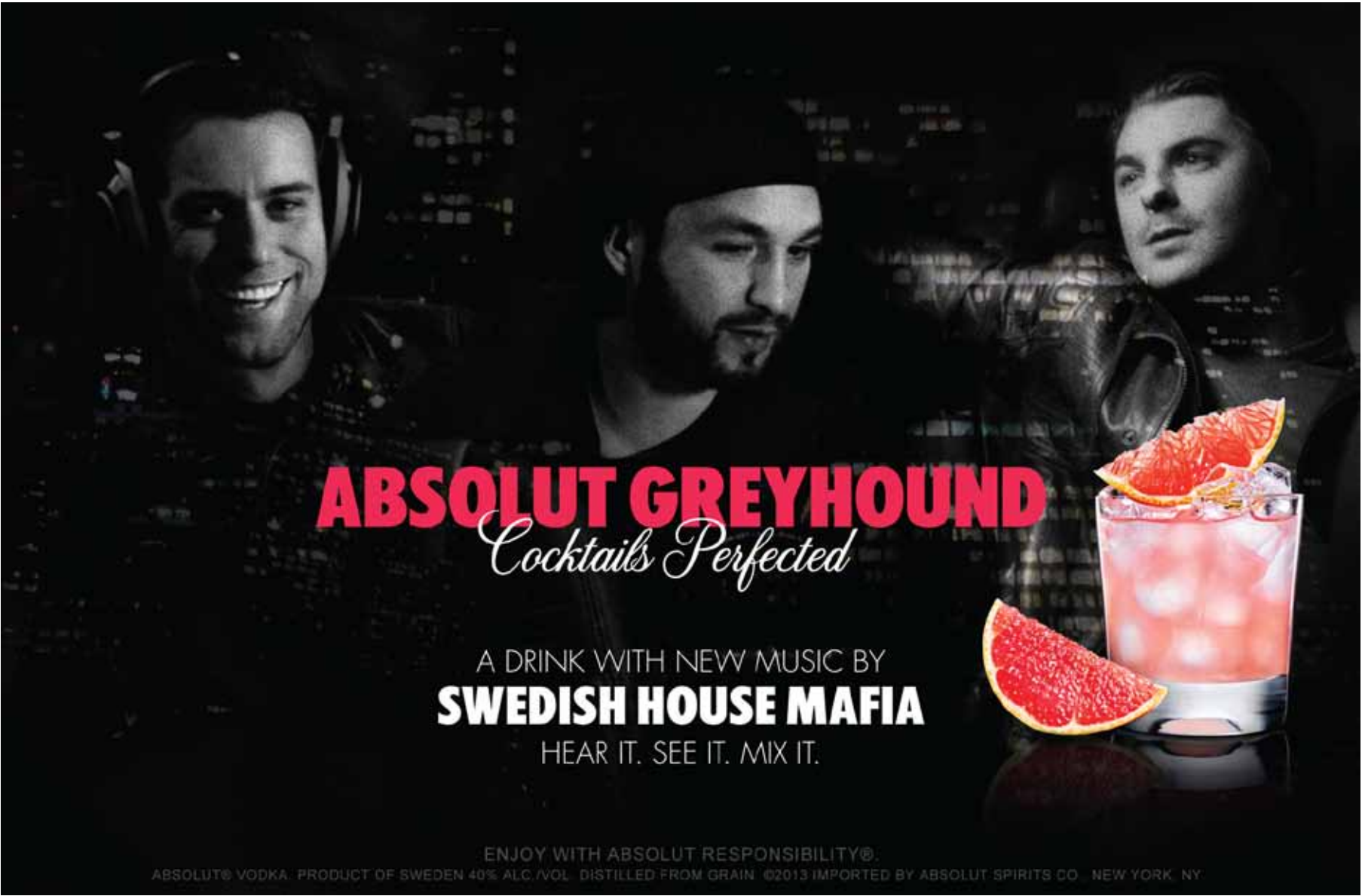


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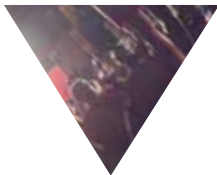
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ART LEAGUE HOUSTON'S TALENT TRANSFORMATION & ARTISTIC AFFIRMATION

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09_13
6

By Meghan Hendley | Photos by Barry Tse & Alex Barber



NESTLED IN MONTROSE, Art League Houston embraces contemporary art and the cultural enrichment it provides for the community. Founded in 1948, this non-profit organization features two galleries, classes, its annual *Texas Artist of the Year program*, and an impressive outreach program. In addition to the constant visual stimulation located inside the building, Art League Houston is also known for their promotion of outdoor installations that merge with the surrounding environment.

Hailing from London, Jennie Ash (an artist in her own right) stands as visual arts director at Art League Houston helping to shape the programming and exhibition process from start to finish. She has helped bring about more dynamic installations and creative experiences for the community, while radiating a pure joy for the arts. *FPH* recently spoke with Ash about Art League Houston and the current happenings brewing on Montrose Boulevard.

Art League has truly become a staple of the Houston arts community over the past few years. How has the organization grown since you have been there?

When I first started as the visual arts director back in 2011, Art League Houston's (ALH) name had somewhat disappeared from the discussions about which

art spaces were the most exciting in Houston. I was still incredibly excited to be offered the position however because I felt like this organization had so much potential. My initial mission back in 2011 was to increase the visibility of the organization within the local and national arts communities through more diverse and innovative programming, more events in conjunction with exhibitions such as panel discussions, lectures, film nights and performances, and a better online presence.

Two years later, it is still a work in progress, but I am really happy to say that exciting things have been happening at Art League, which include the formation of a new artist board made up of some of exciting emerging writers, musicians, and artists who will function as the organization's creative Think Tank.

In 2012, we hired a new Executive Director, Michael Peranteau who has been incredibly inspiring to work with and very open to new ideas I might have, no matter how crazy they sound! He also has an extensive background in performance and interdisciplinary work, after 12 years at DiverseWorks and seven years at Project Row Houses. We also hired a new Education Director, Zachary Gresham, who has totally rejuvenated the Art League Art School (with over 200 students per quarter) by hiring new and emerging

local artists as teachers, redesigning the school catalog, and adding more creative and diverse classes that are not offered anywhere else in Houston.

As the Visual Arts Director, what are some of the things you want to bring to Art League?

I want to bring multi-disciplinary projects, installations, collaborations, performances, films, and exhibitions to Art League that not only connect artists with writers, scientists, musicians etc., but also embody a sense of innovation, experimentation, and cultural meaningfulness. The art that engages me the most tends to be the work that always asks more questions than it does give me answers. I am particularly interested in showing local, national, and international artists who are interested in creating new and unusual ways for the public to experience Houston's indoor and/or outdoor public spaces through art, as well as artists who are challenging the traditional format of what an exhibition should look like, and also exploring the idea of what it means to curate something. For instance, I have been thinking how fun it would be to do a scavenger hunt-style art show, where all the artwork is hidden throughout the city on say buses, trains, bike racks and/or in parks, coffee shops, bars. In order to view the work, one must follow a set of clues that will take them on a creative journey throughout the city, which will incorporate public transport—biking and walking as a way of reconnecting the viewer with the city.

As people travel down Montrose, they will be greeted with a colorscape of architectural proportions. Tell us about the latest installation of "Funnel Tunnel" by Patrick Renner.

This is a project that Art League has been working on for over 16 months. For the City of Houston, it is an experiment and Art League is the "guinea pig." We worked closely with the City Parks Department and the Mayor's Office. Again, it goes back to that idea of placemaking. With Houston being such a car-dependent city, and Montrose being one of the busiest roads in town (39,000 cars go up and down it every day!), it's easy to become complacent about, and disconnected with, the public spaces around us. Bringing art on to the Montrose Blvd. medians is a way of creatively reclaiming these lost spaces, so that they may positively reflect and bring together the creative people and businesses in the area. The "Funnel Tunnel" has done just that, by creating a sort of visual art speed bump that creatively interrupts the average commuter's day. This is just the beginning of the Art League's Esplanade Program, so watch out for more art on the medians.

You had a lot of community involvement with Patrick's work. What was the response like for the participants from your perspective?

People were so eager to help; I was totally amazed and inspired. I am still in disbelief about how many people came out and volunteered their time with only the promise that it would contribute to a public art piece. It was a really emotional and humbling experience to hang out with a constant stream of complete strangers who were as invested in the sculpture as I was. Another thing that sort of blew my mind was that I expected people to just paint the wooden strips in solid colors, but instead volunteers got really experimental with the colors, mark-making and textures. Each strip of wood is an artwork in its own right! **FPH**





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By Michael Pennywark

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09_13
8



△ **SOMEONE ONCE TOLD ME** that no man is an island. Unfortunately, I took those words, immortalized by Donne, as a personal challenge and locked myself away from the world. I lived a blissful, if slightly uneventful, existence for quite some time. Until, of course, I ran out of coffee and cigarettes. I was eventually forced to concede that unless I had my own coffee and tobacco plantation, I probably would need some sort of human interaction to survive. Besides supporting my habits, interacting with people has other merits. I mean, without collaboration, how would we have sent people to the moon (or at least faked the moon landing), discovered new lands or built the Great Pyramids? OK, the last one wasn't so much a collaboration as it was forced labor, but you get the point – great things have been achieved with the collaboration of great minds.

It is no surprise then to find the art world full of great collaborations such as Picasso and Braque; Warhol and Basquiat; Mapplethorpe and Patti Smith; Paul McCartney and Michael Jackson; and Sylvester Stallone, Jason Statham, Dolph Lundgren, Jet Li, Bruce Willis, and Randy Couture. Well, it's great most of the time anyway. Ultimately, what makes collaboration special is when two or more artistic disciplines come together to create something new and exciting. In a landmark public program, the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts will launch a new annual lecture featuring leading artists in the world of artistic collaboration. These speakers will discuss the power and potential of interdisciplinary collaboration.

Performance-based art such as dance, theater, and film call for some of the greatest interdisciplinary collaboration and so it seems only fitting then that the inaugural Mitchell Artist Lecture series kicks off this month with legendary choreographer, Bill T. Jones. Jones' impressive credentials include a MacArthur "Genius" Award, the Kennedy Center Honors award, and two Tony Awards. With more than 45 works under his belt for his own company, Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company, and artistic



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partnerships with Louise Nevelson, Kiki Smith, Toni Morrison, Jessye Norman, and Keith Haring, Jones knows a thing or two about collaboration.

Intrigued by the opportunity to discover the advantages of collaborating, *FPH* sat down with Jones to learn more. He reveals that while the discipline he has been involved with for most of his life is very people-centered – from the dancers and writers to the people that light the stage and create the video – he has been looking to subvert the bounds of conventional categories. Jones explains that “if one wants to jump outside of categories, it's best to have collaborators or co-conspirators who are interested in trying to achieve something that would be greater than the sum of its parts. In a nutshell, I think that's the bulk of interdisciplinary collaboration – that it's greater than the sum of its parts.”

You cannot come away from a collaboration without the experience affecting you in some way, and Jones points to the example of Bruce Nauman whose performance-based work as a visual artist came about after a breakthrough while studying under the avant-garde choreographer Meredith Monk. Jones' personal collaboration with photographer, choreographer, and dancer Arnie Zane was one of his most important and led to the creation of his dance company. Jones describes his long-term work with Obie-winning lighting designer Robert Wierzel as “always sort of humbling. If I really step back away from my own concerns for a moment and see the way that he is seeing, I learn. I learn about what I've made.”

A self-admitted booster for collaboration, Jones recognizes that collaborating is not for everyone: “I have no problem with a great novelist or poet holed up in their imagination, cut off from the rest of the world if they bring me back something that is deep and resonant with the world—with the particular world that I live in.” Realizing I need to step up my game from second-rate beat writer in order to justify my existence, I dug deeper into the collaborative process as Jones continues, “One thing about collaboration is that it really asks you in some ways to give up control, ultimate control. It asks you to share that [control] and that can be harrowing for certain, Type-A personalities or people that want to have control. I think I am that but when you are part of something that's bigger than you are in that way, yes you are humbled but you also feel you have the air underneath your wings, you can soar more. You don't have to have all the answers—you can respond more and I think that's very good in life wherever we turn.”

Often referred to as a collaborator, Jones has found his preparation for the upcoming artist lecture to be rather enlightening. “As time goes on, one becomes more [of a collaborator]. One has more pressures on them about the bottom line, your name on something, the number of different projects coming, some of them away from my comfort zone, things that I'm working with. I'm having questions about what collaboration is and in some ways I will air some of those questions maybe just to get a discussion going,” Jones reveals. “One of my guiding ideas right now is a quote from Jasper Johns, the great post-pop artist. Someone was asking him how he made what he did and he said, ‘Well you take something, do something to it, now do something else to it.’ This speech will be an opportunity for me to take something – the idea of collaboration – and do something with it and then attempt to do something else with it,” Jones adds in summation.

I guess I can live with being part of a continent for right now, just don't be ringing that bell for me too often; I like to sleep in. **FPH**

A man with a mustache, wearing a dark blue suit, a light blue shirt, and a patterned tie, is sitting in the driver's seat of a light blue vintage convertible. He is wearing dark sunglasses and has his hands on the steering wheel. The background features large orange and white shipping containers, one of which has the "Hapag-Lloyd" logo. The overall scene is set outdoors, likely at a port or industrial area.

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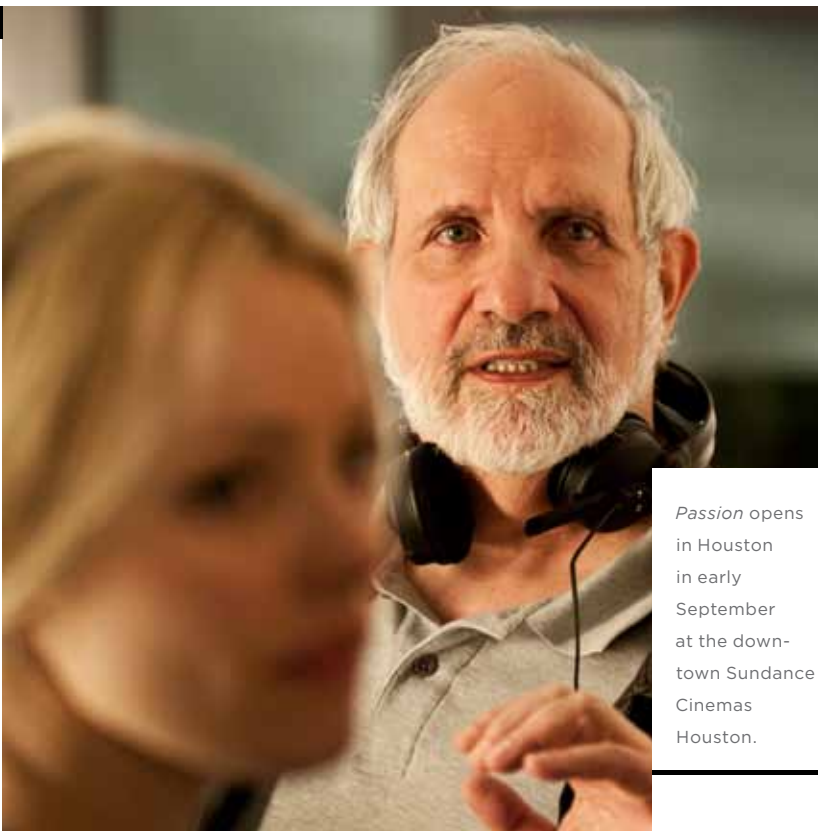


P A S S I O N P L A Y

BRIAN DE PALMA IS ONE OF THE GREAT American directors and he's still going strong in his 70s. De Palma's latest film *Passion*, a remake of a 2010 French film by Alain Corneau, *Crime d'amour*, revolves around corporate competition between two female executives at an ad agency, resulting in intrigue and eventually murder. Rachel McAdams and Noomi Rapace star in the remake. The French version starred Kristin Scott Thomas and Ludivine Sagnier.

"I wanted to keep the audience guessing until the end. I filmed the second half in a dreamlike reality so the audience could identify with her blurred sense of reality. In the Corneau film, you observe, how can I put it, a lot of tedious expositional scenes with a lot of information being elicited between Isabelle and her lawyer and the district attorney from across a table. That's stuff we see on television all the time. I wanted to be more imaginative with the exposition; it is after all a murder mystery and you have to explain how it all works at the end," explains De Palma.

"There are certain things that worked quite well in the Corneau movie and other things that I thought could be improved. I didn't like the idea of revealing the identity of the murderess at the murder," De Palma tells *Free Press Houston* during a recent phone interview.



Passion opens in Houston in early September at the downtown Sundance Cinemas Houston.

△ By Michael Bergeron

In Crime d'amour, Isabelle goes to see a movie but in Passion Isabelle goes to see Claude Debussy's ballet "Afternoon of a Faun" that was originally choreographed by Nijinsky. However, you chose to use a contemporary version of the piece choreographed by Jerome Robbins. Was there any particular inspiration for this choice?

I saw a video of the Robbins choreography on YouTube many years ago. I thought it was extraordinary and I wanted to figure out a way to use that ballet in a movie and this particular piece lent itself to that.

You also use one of your visual motifs, the split screen in Passion. Can you talk about your history using the split screen technique?

Split screen is a kind of involving technique. Every movie that I've put it in, it's been in a different way. I first used it in this documentary I made about a play, *Dionysus in '69*, in which I was shooting the narrative of the play while my co-director was shooting the reactions of the audience to the play. It was an environmental work and the audience was literally part of the play.

In *Sisters*, I had the idea of seeing this murder from two different points of view—from Jennifer Salt's point of view and then the point of view of the guy dying in the room. Then bringing the screen together when Jennifer brings the detective back to the apartment.

In *Carrie*, I used it in the destruction of the prom sequence. But I found that was not a great use of the technique because split screen isn't really good for action sequences. It's a kind of meditative form of filmmaking.

In *Passion*, it lent itself. Split screen is something you have to slowly watch because a lot is going on, and I felt that

these two images against each other would be extremely captivating.

Sissy Spacek, in addition to starring in Carrie (1976), was also the set dresser on your previous film Phantom of the Paradise (1974). Had you seen Spacek in Badlands (1973), and when did you know you would cast her as Carrie?

Not until I saw her screen test. I had somebody else in mind for the part. Sissy had a commercial she was going to do that weekend. She asked me what I thought and I said, 'Sissy, I'm leaning towards this other girl.' But she blew off the commercial and did the audition, and it blew everybody away. And yes, I had seen *Badlands*.

How did you get hooked up with Paul Williams for Phantom of the Paradise?

Kind of by luck. It's difficult to get big rock groups, or established songwriters, to write complete scores for movies. We were very fortunate that Paul liked the material and had the ideas for the songs as well as the permutations of the original song that the Phantom sings.

Many of your movies feature conspiracy plots. Blow Out (1981) is practically a template for how the Zapruder film was re-edited. And Snake Eyes (1998) concerns a military coup and assassination. What helped to form your opinions on such matters?

I'm a child of the '60s. That's when we discovered our government was and is still lying to us so blatantly. I'm fascinated with revealing the truth behind the lie. Look at this whole NSA issue – Oh, we just happen to be eavesdropping on everybody. Can you really believe that anything you do on the Internet isn't on some server in the basement of some NSA establishment? **FPH**

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09_13
10



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PAY IT FORWARD

By Will Guess



WHEN I WAS FINALLY OLD ENOUGH to make the hour-long drive to Houston to see shows, Walters was always a home away from home for me. There was something really different about the place on Washington. I owe so many of my great memories to that venue and specifically to owner Pam Robinson. From seeing American Nightmare for the first time to watching local legends The Jonbenét play countless times, Pam’s vision gave me and so many others the opportunity to see shows that changed our lives and shifted our futures. Pam was recently diagnosed with cancer—news that absolutely crushed me. For this month’s preview, I’ve chosen to feature three shows taking place at Walters during one very special week-end. All the proceeds from the Keep Calm // Fight Cancer benefit will go to help Pam cover her medical expenses. From the bottom of my heart, Pam—thank you.

The Tontons, The Suffers, and Wild Moccasins

Friday, September 6_ Walters

I recently had the chance to see all three of these bands at the Houston Press Music Awards showcase at the House of Blues. I was floored. I’ve heard so much about each of them yet, for some reason, had never seen them live. The Suffers are the standout of the bunch. Singer Kam Franklin has got some serious soul. She lights up the stage with a powerful presence that demands your attention. The band isn’t so bad either. To add to that, The Tontons write great pop songs with catchy hooks and are gaining popularity daily. The Wild Moccasins have similar appeal. Three of Houston’s standout acts on one bill—a great way to start off your weekend and give to an important cause.

Pride Kills & Black Congress

Saturday, September 7_ Walters

Two of Houston’s absolute BEST hardcore bands are playing on the same day. One is a long-time staple and the other is an eclectic group comprised of members from other local bands that together make up a phenomenal heavy music scene in Houston. Pride Kills are one of the reasons people around the world talk about Texas hardcore music. They’re the band that’s still around to show the new generation what the music is all about. On the other hand, Black Congress quickly became the talk of the city as soon as they formed and they don’t disappoint. If you haven’t seen the new incarnation with former Jonbenét vocalist Mike Murland, you’re missing out. They don’t play often but when they do, it’s something you don’t want to miss.

The Last Starfighter & Pbearadactyl

Sunday, September 8_ Walters

Every time I talk to someone and mention The Last Starfighter, their response is always, “Oh yeah, I remember that band. They were great. What happened to them?” Now, after an almost five-year hiatus, they’re back. A band that has maintained its popularity despite a lengthy disappearance has decided to play again, with two new guitar players in tow, in support of a venue that supported them for so long. Also on the bill are newcomers Pbearadactyl. With a band name like that, who wouldn’t want to see what they’re all about?

Raekwon, Sept 12_ Fitzgerald’s

Cold Cave, September 14_ Walters

Minus The Bear, Sept 17_ House of Blues

Between the Buried & Me, Sept 19_ House of Blues

Title Fight, Sept 20_ Fitzgerald’s

Alt-J, Sept 27_ Bayou Music Center

MUSIC OPINIONS

By K.M. Anderson



(Imagine this with voice narration by James Earl Jones)

Plankton Wat

Drifter’s Temple_ Thrill Jockey

Psychedelic music is best at making a moment seem epic, whatever that moment may be. Plankton Wat embodies all that is great about the psychedelic experience. Let us take the beautiful “Empire Mines,” prefaced with warm, endearingly-strummed acoustic guitar, only to reveal with each layer of guitar reverb and delay, another ray of light, another color of the sky. “Bread of Dreams” is appropriately named. “Klamath At Dusk” is the wind causing the leaves to brush, the illuminating and dimming of a shadow by a passing sunlight, the shapes of the clouds. As I listen, I realize that I’ve never appreciated the beauty in the patterns of this tortilla chip.

Drake

Nothing Was The Same_ OVO Sound

There are two sides to Drake: the rapper’s rapper and the slow-jam rapper/singer. It has garnered him both the acknowledgement and admonishment of his peers. In a recent interview with XXL, he said that his new album *Nothing Was The Same* is the perfect mix of both of those worlds—the newfound confidence in the Drake complex. What should one expect? Take “All Me” or “5AM In Toronto,” braggadocio, sing song-y hooks, full of one-liners (the rapping Drake), or take “Girls Love Beyonce” and “Hold On We’re Going Home” (the singing Drake). Though “Hold On...” is pretty damn awesome. These songs would basically be the album—well-rapped R&B.

Julia Holter

Loud City Song_ Domino

Julia Holter is unapologetically high art. Her music is not the stuff of easy reference and comparison. However, her latest effort, *Loud City Song*, is a much easier initiation into her world than any of her previous albums. The album is loosely based on the novella “Gigi,” by French author Colette, and is also a meditation on life in Los Angeles. The album reminds me of the Prince album *Parade*, or the music of Stereolab; it is lush in production (sweeping strings, grand keyboards, atmospheric), but also rhythmic, with songs such as “In The Green Wild” and “This Is a True Heart.” The album feels complete—it has pace, mood, and movement, all seeming intentionally narrative. Definite album of the year candidate.

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09_13
12



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SHINER

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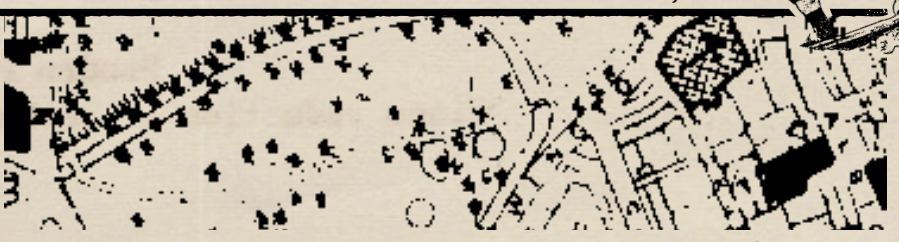
SMART

Shiner

ABSOLUT
Country of Sweden
VODKA



open your mind.



INTERVIEW: FLCON FCKER

By Rob McCarthy
Photos by Ronald Jones & Hipporacle ▲

FLCON FCKER may not be a name you'd easily bring up during dinner with your grandmother, nor is it really any indication of what you actually get when you strap yourself in for one of his explosive live performances, but make no mistake, this guy will eat your lunch with his mastery of all things synth and electronic. Just who is this masked man, and what led him down the path he has chosen for himself? *FPH* had the pleasure of getting in touch with the masked musical marauder, and asked him to unveil a few of his secrets.

FPH
MUSIC

09_13
14

Before you started becoming a wizard on synthetic synths, did you have a history with analog or acoustic/electric instruments? What all do you play?

I had piano lessons briefly when I was young but I quickly graduated to guitar when puberty hit. I took the usual "I'll just play in a bunch of punk bands because fuck yeah!" route in high school, but I quickly grew out of it. I was the kid that would show up to rehearsal with weird pedals. I also started dissecting and modifying guitars soon after acquiring them. I moved to Nashville and learned a lot about modifying guitars, but I was too busy to really jump into any musical endeavors. Plus, it's Nashville. Unless you're a super musician, you're not likely to get anywhere.

Why did you choose electronic music?

I didn't choose electronic music, per se, I chose a process. Most musicians are recording digitally these days, so using DAW (Digital Audio Workstation) programs like Ableton, Pro Tools, and Logic is no longer exclusively for electronic musicians. I started learning these programs because a friend wanted to start making/recording music cheaply. While researching cheap gear, I stumbled upon the world of DIY, open-source "makers" and musicians. I read a bit about DC electronics and started building synthesizers and controllers. With all this weird gear, I was invited to and made an impression on small venues in and around the downtown and Montrose areas. I just fell into electronic music, really. When you hear a synth you've made roar through a set of decent speakers and a club's sub for the first time—you're hooked.

Where do you like performing, and why?

My biggest concern is sound. I'll play a back alley if there's a good sound system and the risk of being arrested is low. I had a really awesome show at Fitzgerald's main stage curated by "Texphrastic" art blogger Harbeer Sandhu. Their sound is epic so it is definitely a highlight. They also give you these snazzy "artist" wristbands. That's nice.

On the other side of the spectrum is Notsuoh. The sound is never perfect, you might show up and no one knows you're booked, but the night will always be interesting and they let you do whatever in the loving fuck you want. It's crazy.

Last, but definitely not least, is The Doctor's Office on Nance St. It goes the fuck off. The crowds are thick and I have to play on the floor. People surround you because there's no stage, and they bring the energy. It's great.

We see that you work with some local talent, including acts like Josiah Gabriel. You also work with Houston's Fox (Hipporacle), who made the mask you've been donning for your

performances. How do you know these people, what is your relationship with them, and why them?

I've known Hipporacle for many years. She has a very unique aesthetic and is plugged into this amazing online community of bloggers, jewelry makers, crafters, and artists. They all know each other and draw inspiration from one and other. Her stuff is dark and enchanting. I hope she gets the opportunity to publish more of her work.

Josiah Gabriel and I are really close. We've thrown shows together and helped each other with process and production. In my opinion, he's Houston's best-kept secret. His Bandcamp account (under the name "crookedteethe") is, in my opinion, the embodiment of Houston electronica. It's raw, energetic, and the samples and singers are often Houston-specific. He and I take great pride in the city's electronic artists.

What programs and tools do you use to make your music? Anything new, technologically-wise, that you are excited about using?

I'm a gear/process head. I use a gs 128 monome to control everything. This includes two analog synths modules I built, any visual installations, Ableton, and a host of open-source samplers and controllers. They're all tied together by a Java program written by a good friend and programming badass, Phortran. With his help, I was also able to write my own code that allows me to use my monome as a motion-based effects controller. I never know if people are watching, but if I launch an effect, I can control it by waving the monome around. It's so much fun.

As the open-source community grows, lots of innovative stuff gets released. You can never predict it. I have, however been excited about the completion and release of an Ableton-like program, Bitwig. If it's everything the programmers claim it is, it's going to change things.

Also, I'm really excited about the direction of analog synths.

Anything you'd like our readers to know?

Houston is brewing up some nutty music. It's a perfect storm of low-cost DIY equipment, plenty of unused warehouse spaces, local galleries, and bars willing to debut new artists. Sure they all call me a DJ, but whatever, they still let me and my contemporaries play. In other cities, it's a bunch of hurdles to get booked. I've never had to sell tickets to a show or pay-to-play, for example, but that's standard operation in most places. It's really a great place to be if you're a musician looking for something different or a spectator that yearns for something new. **FPH**

Check out www.freepresshouston.com for the full interview.



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J.J. WATT AND DWIGHT HOWARD MAKE A GREAT COUPLE... YAY! SPORTS IS GOOD AGAIN

pops bottle of champagne

By Mills-McCoin
Image by John Forse

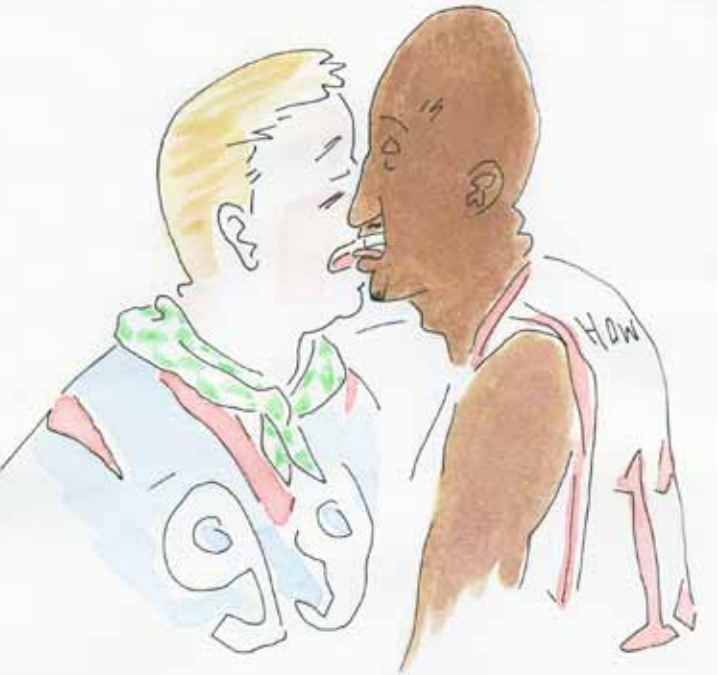


BACK IN SEPTEMBER OF 2010, when I wrote my first article about the Houston Texans, the professional sporting climate in Houston was 1,000 percent humidity - or some other meteorological metaphor for misery. The Houston Texans had still not reached the postseason. The Houston Rockets were stuck in the purgatory of “average.” The Houston Astros were slightly worse than they are now. Our fair city’s only testament to athletic success was the professional soccer team (Thank you for the new stadium and good times, Houston Dynamo).

pours champagne into pint glass

In three years time, the climate has completely changed for the better (though the Astros are still embarrassing; ownership of the team changed hands). In fact, the remainder of 2013 and the first half of 2014 promise to be exciting; and that’s a new feeling if you’re a sports fan in Houston.

pours contents of pint glass into face



I guess you can say it all started when Wade Phillips decided to accept the job as defensive coordinator of the Houston Texans in 2011. The hiring of Bum’s son and the decision to draft only defensive players in the 2011 NFL Draft (in which we drafted last year’s Defensive Player of the Year, J.J. Watt) were pivotal moments in our beloved franchise’s history. That season, the Texans were AFC South champs and went straight to the playoffs wherein they defeated the Cincinnati Bengals.

refills pint glass

That’s two or three franchise milestones in one season. What? “Boom. Houston you’re a winner now. I bet you didn’t see that coming.” No sir, I did not.

pours half of pint glass into face

Last season, again, the Texans were AFC South champs and went straight to the playoffs, defeating the Cincinnati Bengals. Literally, a pattern of success has formed, depending on how you define “success,” I suppose. In any case, this pending season promises to be a very exciting one indeed. With another decent draft under the Texans’ belt and the free agent signing of safety, Ed Reed, the Houston Texans are, on paper, the best to ever take the field. If you don’t believe me, then please enjoy the following words for the team’s owner, Bob McNair.

pours remainder of pint glass into face

“I think this is the best team we’ve had. I’m excited for our fans and I think they have reason to be excited,” said team owner, Bob McNair, before he addressed the Touchdown Club of Houston’s awards banquet. “...So there’ll be some setbacks along the way; we’ll have some injuries along the way. But I think this team will be able to recover and go a long way and go deep into the playoffs and that’s our hope.” It should be noted that most media outlets reported that Mr. Moneypants McNair said this season’s team was the best he’s ever “owned.”

So, the Houston Texans are predicted to do very well this season; and Las Vegas’ opinion on the matter is as follows: 18-to-1 to win the Super Bowl. But what does any of this predicted good fortune mean for Houston?

pops second bottle of champagne

Let’s talk about the Houston Rockets—because fuck you and champagne is good.

screams at pint glass, “Are you ready? Huh? Are you? Let’s go.” then fills pint glass to brim like an idiot

Dwight Howard, an NBA player generally acknowledged to be very good but also very sissy-pansy, became a free agent at the close of the 2013 NBA season. Mr. Howard made the brave decision to sign with the old ‘Ketchup and Mustard.’

“That’s the priority,” Howard explained in a phone interview on the night of his decision to join the

Houston Rockets. “That’s the priority. Shit, I’m betting \$30 million on it. That’s the priority. That’s what I want. My résumé, I’ve accomplished almost everything that you can accomplish in the NBA but winning a championship and getting MVP; and I’ve come close to both of them. So, you know, that’s my goal right there. That’s the reason why I play. I have fun, but that’s my goal. ... I might have fun, I might joke a lot, but I’m serious about winning a championship.” Hours after he made this statement, Dwight Howard bought breakfast for a lucky bunch of Houstonians indulging in the popular cuisine of The Breakfast Klub.

Is Dwight Howard as good as Hakeem Olajuwon—absolutely not. Sex with Kate Upton isn’t as good as Hakeem Olajuwon.

pours half of pint glass into face

I’m not real sure what I meant by that last statement. In any case, last season the Houston Rockets made a triumphant return to the NBA Playoffs due to a roster improved greatly by the presence of James Harden (the Beard) and Omer Asik (I believe this man is Turkish). Yes, I left out the addition of Jeremy Lin because what the hell. He hardly did anything.

finishes pint glass

The addition of Dwight Howard to this Houston Rockets team all but guarantees that Houston will have a deep run in the playoffs. In fact, Vegas had set the odds that Houston would win the NBA Finals at 20-to-1. Then Howard joined the team and Vegas adjusted the odds appropriately to 12-to-1. Yay! Everything is so exciting.

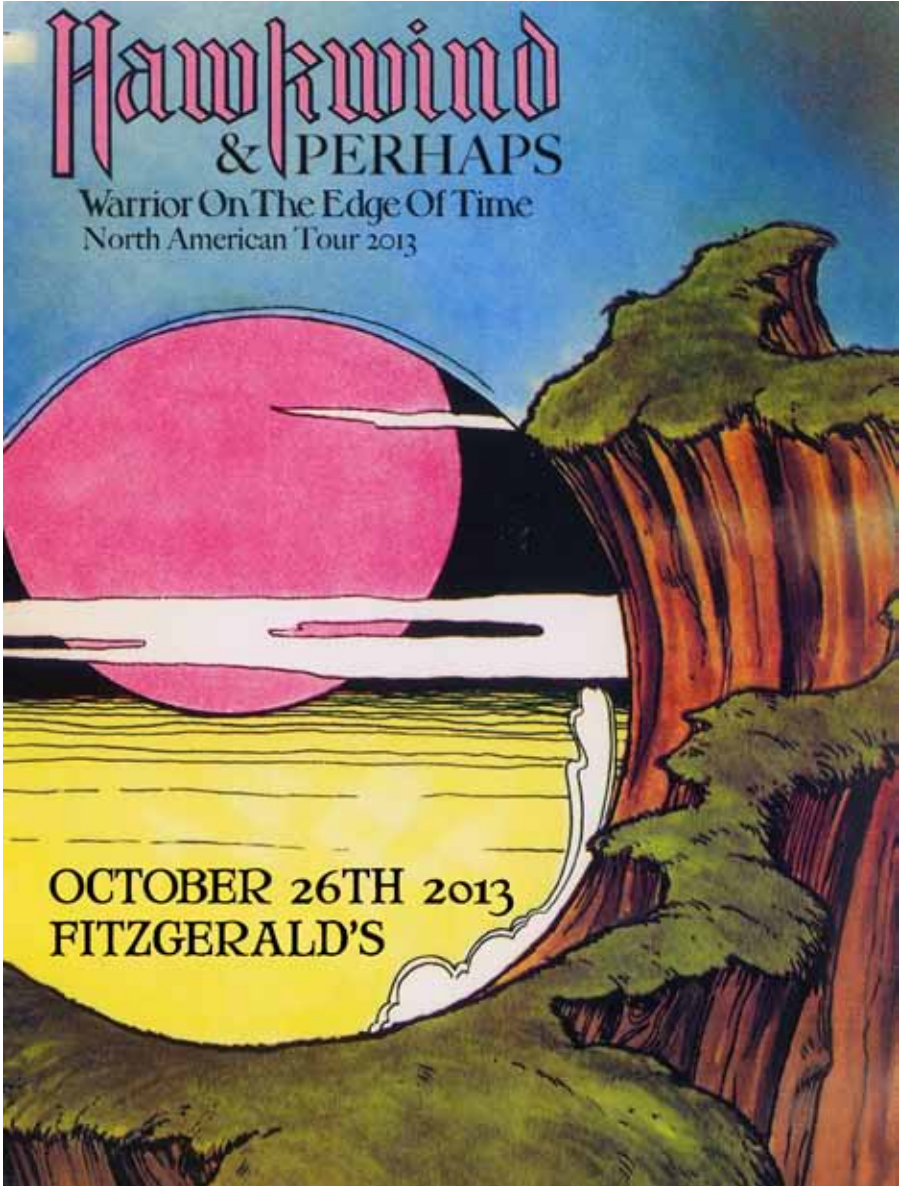
pours rest of bottle in pint glass, some spilling

But what does all of this new sports entertainment positivity mean for the city of Houston? I’ll tell you.

deep breath, pours pint glass into face, throws pint glass at rubber chicken

There’s a new marketability about Houston. Tourism is on the rise here. Superstar-level athletes want to live, play, and work in Houston. When Dwight Howard says he’s “betting \$30 million” on winning a championship in Houston, he’s really saying, “Holy shit! No state income tax. I won’t be the only person with a job. The food and beverage industry is bonkers ass delicious. Land is cheap. People are friendly. This sounds too good to be true.” Well it’s not too good to be true, Dwight. It’s Houston. In the mid-90s, when the Houston Rockets won back-to-back championships, those two summers were perhaps the best times to live in Houston. And I have a feeling those good times are soon to return. So go out there and stimulate the local economy by supporting the Texans, Dynamo, and Rockets however you please. Drink responsibly but party hard. Cheers. **FPH**

P.S. Just pretend the Astros are a minor league baseball team located just outside of Beaumont.





To open by listing Houstonian author Anis Shivani's many accomplishments—the prestigious journals where his work has appeared, the awards, the accolades—would be to take up half my column-space. Suffice it to say that Shivani, who writes short fiction, poetry, and criticism, and has his first novel coming out this fall, has been humbly sharpening his craft here, in his adopted home, since the mid-90s and he is now ready to make some noise.

FPH
LOCAL
09_13
18

What brought you to Houston? From where did you come?

I mostly spent time on both coasts before coming here. By the mid-1990s, I felt that I needed to get away from the Boston/New York/DC bubble if I was ever going to become a “real” writer. The decision to move to Houston, or to get out of the bubble into any culturally less-sophisticated place (which Houston was to a great extent then, but is considerably less so now), extracted a heavy price in terms of solitude, even alienation, but I felt it was a price worth paying. The conservatism of the South was a shock to my system; I had never encountered such belief in family and country before, but I did appreciate that the people seemed more “real” than, for example, the theory-besotted pseudo-intellectuals in the bohemian capitals. I still appreciate that.

What do you think of the local literary scene? How do you fit in (or not)? In other words, what is your place in the local literary community?

The local literary scene is diverse and becoming more diverse by the day. There is every kind of fiction and every kind of poetry being written here; whatever your tendency you can start or join a group or movement suited to it. We've finally reached a point where different aesthetics

can flourish on their own and evolve organically without being pushed by competing tendencies. The growing interaction of the broader arts community with the literary community is an exceptional development. The geographical concentration of nearly all the arts and literary activity in one more or less limited district is also great because that's the kind of density that's needed for organic evolution. At the same time, I'm worried about the onslaught of recent gentrification in the arts district and what that might do to damage the critical mass that's already been developed. *[Wait for the longer, online version of this article to read Shivani's more detailed response regarding institutions he supports, as well as his pointed criticism about the UH Creative Writing Program (which increasingly comes from a variety of sources).]*

Sometimes you use non-English words that may not be familiar to all your readers (pehelwan, parathas, tamasha, etc). Why do you do this? What is gained by this, and is it worth it to risk alienating some readers to this end?

This is a question some literary agents have posed to me in the past, and whenever they've done that I've reacted negatively. I think I provide enough context within the narrative to make sense of the unfamiliar vocabulary, and I think it's the kind of lazy

Shivani will be reading at Kaboom! Books's LitFuse reading series on November 14. In the meantime, his short story collections *The Fifth Lash* and *Anatolia*, his poetry collection *My Tranquil War*, and his book of criticism *Against the Workshop*, are available at Kaboom!, Brazos Bookstore, and other local independent bookstores and libraries. His debut novel, *Karachi Raj*, will be published this fall.

reader, who's not willing to invest himself in the specific nature of the world I'm creating, who becomes alienated so easily.

Certain ethnic communities have long been sprinkling “foreign” words into their fiction, but when they do, it's considered a mark of authenticity and they're admired for it. So take that, easily-alienated, lazy reader; this is immersion in South Asian culture for you.

Some of your characters are Muslim Zionists. You have been commended for your ability to depict a broad Muslim diaspora—are you choosing to depict Zionist Muslim characters as another way to show the breadth of Muslims' political opinions, or is there something else at work here?

Yes, this is something I've thought about after the book came out. One of these characters is from the story called “What It's Like to Be a Stranger In Your Own Home,” which is about an Egyptian engineer, Mo(hammed), in New Jersey caught in a web of paranoia and suspicion in the days immediately following 9/11. Mo wants desperately to belong, to the extent that when he's fired from his job, he writes an imaginary letter to his father back in Egypt about how well he's been treated by his former employer.

The same applies to a character from the story called “Growing Up Blind, in a Hotly Contested State,” where a South Asian professor of Middle Eastern Studies is in a state of utter delusion and denial about his marital situation. This character, Safdar, proud of his lineage from the Prophet, is desperate not to be seen as having too close an allegiance to Islam. He goes out of his way to mock the Syrians, Algerians, Egyptians, and others who hold democracy panels at elite universities like his own.

I think obeisance to Israel is a form of identity marker, a shortcut to belonging where perhaps one may never belong.

Your first novel is coming out soon. What do you want to tell Free Press readers about that?

My novel *Karachi Raj* will wash you of any impurities you might have accumulated during the watching of *Slumdog Millionaire*. You'll forget you ever saw that movie.

Karachi Raj is based on the actual slum called Orangi Pilot Project, founded by a major South Asian NGO leader, Akhtar Hameed Khan. Khan believed that slum dwellers could improve their lot by not relying on others, but instead taking the initiative to clean up their environment and make it conducive to health and prosperity.

I wanted to present a panoramic view of the city of Karachi, such as I don't think has been offered before in fiction written in English. How things are different from the received image of Pakistan in the wake of changes in class and gender relations, and how they're still the same, is what I'm trying to address in this novel. And the book is funny.



1
Bollywood Blast 2013:
"The Magic of Love"
MILLER OUTDOOR THEATRE
"THIS IS PROBABLY GOING TO BE AWFUL UNLESS YOU'RE INTO KITSCHY SENTIMENTALITY, MELODRAMA, OVERBLOWN BUSBY BERKELEY SONG-AND-DANCE NUMBERS, AND BASICALLY EVERYTHING ELSE THAT BOLLYWOOD REPRESENTS IN THE POPULAR IMAGINATION. FREE." - H.SANDHU



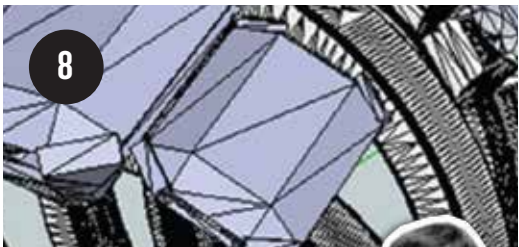
2
TWILIGHT EPIPHANY
RICE UNIVERSITY | SHEPHERD SCHOOL OF MUSIC
"GRAB YOUR HONEY AND HEAD TO RICE UNIVERSITY DURING THE GOLDEN HOUR TO CHECK OUT THE GIANT JAMES TURRELL INSTALLATION. MAKE SURE TO PACK A SNACK AND BRUSH UP ON THE LATEST WOODY ALLEN SCREENPLAY AND LISA LING INTERVIEWS." - B.JONES



3
THE BOOK OF MORMON
THE HOBBY CENTER | 800 BAGBY
"MAKING FUN OF RELIGION IS LOW-HANGING FRUIT, AND SOMETIMES THE LOWEST-HANGING FRUIT IS THE MOST DELICIOUS FRUIT OF ALL." - M.ARMES



4
EAT AT SINH SINH
9788 BELLAIRE BLVD
"IF YOU HAVE NOT BEEN TO HOUSTON'S CHINESE-VIETNAMESE EATERY SINH SINH, CRAWL UP OUT OF YOUR LONELY HOME, ROASTED DUCK, RA MUONG SA TOY, AMONG MY FAVORITES. MAKE SURE 'NON-ANGLO' MENU!" - O.AFRA



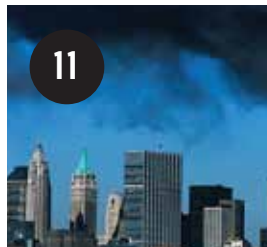
8
CTRL + P
HOUSTON CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY CRAFT
4848 MAIN ST
"YOUR LAST CHANCE TO SEE THIS EXHIBIT OF REKNOWNED ARTISTS USING TECHNOLOGICAL TOOLS SUCH AS OPEN-SOURCED PROGRAMS AND 3D PRINTERS TO CREATE NEW WORKS OF ART." - B.JONES



9
HOUSTON TEXANS SEASON OPENER
WHICHEVER VENUE MAKES YOU CHEER LIKE A WILD BANSHEE
"MONDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL. HOUSTON VS. SAN DIEGO. WEST COAST TIME SLOT. 9:20PM KICKOFF" - M.MCCOIN



10
THE TOY HEARTS
MCGONIGEL'S MUCKY DUCK | 2425 NORFOLK
"BRITISH TRIO COMPOSED OF FATHER AND TWO DAUGHTERS REVIVE CLASSIC COUNTRY SOUND." - M.BERGERON



11
9/11 NEWS COVERAGE ON TV
COMFORT OF YOUR OWN HOME
"STILL BELIEVE CAVE PIRATES IN DISGUISE? PULLED OFF THE MOST HORRIFIC TELEVISION U.S. HISTORY? THEN KICK BACK, CRACK SOME BEERS, AND WAVE SOME FLAGS TODAY."



15
ASTROS VS. ANGELS
MINUTE MAID PARK | 501 CRAWFORD ST
"BASEBALL IS DESCRIBED AS 'A BAT-AND-BALL GAME PLAYED BETWEEN TWO TEAMS OF NINE PLAYERS WHO TAKE TURNS BATTING AND FIELDING. SOUNDS INTERESTING IF YOU ARE INTO THAT KIND OF OBSCURE, AVANT-GARDE HUMAN RITUAL.'" - O.AFRA



16
JAZZ NIGHT
AVANTGARDEN | 411 WESTHEIMER
"EVERY MONDAY, NAMELESS SOUND PRESENTS 'THEY, WHO SOUND' — THE BEST IN LOCAL AND NOT-LOCAL FREE JAZZ MUSICAL IMPROVISATIONS. \$5 DONATION." - H.SANDHU



17
TOTALLY VOCALLY
WITH BALL IN THE HOUSE
MILLER OUTDOOR THEATRE
"A FUN, FREE EVENT FOR THE KIDDOS. THIS PERFORMANCE IS DESIGNED TO TEACH THE AUDIENCE ABOUT MUSIC IN AN ENTERTAINING, INTERACTIVE WAY." - B.ZABAK



18
DEPECHE MODE | CRYSTAL
CYNTHIA WOODS MITCHELL PAVILION
"IF WHAT YOU SWORE THE TIME BEFORE YOU WERE TIRED OF ENJOYING THE SOUND OF DEPECHE MODE'S CAREER, YOU'LL BE PLEASED TO KNOW THAT YOU CAN GET A PIECE OF YOUR PERSONAL JESUS, RIGHT HERE IN HOUSTON."



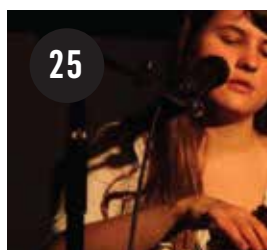
22
FUN FUN FUN FEST SCAVENGER HUNT
FITZGERALD'S | 2706 WHITE OAK
"GET YOUR HANDS ON A PAIR OF FFFEST TICKETS THE HARD WAY." - S.JAM



23
JAZZ NIGHT
PHIL & DEREK'S | 2811 Bammel Lane
"ONE OF THE BEST-KEPT SECRETS IN TOWN, THE MONDAY NIGHT JAZZ JAM IS NOW AT PHIL & DEREK'S. HEAR THE STRAIGHT-NO-CHASER JAZZ ENSEMBLE WAIL ALONG WITH THE BEST IN LOCAL AND TOURING MAESTROS." - H.SANDHU



24
LET'S EAT!
MENUS AND MORE FROM HOUSTON'S CLASSIC RESTAURANTS
THE HERITAGE SOCIETY | 1100 BAGBY
"THIS EXHIBIT FEATURES THE HERITAGE SOCIETY'S COLLECTION OF MEMORABILIA FROM MANY NOTABLE HOUSTON RESTAURANTS." - B.ZABAK



25
ALEXIA DEXA
SUPER HAPPY FUN LAND | 3801 P...
"SULTRY, COCO ROSIE-INSPIRED BIZBIZ FROM THE BIG APPLE." - J.BETZ



29
HAWKS AND SPARROWS
MFAH BROWN AUDITORIUM | 1001 BISSONETT
"CLASSIC '60S ITALIAN FILM FROM PIER PAOLO PASOLINI" - M.BERGERON



30
MUDHONEY • CHEAP TIME
FITZGERALD'S | 2706 WHITE OAK
"THE BAND THAT WAS ALMOST THE NIRVANA OF SEATTLE WILL BE PERFORMING THEIR BLEND OF DIRTY PUNK AND GARAGE METAL. IF YOU LIKE THE IDEA OF A SONG CALLED 'TOUCH ME I'M SICK,' THIS IS FOR YOU!" - R.MCCARTHY



WHAT IT

Say Hello to FPH's guide to September, a calendar of events to help you plan your month.

We encourage you to get off your ass & go enjoy it.



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HOLE AND GET THERE.
Y, AND HOT POT ARE
E TO ASK FOR THE



THE CORK-SCREWED REVUE
THE CORKSCREW IN THE HEIGHTS
1308 W 20TH ST | 8:30-11:30PM
"NICK GREER, KIKI MAROON & MILLS-MCCOIN
BRING YOU A NIGHT OF DEBAUCHED DINNER
THEATER. DRINK WINE, ACT A FOOL." - B.ZABAK



KEEP CALM//FIGHT CANCER
WALTERS | 1120 NAYLOR ST | 7PM
"A 3-DAY MUSIC & ARTS EXTRAVAGANZA
BENEFITING PAM ROBINSON, LONG-TIME OWNER
OF WALTERS ON NAYLOR (ORIGINALLY ON
WASHINGTON)." - M.MCCOIN



2ND ANNUAL APOCALYPSE BALL
FRENETIC THEATER | 5102 NAVIGATION BLVD
"FEATURING: PERFORMANCES BY FRENETICORE
DANCE, HOUSTON BURLESQUE REVUE, CHINACAT
DANCE, JIM MACKENZIE, AND MORE!
FRENETICORE.NET" - N.COOPER



TV
DIRTY BED SHEETS
TERROR ATTACK IN
RACK OPEN A FEW
DAY." - M.ARMES



FRESH ARTS' CULTURED COCKTAILS
BOHEME | 307 FAIRVIEW
"FEEL GOOD ABOUT DRINKING AT 5PM. A PORTION
OF THE PROCEEDS WILL GO TO THE HOUSTON METAL
ARTS GUILD." - S.JAM



FRIDAY THE THIRTEENTH
INSIDE YOUR PARANOID HEAD
"THIS IS A GREAT DAY FOR BAD LUCK. AND IF YOU
HAPPEN TO BE IN A SLASHER MOVIE, THEN YOU ARE
GOING TO HAVE A REALLY BAD TIME TONIGHT.
BEWARE!" - R.MCCARTHY



COLD CAVE
WALTERS | 1120 NAYLOR
"FORMED FROM EX-MEMBERS OF AMERICAN
NIGHTMARE AND PRURIENT. THAT SHOULD
PRETTY MUCH BE ALL I NEED TO SAY.
THIS WILL BE LOUD. AS. BALLS." - S.HOHL



L CASTLES
LILION
EFORE WAS THAT
SILENCE OF THIS
ED TO KNOW
OUR OWN
HOUSTON." - R.MCCARTHY



3RD ANNUAL HOUSTON FINE ARTS FAIR
GEORGE R. BROWN CONVENTION CENTER
"LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL ART DEALERS WILL
BE EXHIBITING A SELECTION FROM THEIR GALLERIES
AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE. 9.19-9.22 (PHOTO BY
JEFF ROBB)" - A.AFRA



BLEEDING RAINBOW • TWIN PEAKS
FITZGERALD'S | 2706 WHITE OAK
"COME DROWN IN A SEA OF HAZY ROCK,
CROSSED-ARMS, AND SLOW NODS AT FITZ."
- B.JONES



5TH ANNUAL UTOPIAFEST 9.19-9.21
1555 LEMOND RD. UTOPIA, TX
"ROAD TRIP! THIS YEAR'S 3-DAY HILL COUNTRY
MUSIC FEST FEATURES BANDS FROM GALACTIC
TO ROBERT ELLIS. BYOB WITH FREE CAMPING AND
PARKING." - A.AFRA



POLK
IZARRO-SOUL



WOMEN'S EQUALITY DAY
HUGHES HANGER | 2811 WASHINGTON
"JOIN THE LEAGUE TO CELEBRATE WOMEN'S
EQUALITY DAY AND MEET THE NEWEST CLASS
OF RISING STARS AT THEIR 4TH ANNUAL
CELEBRATION.
LWVHOUSTONRISINGSTARS.EVENTBRITE.COM" - N.COOPER



METALLICA: THROUGH THE NEVER
IMAX THEATERS
"METALLICA SENDS ONE OF THEIR ROADIES ON A
"MISSION" PRIOR TO THEIR SET AND SAID ROADIE
ENDS UP NAVIGATING AN APOCALYPTIC WORLD
FILLED WITH HELLFIRE AND BRIMSTONE. I WISH
THEIR LAST FEW ALBUMS WOULD'VE BEEN LIKE THAT." - S.HOHL



MILDRED'S UMBRELLA'S **XANADU DISCO GALA**
BRAZILIAN ARTS FOUNDATION | 1133 E. 11TH
"START COSTUME-SHOPPING NOW AND COME
SUPPORT LOCAL THEATRE COMPANIES AND ARTISTS,
'70S STYLE." - S.JAM



DO | SEPTEMBER 2013

dar of events featuring choice picks from our delightful staff of heathens.

y your city.

FPH
LOCAL

09_13
20



CLASSIC NEW YORK COCKTAILS?
WE GOT HAM!



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 THUR-SAT 10:30PM-1AM

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FITZGERALD'S OCTOBER 5, 2013





By Amanda Hart
Photos by Erik Vidor △

INTERVIEW: CHELSEA PAQUETTE

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09_13
22

THE RECENT FIGHT for reproductive rights in Texas is being framed as a long-overdue progressive awakening. The well-being of Texas women and their families has been in jeopardy for many years now and although we have a long, tough fight ahead of us at least we know we are on the path to victory. We here at *Free Press Houston* would like to see the dialog around women's issues continue to be spotlighted as we watch this battle unfold. However, instead of hearing from the same voices over and over, we have decided to partner with the community to ensure that a diverse collection of voices can be heard. Our first interview is with Houstonian Chelsea Paquette—one of hundreds of Texas women who participated in the Austin rally to protect women's health rights.

You were one of the many reproductive rights activists that ventured to the state Capitol during SB 5/HB 2. What was your experience like while visiting Austin?
I always suspected the system was rigged. Now, I've had the chance to witness it. I got to watch the legislative majority make a mockery of democracy by bending rules, breaking the law, and ignoring the pro-choice presentation of reason, logic, science, and human compassion from both citizens during testimony and their colleagues on the House and Senate floor. They repeatedly voted against every amendment, some you would think were no-brainers, like excusing victims of rape and incest from this law or when the health of the woman or pregnancy is in danger. Being in Austin was one of the most emotion-

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ally-testing events of my life. Not to sound dramatic, but my jaw physically hurt from clenching and grinding my teeth for a month straight. Putting in those all-nighters testifying, observing from the gallery, watching our pro-choice politicians put up a fight, marching, and rallying with so many other Texans determined to make some kind of difference was inspiring and unforgettable.

It feels as though the civil unrest that happened this legislative cycle has been building for many years now. Over the years we watched as legislators cut the family planning budget, pass an intrusive sonogram bill, and completely dismember the Texas Women’s Health Program. There were advocacy groups at the Capitol during all of those debates but the community support came out in full force this go round. What do you feel lit the spark that lead to an explosion of voices rising up and literally defeating SB 5 during the first special session?

Exactly. This is nothing new for Texas, but unfortunately it was almost like we were waiting for a bomb to drop. This summer they brought HB 16 and HB 60 to the table halfway through the first special session. Interns and advocacy groups working at the Capitol caught wind of this and made sure the urgent call to action spread like wildfire. If it weren’t for networking through social media, a lot of us would have been left in the dark. We wouldn’t have been able to mobilize as quickly as we did for the first “citizen’s filibuster” when hundreds of pro-choice Texans showed up to testify during the House committee hearing. From that point on, we had a constant presence at the Capitol. Then there was Wendy Davis’ infamous personal filibuster, which was ultimately completed by the pro-choice activists in the Senate gallery that evening. The Texas Senate was the number one live stream being watched around the world that night. As short-lived as that victory was, it was an amazing moment in Texas history.

You work with many local and regional advocacy groups from here in Houston. Do you think this level of energy and political involvement was just a fad? Or was this a profound moment for Texas politics that could lead to a drastic and much-needed shift in our state’s political climate?

I think the sheer number of people that testified against these bills, and continued to show up, was unprecedented and proves this is not a fad. This is deeply personal. So personal, the government needs to butt out. I have met a lot of wonderful people who are dedicated to keeping the momentum going—to undoing the damage that was done. I do feel we are on the cusp of a change. But change doesn’t just happen. We need to work for it.

Now that Rick Perry has signed the legislation into law what can women expect in the near future? Is there anything that was immediately impacted by the law?
Well, we are already beginning to see the fallout of HB 2. Planned Parenthood announced the closure of three clinics. Only one of the three provides abortion care. Many other clinics are feeling the pressure, as well. The CEO of Whole Woman’s Health broke news they received a letter of resignation from a doctor due to the unclear future for employment in Texas. While we do expect to see many doctors of these endangered clinics doing everything they can to stay open, we cannot fault physicians for seeking employment in a more stable state. After all, what healthcare provider can be expected to want to work in a state that has done everything it can to criminalize them for doing what every doctor and nurse takes an oath to do? Provide compassionate, safe, and legal care to their patients.

Which communities stand to bear the brunt of this legislation? How will the women and families in Houston be affected by these new regulations?

This law puts an unfair burden on our poor and rural communities. Women living anywhere south or west of San Antonio will have absolutely zero access to legal abortion. They will be forced to travel several hundred miles and stay for multiple days to access a constitutionally-protected procedure. Houstonians will have two options for abortion care because they meet the ASC standards. That is if you can get in or have the money to do so. Before HB 2, it cost about \$450 to terminate a pregnancy. Now with all these new regulations, the procedure is estimated to cost anywhere from \$1,200-\$3,000.

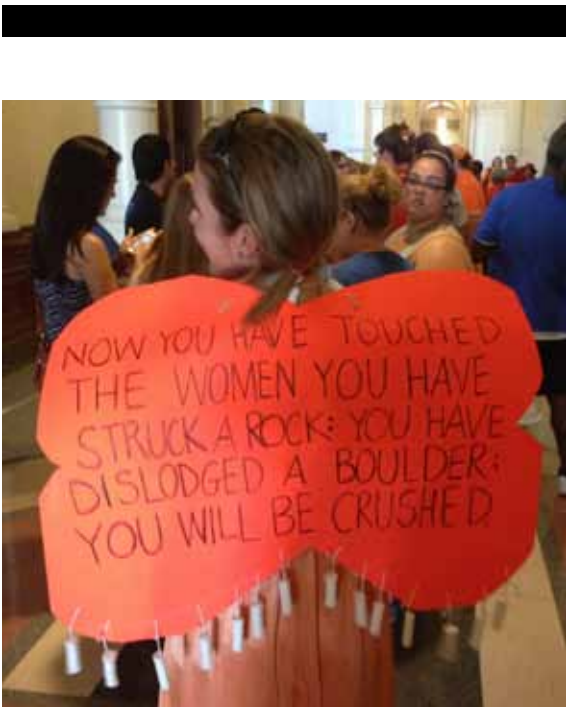
HB 2 is now known for being the strictest set of reproductive regulations in the country and earned Texas the title of being “Ground Zero for Reproductive Health.” This is all to “improve the standard of care,” right? Yet somehow, the authors of this law fumbled through their bill, couldn’t pronounce parts of the female anatomy, and couldn’t cite one credible source backed by the medical community for the need for these extreme regulations.

The already marginalized women who rely on these low-cost options, not just for abortion care, but for annual check-ups, pap smears, cancer screenings, medically accurate sex education, and affordable birth control will simply be out of luck. Governor Perry and his friends just don’t care about these women or the families that count on them.

What advice do you have for anyone who is interested in becoming more active in this fight?

I am not a community organizer. I did not major in political science or attend law school. I am simply a young woman who heard about an awful piece of legislation via Facebook, and decided I had an obligation to do something. There are many ways to get involved in this movement. You can volunteer for Planned Parenthood and NARAL Pro-Choice, work with Houston’s Clinic Defense Team, donate to increasingly important organizations like Texas Equal Access and The Lilith Fund, which help financially support women seeking an abortion. You can also meet amazing, like-minded people of HTXFEM and Houstonians Acting for Choice and Access (HACA) who demonstrate and meet up monthly to brainstorm and organize new tactics. Both groups can be found on Facebook.

But most importantly, we need to participate in our government. Texas ranks 50th for overall voter turnout and 49th for women’s voter turnout. That’s pathetic. Let’s raise awareness. Let’s hold these politicians accountable. Get registered and VOTE. **FPH**



FPH
LOCAL

09_13
24

NO GREEN ALTERNATIVES: ORANGE GREENING, AGENT ORANGE, & THE GREEN REVOLUTION

By Nick Cooper

Image by Blake Jones △



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09_13
26

ARE YOUR CONCERNS ABOUT genetically modified organisms (GMOs) justified, or are you just freaked out by ‘ Frankenfoods?’ Recently, the New York Times ran a story about Citrus Greening Disease, which has been wiping out the world’s orange crops. The article says to defeat the bacteria that cause the disease, we just need to splice in a little DNA from our innocuous green friend: spinach. Since the alternative is dumping more and more pesticides on orange trees, the GMO option indeed seems ‘greener.’ The article tells us there’s only one thing getting in the way of our toasting the morning with a cold glass of gmooj—our own irrational fear.

A generation ago, in what is called the Green Revolution, pesticides were promoted as a solution for world hunger. These pesticides have built up in soil, the water, and in our bodies, and spread to the farthest reaches of the planet. Today, commercial GMOs are promoted as useful to prevent starvation, and to allow farmers to use less toxic pesticides. Apparently, a new round of planet-saving technology is needed to save us from the previous round.

Today, virtually all non-organic corn, soy, and cotton are GMOs, but this change has been associated with an *increase* in use of pesticides and herbicides. Many commercialized genetic modifications entail building pesticides into the plants, such as Bt varieties of corn, potato, and cotton. Another modification involves inserting herbicide resistance, which allows for more herbicide to be used without killing the crops, such as in Roundup-Ready soy, canola, and corn. These types of modifications have the same pitfalls as other forms of pesticides. They cause damage to the

soil, transfer into human bodies, and breed resistance in weeds, insects, and bacteria.

While some writers conclude that Indian farmers are committing mass suicide in response to GMO seed debt, others cite several studies that show Indian farmers who plant GMOs are improving their diet. One thing is clear: GMO pest and weed advantages are short-term and could leave farmers with few options when they run out. If we’re counting on a company like Monsanto to come to the rescue with a new product each time their last one stops being effective, farmers’ futures are in questionable hands.

There is good reason to distrust Monsanto. In addition to having a former Monsanto lawyer, Clarence Thomas, on the Supreme Court, and a former Vice President of Public Policy, as the deputy commissioner for foods at the FDA, there have been many former Monsanto people in positions of power within governmental food regulation. Monsanto and other big agriculture corporations have significant lobbying power, and this has made proper oversight impossible. Up against this type of money, even Californians didn’t have the resources to win a ballot referendum on a mere GMO-labeling law.

Monsanto produced much of the 20 million gallons of Agent Orange sprayed by the U.S. military in Vietnam, and has not taken care of the victims. Some of Monsanto’s dangerous pesticides, such as DDT and PCBs, have been banned, but these substances will remain in our environment and inside our bodies for generations. Monsanto’s rBGH increases the amount of milk a cow can produce, but makes cows sick. The benefits of these products are

too short-term, the profits are too concentrated, and the risks are too great. We can look back now at these substances that Monsanto created, and say that they should never have been approved. Monsanto may well make more such mistakes in the future. Its policy has been to market new technologies without enough testing, making us all their guinea pigs.

When fourteen-year-old Rachel Parent was brought on to debate Canadian TV host Kevin O’Leary on the topic of labeling of GMOs, he repeatedly attacked her, calling her a lobbyist, a shill, and anti-science. His main argument was that her efforts would only impede GMOs that could save starving people. While it is true that there are some GMO products that could save populations from starvation, there are also scenarios in which GMO side effects could cause starvation. For example, if pesticides are indeed destroying bee populations, and use of GMO crops is contributing to depletion of butterfly populations, all of the foods that depend on these pollinators are at risk. People all over the world are concerned about these risks, and have stopped trusting the promises of the Green Revolution to the point of ripping GMO field trials out of the ground.

However, some long-time GMO critics and scientists have been changing their stances, joining Bill Gates in promoting GMOs to feed more poor people. Placing herbicide resistance and pesticides into plant DNA is not the same thing as placing bacteria resistance or nutrients. Nutrient-enhanced GMO forms of rice and cassava could potentially help millions, and GMO oranges, an attempt to solve a specific problem, can’t be written off simply because they use the same technology Monsanto has misused. It is important for us to acknowledge that genetic modifications are each unique, and present their own advantages and risks.

Perhaps GMO oranges are the best solution to this crisis, but we should ask if factory farming is prone to these types of crises. Our lack of crop rotation, overdependence on pesticides and herbicides, monoculture farming, asexual reproduction, and all the other practices that increase short-term yields, might soon put us in another crisis, and the solution may be more problematic than borrowing some spinach DNA.

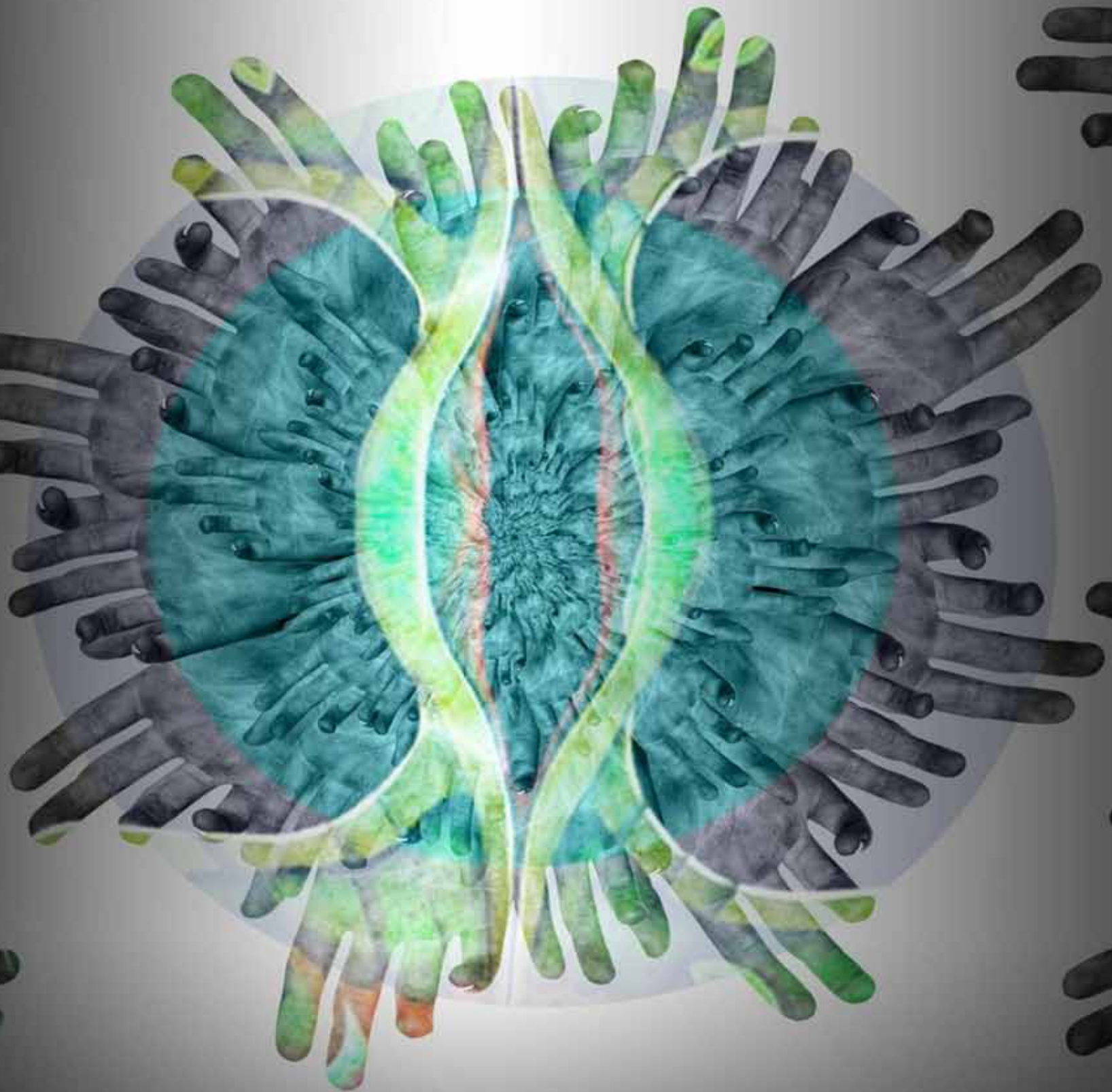
The impediments to transitioning into balanced, sustainable systems are not scientific or agricultural—rather they are political. Our food and energy systems are corrupted by money, serving the few while putting everyone at risk. Corporate personhood shields executives from jail time for pollution and other crimes. Two-party controlled, corporate-funded elections give us politicians who appoint industry insiders as regulators. Consumers demand unsustainably grown foods. As long as these realities persist, we are headed for more and more crises, with increasingly elaborate, and increasingly temporary solutions. **FPH**

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EDITORIAL:

WHY WE NEED TO STAND WITH ALL TEXAS WOMEN

By Amanda Hart
Image by Maria-Elisa Heg

△

TEXAS APPEARS TO BE PERCHED on the verge of a complete political overhaul. The ever-changing demographics, coupled with record high levels of political activism, have made our great state the talk of the town throughout the nation in recent months. One woman in particular has emerged as the face of this movement and has inspired a new generation of Texans to stand and fight. Sen. Wendy Davis (D-Fort Worth) managed to become a household name in the span of just 12 hours when she stood up to state Republicans on the Senate floor over their attempts to pass a draconian proposal that would ban all abortions after 20 weeks. The overwhelming amount of gratitude and respect that Sen. Davis has seen after her epic filibuster will hopefully come full circle in 2014 when she is elected the next governor of Texas. However, there is something critically missing from the mainstream dialog about Sen. Davis and her accomplishments. There is a lack of discussion or recognition of the women who paved the way for someone like Wendy Davis to have the opportunity to not just run for governor but to win it. Before invoking the names of Ann Richards or Molly Ivins, as many of us have while watching these recent events unfold, we need to recognize that our history of strong Texas women goes far beyond the same women we all keep praising. We will never fully succeed as a movement if our knowledge about our roots does not stretch to include a broader awareness of ALL women who have helped open doors for future generations of Texas women.

Long before the morning of June 25, the day Wendy Davis slipped on her now-famous pink sneakers in preparation for her all-day filibuster, House Democrats were laying the groundwork necessary to force a time delay to ensure a filibuster was even possible. On June 23, State Rep. Senfronia Thompson (D-Houston) anointed the microphone with a powerful speech and a wire coat hanger in hand. Thompson pleaded with House Republicans to approve an amendment that would provide an exception for victims of rape and incest from their 20-week abortion ban. A request that instigated one of the biggest gaffes of the entire debate when the sponsor of the bill, State Rep. Jodie Laubenberg (R-Parker), denied Thompson's request citing, "In the emergency room, they have what's called rape kits where a woman can get cleaned out." Shortly after her colleagues cleared up

for Rep. Laubenberg that a rape kit is in no way a form of contraceptive, State Rep. Jessica Farrar (D-Houston) gave a moving and pointed personal privilege speech on the floor. In her speech, Rep. Farrar warned SB 5 supporters: "The truth is that these bills aren't about women's health and they aren't about the will of the people. They are about winning Republican primaries. One

need only look at Lt. Governor Dewhurst's tweet that reveals his real motive to close abortion clinics to know that. Texas women deserve better than to be used as a tool in partisan politics. The constituency of Texas expands beyond Republican primary voters. The majority cannot ignore the rest of Texans." Many other House reps that night stood up and aided in dragging out

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30





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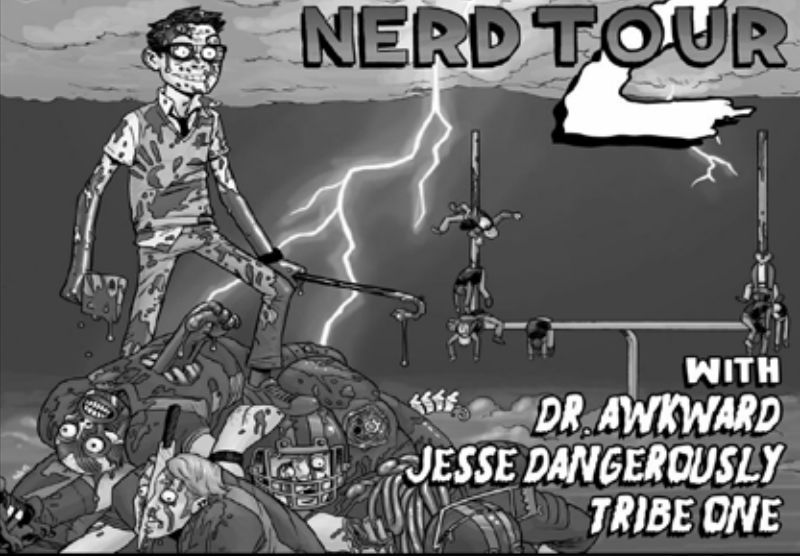
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the process including Rep. Dawnna Dukes (D-Austin), Rep. Naomi Gonzalez (D-El Paso), Rep. Alma Allen (D-Houston) and Rep. Mary Gonzales (D-El Paso)—they all used their voices and brains to help run the clock down. Every minute they spoke was another minute that propelled Wendy Davis closer to victory. Once SB 5 made its way back to the Senate and Sen. Davis took the floor she was given the seemingly doable task of filibustering for 14 hours. Ultimately, this endeavor was obstructed by Senate Republicans when at 9:34 p.m. they managed to put an official end to Sen. Davis' filibuster.

With nearly two and a half hours to go, it felt as though someone had let the air out of the room and defeat was surely eminent. This assumption would have been correct if it had not been for the efforts of Sens. Judith Zaffirini and Leticia Van De Putte. Both of these women played extremely important roles in defeating this harm-

points of order so that I may understand?" Explanations were provided and then arguments ensued about who had the floor and if a vote could be called. At 11:45 p.m. a vote was called. However, Sen. Van De Putte, in the middle of the chaos, repeatedly requested to be acknowledged for a motion to adjourn. Sen. Leticia Van de Putte, arguing that her move to adjourn had not been recognized, said something rather extraordinary, "Did the President hear me or did the President hear me and refuse to recognize me? At what point must a female senator raise her hand or her voice to be recognized over her male colleagues in the room?" And with that the crowd erupted and refused to be silenced—ultimately screaming and cheering for the final 15 minutes needed to claim a filibuster victory.

The importance of the retelling of this monumental event in Texas politics is that it highlights the collective work of many of the other female reps that seem to be

will disproportionately affect poor women of color and then turn around and glorify the one white woman who fought to protect all women that night. This is a common cause that affects all Texas women and families. This is not an issue that only affects white women, but you wouldn't be able to tell that from the images that have been shared, the leaders that received attention, or the discussions that were sparked.

For the progressive movement to reach its full potential, we must operate as the broad tent movement that we are. We can't pick and choose when we allow certain groups a seat at the table and then in many ways take their voices away once they are allowed to sit down. We must work together to ensure that real change is allowed to blossom. If groups continue to be marginalized within the movement, we will effectively fail as a collective group while also blatantly ignoring the values we claim to be defending. When people of

This is not an attempt to diminish the work of Sen. Davis but more so to deconstruct the harmful ways in which the progressive movement has repeatedly been whitewashed throughout history.

ful legislation that night. Thanks to their knowledge of the parliamentary process, they managed to delay the vote and revive what felt like a dying cause. At one point, Sen. Zaffirini used the Republicans' games against them when she pointed out that if they were going to use a ridiculous literal interpretation of the rules against Sen. Davis, then they should have to comply with the literal reading of the rules they were reciting. The same outdated rules that disturbingly used "he" as a pronoun. Seeing as Davis is a woman, Sen. Zaffirini argued that their attempts were invalid and should not be applied to Davis. All of this was precious time allotted to Davis, which was necessary in the ultimate victory that night.

The real star of the night though would have to be Sen. Leticia Van De Putte, who arrived at the capitol shortly after 9 p.m., coming straight from her father's funeral. Sen. Van De Putte made her presence known when at 10:41 p.m. she took the floor and asked, "Since I was at my father's funeral, I ask that you please let me know, what were the three motions or the three

missing from mainstream media coverage. Texas' female legislators of color represent the true diversity of the state's progressive movement. This is not an attempt to diminish the work of Sen. Davis but more so to deconstruct the harmful ways in which the progressive movement has repeatedly been whitewashed throughout history. If Sen. Van De Putte had taken on the role of filibustering, would you have seen the same amount of local and national attention? Would she be the frontrunner for the upcoming governor's race? The somber reality is that in most cases the answer would be no. Sen. Van De Putte in one day laid her father to rest, traveled back to the Capitol, walked onto the Senate floor, and made the most poignant statement of the whole damn debate, which lead to an outburst that clenched the night's victory. And yet she is rarely mentioned. Davis alone has been elevated to the status of Patron Saint of Texas Liberalism for her role that night. If we are going to be successful as the progressive identity in Texas, we must address our exclusivity. We cannot regurgitate talking points about how SB 5

color open up a dialog about their lack of representation within various progressive movements, we need to listen to their concerns. All the voices that have struggled for equality are worthy of praise and appreciation. If we don't allow leaders to emerge that represent the diversity among us, we will continue to play an active role in the institutional injustice we seek to destroy. If the values we claim on the surface are to be fully realized, we need to see that our true power is directly linked to our diverse coalition of voices and struggles. An outpouring of support and action must also be present when other communities are at risk, even if we think we aren't directly affected by said cause.

What is happening right now with Wendy Davis is a symptom of a larger problem that plagues the progressive movement. The night of the filibuster was our coalition working together to successfully stall harmful legislation. The reaction and conversations that followed that night shed light on the challenges we still face as a movement, community, and ultimately nation. **FPH**

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PLANTING A SEED

By Laura Coburn
Photos courtesy of Chef Tarsha Gary



A GRAYING WOMAN TRUDGES PAST a parked blue Ford on a gravel driveway, opens a metal gate crowned with vines, and enters the tucked-away Alabama Gardens in Houston’s Third Ward. She paces through the grounds, eyeing rows and rows of crops. Eggplants, watermelons, avocados, tangerines, lemons, limes, and bananas are ripening under the sun. With a plastic bag of freshly-picked okra in her hand, she strolls away through Houston’s 100-degree heat and turns the corner, passing the rundown Delano Mini Market just down the block. The neighborhood is lined with fast food restaurants and convenience stores, but a substantial grocery store is nowhere in sight. However, thanks to the green thumb of gardener J.D. Green, and a bumper crop of others, this underserved community is getting nutritious food on the table by growing and preparing it themselves.



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09_13
34



“You’re getting more and more gardens in the communities here,” says lead gardener J.D. Green at the Alabama Gardens. “Everybody is getting a chance to get some sort of organic vegetable if they want to.”

The lady visiting Alabama Gardens is just one of the growing number of residents in low-income neighborhoods who utilize gardens as a means to gain access to fresh, organic food at a low cost. Despite a lack of supermarkets moving to these areas, low-income communities in Houston are starting to see a growing number of community gardens. Today, there are 11 community gardens in the Houston Department of Health and Human Services’ multi-service centers throughout the city, and more and more individuals and organizations are working to amplify these numbers.

Houston has a great need for both community and individual gardens. Texas has the lowest number of supermarkets per capita of any U.S. state, with 185 stores below the national average, according to the 2010 study “Food for Every Child.” The grocery stores that do operate in Texas are predominantly concentrated in more affluent neighborhoods, often creating food deserts in lower-income areas. The produce available in these areas is often not fresh, limited in selection, and may require unaffordable transportation. And Texas

is only a microcosm of the rest of the nation. The same study also noted that “low-income ZIP codes have 25 percent fewer per capita supermarkets than middle-income ZIP codes.” Neglecting to consume nutrient-rich foods can have vast implications. Diabetes, high blood pressure, emotional stress, and obesity can all stem from poor eating habits. Texas spends \$5.3 billion on obesity-related medical issues, according to the Texas Medical Association website.

Despite the common notion that eating organic is expensive and reserved for the prosperous, eating healthy and organic is possible for everyone, regardless of one’s socioeconomic status. First Lady Michelle Obama planted a garden at the White House in 2009, which helped shed light on the benefits of gardening, particularly in underserved communities. Gardening is a key way that low-income individuals can save money while improving their health. The HDHHS promotes personal and community gardening, emphasizing that gardens offer significant societal benefits. Gardens provide an opportunity to teach citizens the importance of proper nutrition and food preparation while saving costs. They are a place to socialize and interact with others, and there are opportunities to purchase produce at a reduced cost from community farmers markets.

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“Instead of going out and just giving a plate [of food], what better way than [to] help people grow it themselves in a cost-effective way and [that] can save money,” says HDHHS Master Gardener Terry Garner. “You go into a store and buy one tomato for maybe a dollar, and then you can go buy your own tomato plant for a dollar which might produce 30-40 tomatoes.”



Not only do gardens save money, but they may also reduce dumping, as well as crime near the gardens, according to Chef Tarsha Gary, chef and founder of Ecotone, a non-profit that promotes sustainability through gardening. The land once used for dumping and as a hub for drug trade is now peaceful. She says that she has noticed children heading home from school start to migrate toward walking on the sidewalk by the garden.

“Bringing this raised garden on one block of the street—it brought in this safety zone,” Gary says, discussing the newest garden Ecotone began in the Third Ward. “You start growing flowers and fruit trees, and then you inevitably have the butterflies and the bees and the birds.”

Gary is at the forefront of the urban gardening movement, encouraging those living in low-income areas to garden their own fresh, organic food. She plans to open a restaurant in the next few months that uses healthy ingredients, most of which are grown organically from nearby gardens. Until then, she is educating and capturing the community’s interest in pursuing a healthier lifestyle through cooking and gardening classes.

Gary tends her garden in the grassy lot behind her new restaurant, just across the street from Emancipation Park and next door to the historic El Dorado Ballroom. As people walk by the nearby gas station, passing a shrimp kitchen on one side, they turn their heads to see a crate filled with dark, decomposing fruits and vegetables and hear the high-pitched buzz of flies hovering above.

“People passing by say ‘what is this lady doing – she’s got watermelon rinds out here,’” Gary says with a smile. “It’s

just so that you have this mental tap or as they say on Facebook, ‘poke.’ It pokes you and jars you, and while there’s no one there to explain what that’s about, it’s like planting a seed. You walk up every day and over time you see those peels decay, and next thing you know, you’re looking at dirt.”

As awareness spreads and interest rises, she plans to open a farmers mar-



ket in the grassy lot, which now has a ripening banana tree, melons, and aloe vera—all supported by compost as soil. Throughout the past few years, Gary and her canvassing team have conducted door-to-door surveys to help gain a better understanding of what the community would want and need from a neighborhood farmers market. Based on the survey responses, Gary found that residents want not only fresh fruits and vegetables, but also fresh flowers.

But she says that even if gardens are very accessible, people won’t invest the time and effort needed to tend to a crop without first gaining a better understanding of its benefits. She starts her efforts by educating children. Gary teaches a summer cooking camp where the students use all organic and fresh ingredients to create balanced and even gourmet dishes.

“They lose sight of ‘oh, I don’t want to eat this green stuff’ because they’re into ‘I am creating something and am getting to have this hands-on deal,’” Gary explains.

However, Green says that despite efforts to encourage youth to garden, the younger generations are still the hardest group to reach. He says that there are many reasons why teens are less inclined to participate: they spend all day in school, work part-time jobs, prefer cheap fast food, and do not have the time to garden or learn about the importance of a nutritious diet.

“What you see is that most of the young people are fast food eaters,” Green says. “They don’t particularly care about asking for carrots or greens. You see them buying a lot of junk food to eat, and that’s why we have this thing about child obesity.”

Garner, who has worked for the City of Houston for 21 years, says that a

garden will not survive without the investment of time, energy, and commitment.

“Some of the best fertilizer for your garden is your shadow,” Garner emphasizes. “Gotta go out there and be out there. So, we don’t use irrigation—we go out there and water the garden.”

Green points out that the seasons do not permit all crops to ripen year-round. It requires preparation and conservation to eat the various crops throughout the year.

“Most people what they do is—for instance, like greens in the winter months—when you’re picking your greens they wash them, cut them up and stick them in the freezer,” Green describes. “In other words, you get some of those Ziploc bags and stick them in your freezer and then once a month you want to cook something, you’ve got it. You can have fresh vegetables year round. Just because we don’t grow it at a certain time, doesn’t mean you don’t have it.”

While many stock up on the seasonal goods to freeze for later in the year, a grocery store would maximize the available options for a diverse, healthy diet throughout the year. Nekaya Young, an urban planning and environmental policy doctoral student at Texas Southern University, says that gardening is only a temporary solution. She ensures that it will not solve the problem of food deserts and that grocery stores in low-income communities are still needed.

“From a food security perspective, because gardens can only grow so much, there still needs to be a grocery store there,” Young highlights. “Food security has to do with having everything you need, which you can find in a grocery store, from produce to safety items to hygiene items.”

While more and more fast food chains and corner stores are springing up in Houston and many other cities across the U.S., other states are addressing the need for better access to basic necessities through policy changes. Governments, such as Pennsylvania’s, have allocated funding to incentivize grocery stores to open shop in low-income areas.

Schools and even workplaces across the nation have started their own gardens. Menus for school cafeteria food and fast food restaurants are beginning to welcome healthier options and caloric counts. People that can’t afford a plot of land are planting their own gardens in tires and pots on their apartment rooftops. Still, Houston and cities across the state and country have a long way to go.

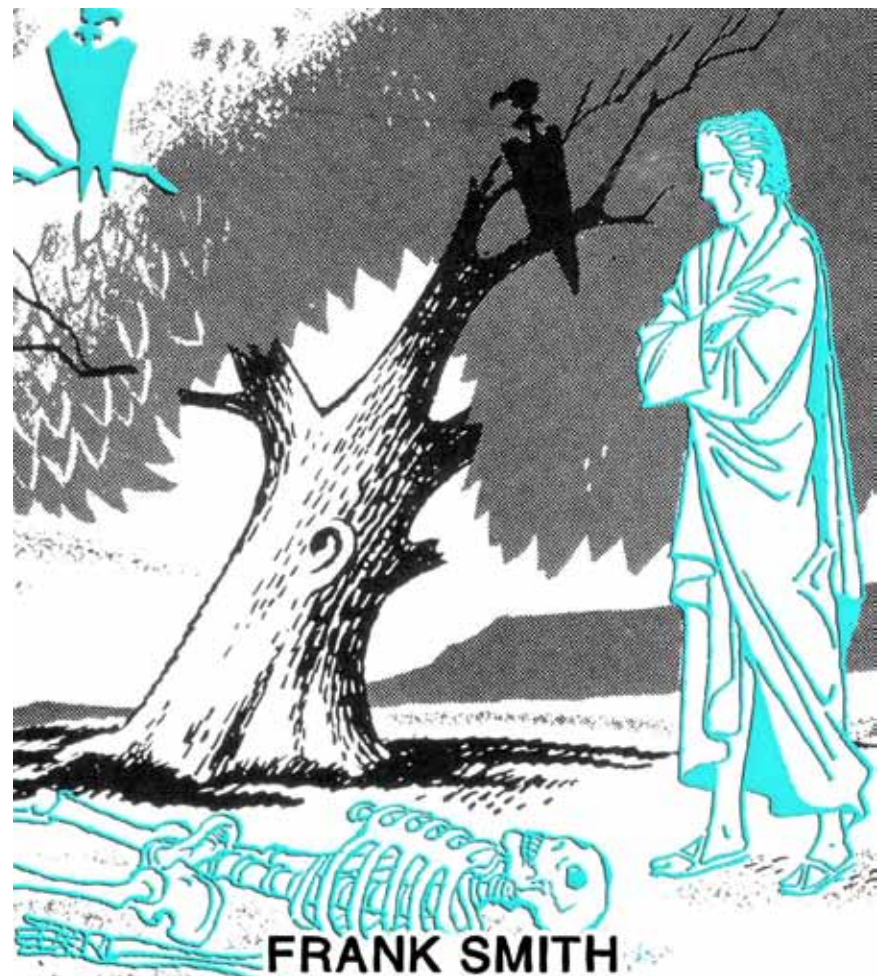
“It’s not a blanket culture yet, but it’s boosting up with pockets of those options,” Young says enthusiastically. And promoting gardening is the first seed to plant in combating the problem.

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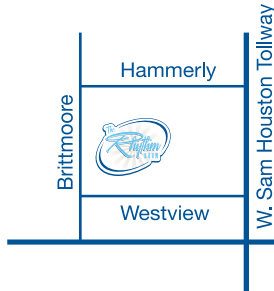


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