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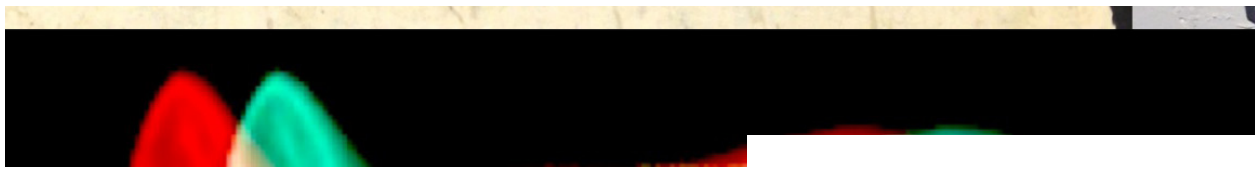
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AUGUST

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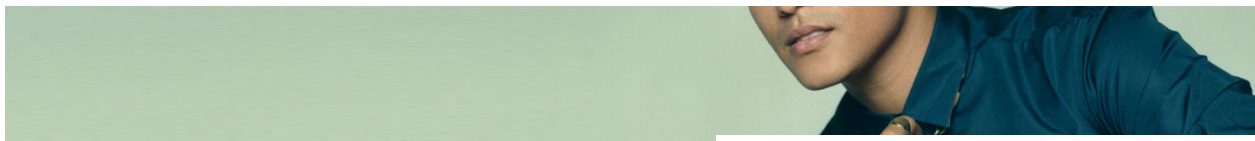


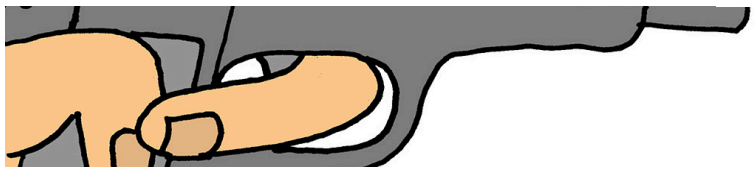




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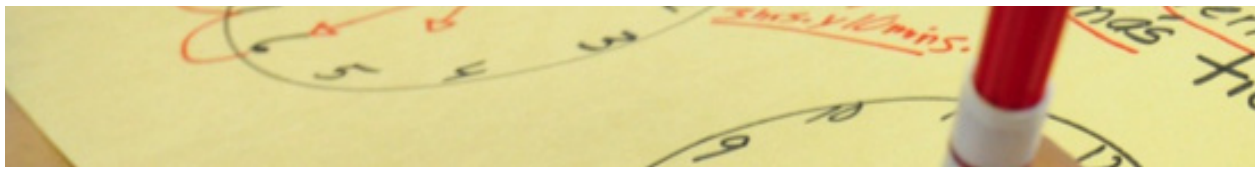








COVER ART BY
SEBASTIAN GOMEZ DE LA TORRE





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AWN


THE POLYPHONIC SPREE
YES, IT'S TRUE.
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Eds letter

Numbers owner Robert Burtenshaw, affectionately known as Robot, passed away a few days ago. This guy fought many fights that we now take for granted and created much of the Houston musical landscape as we know it. Besides those accolades, he was just a super nice and funny guy. He will be sorely missed. We here at FPH would like to take this moment to salute his good work and send our condolences to his family and the fine folks who work at Numbers.



**Photos by M. Lennon,
Jimmy Castillo & Sontera Dresch**

SHADES OF CHANGE

FROM SCULPTURES PLANTED IN OUR CITYSCAPE to groundbreaking shows such as Felipe Lopez's first solo exhibition this fall in the Alliance Gallery, the Civic Art + Design program of Houston Arts Alliance aids in the transformation of public and private spaces. Free Press Houston recently spoke with Civic Art + Design Director Matthew Lennon to inquire about the program and its contributions to the aesthetic of our modern jungle and promotion of artistic growth in Houston.





Give us a brief overview of the Civic Art + Design program at Houston Art Alliance and how it brings together artists, designers, architects, and other members of the community.

The Civic Art and Design program helps contextualize the City of Houston's cultural ambitions. It reinforces its commitment to enhancing the built environment through the relevant and meaningful design of an engaging public realm. This is a collaborative process.

A good city is in a constant state of reanimation. If Houston is to be one of the outstanding cities of the 21st century it has to embrace the importance of design on the grand scale by intensifying the manifestation of the intimate. This means more opportunities for artists to engage with designing their city.

One of the core components of the Civic Art + Design program includes temporary and permanent placement of art in Houston—most recently The Blue Trees project. What are some of the things you all look for in a project?

From the inception of a project we're looking at it as a platform that will activate a change in perception of a public space or issue. We're trying to do this by commissioning more emerging and mid-career artists.

With Blue Trees we worked with Konstantin Dimopoulos to take a drive-by site and transform it into a space for interaction. The Mark Dion's Buffalo Bayou Invasive Plant Eradication Unit is mobile, educational, and a great example of linking art with one of our city's greatest assets and genuine environmental concerns. Elaine Bradford's work at the Vinson Library, Pachikadi and His Flying Friends is a major installation that not only animates a library's reception area but also created a children's book. These are just a few examples.

Another component of the Civic Art + Design program is the Houston Arts Alliance Gallery that features work from local artists and beyond. What is the curatorial approach to this gallery?

There's no formal approach. We're looking for artists that reflect aspects of Houston's vitality. Recently, we had Howard Sherman curate a show of painters he admired, and we chose Howard because he's in the HAS portable works collection. Weihong's Teateria installation and performance echoed Houston's internationalism.

Lou Best's photo exhibition was a step toward reintroducing Houston to one of its major features, the Port. There was an authenticity to this exhibition because Lou works the Port.

Seeing that the opening of the art season is upon us, what show will the gallery be opening with? What artists/works will be featured?

We're going to have Felipe Lopez for starters opening August 29th. Monoprinted sculptures, paintings, and installation work about his interest and explorations with synesthesia, synapses, and thermochromism. We have an interest in artists working off of science and technology.

We'll also be launching an installation by Jo Ann Fleischhauer with performances from Musiqa. This is in collaboration with the Houston Downtown Management District and the Blaffer Gallery (U of H).

What would you like to see happen in Houston as far as a temporary or permanent installation?

In general, I'd like to see more support for experimenting with new models like the Portable On Demand Art program (PODA). We've partnered with PODA to create a mobile platform that gets contemporary artists and designers into the neighborhoods. We want to expand the partnership to link artists with other creatives and businesses working with new materials and technologies dealing with sustainability, energy, and medical research. This is a unique vehicle for the presentation of contemporary art and the work of emerging artists at locations and in communities lacking in engagement with new artistic concepts, forms, and materials.

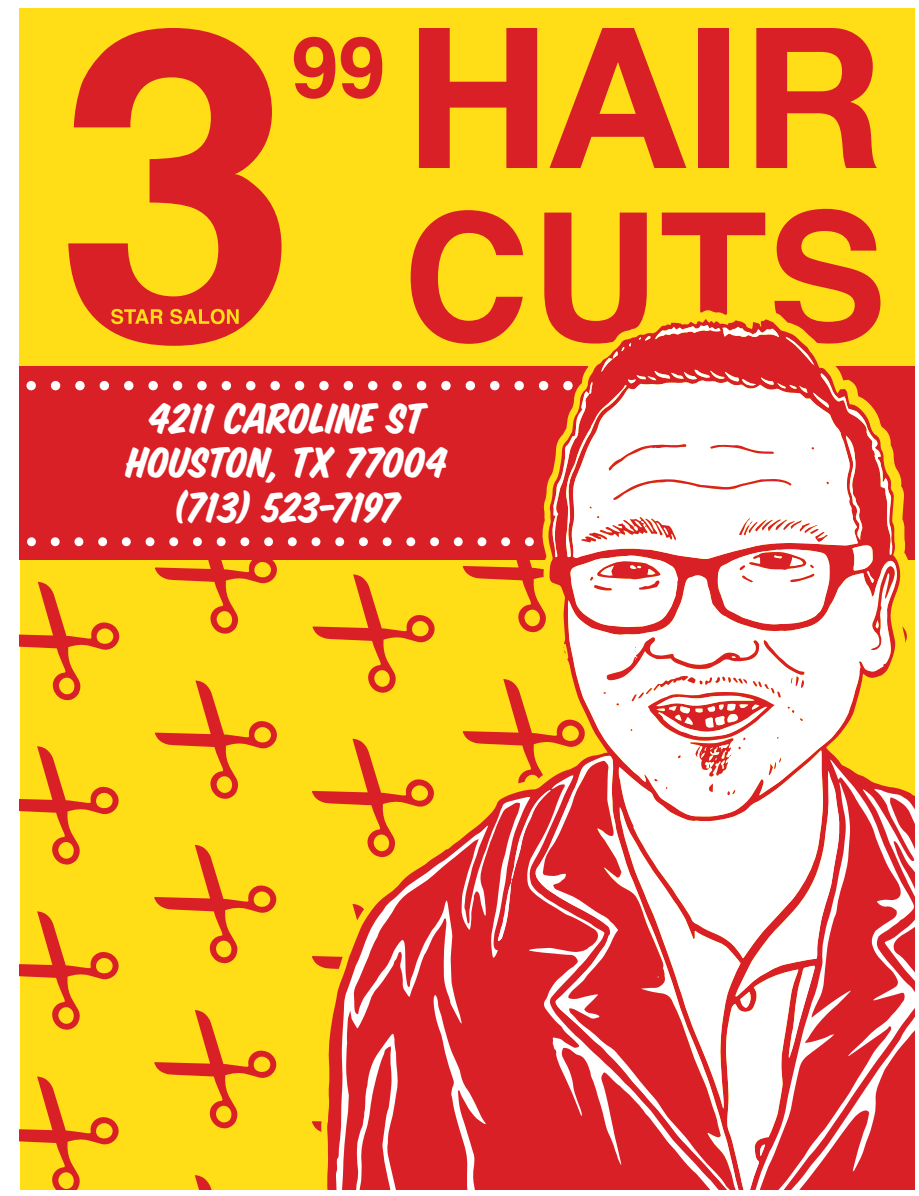
The introduction of a portable works program by the Houston Airport System is exciting and allows us to place art and contemporary craft into the municipal collection.

I like bringing artist like Mark Dion and Konstantin Dimopoulos to Houston because they like spending time within the community and with other artists and exploring the layers of experiences and environments that form Houston. Right now, I've got Claire Morgan on my radar. She's Irish and does incredibly beautiful installations. Lincoln Schatz is exciting. Shinique Smith from Baltimore or the remarkable Osaka-born artist Ichi Ikeda come to mind.

I want artists who confront the challenges of place-making with vigorous interventions. We've had a good run with works by Hana Hillerova, Luca Buvoli, Elaine Bradford, and Tara Conley to mention a few.

Certainly a city of Houston's stature and wealth should have a Richard Serra, Chris Burden, Antony Gormley, and Magdalena Abakanowicz. We could poll our local curators and come up with a great list. If the collectors and business community came together on this, Houston could have a great municipal collection and exciting public spaces. It really does take a collaboration. FPH


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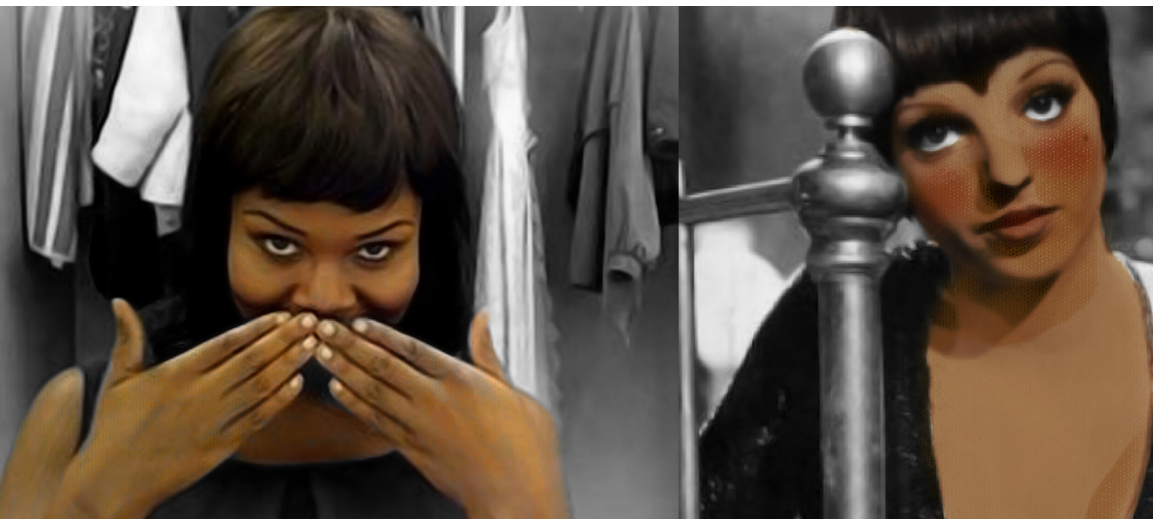

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By Michael Pennywark

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NO MATTER HOW HARD I TRY I CAN'T LOOK THE SAME AS I DID YESTERDAY



MOST OF US CAN LOOK BACK FONDLY at our childhood, those endless summers filled with hopes and dreams, bike rides and swims, wet willies, and wedgies. For most kids, one of life's deepest questions has always been "What will I be when I grow up?" At least for me, the answer was always simple: a superhero by night who worked as an astronaut during the week and a firefighter on their day off. But when we find out that we can't really be a firefighting astronaut superhero we usually fall back on our second choice—beat writer for Free Press Houston. However, for those kids who crave the limelight and want to be a singer or actor, those dreams can come and go before they even know it. Long is the list of former child entertainers whose lives are now more of an anecdote to a TMZ report or a VH1 "Where Are They Now?" special after a meteoric rise to the top finds them unprepared for a life that will never be "normal." So what is it that drives these emerging child stars? And how do they cope with life as an adult?

No Matter How Hard I Try I Can't Look The Same As I Did Yesterday, a new performance installation by soprano Lisa Harris is a part-fictional, part-autobiographical look at the unique experience of being a former childhood star and the ensuing commodification of self. Drawing on personal experiences from her life, Harris brings us into a world of performance anxiety, internal dialogues, and self-criticism as she plays an adult performer "on the brink, wrestling with memories of themselves and trying to survive this 'curse of the child performer' life and the projected ego… just trying to make it to adulthood. And perform." But, as Harris explains, "The show is not all performance based. A good understanding of the work comes with the affections on the space. The items in the space, how they relate to each other and how I relate to all of it, is what I want to share."

In fact, if you happen to walk in on opening night, you will walk into a dressing room, complete with a dressing mirror, costumes, reviews, notes, flowers, a piano, and projections that express the possible internal dialogues of the performer. You will also find Harris in her preparations for going on stage. There will be two different performances to catch – Memory and Being Alive. In Memory, Harris plays a caricature of herself as an adult performer mired in self-reflection and resentment as she criticizes projected footage of herself and her friends performing in their youth, comparing herself unfavorably to the talented Erin Simpson Stallings—a childhood friend and constant reminder of her inadequacies. As Harris put it, "Memory is more about a down day—lower vibrational energy, comparisons, stuck in the past (past reviews, past shows, yesteryear), angst and anxiety, and how that informs a performance." The performance will also include a cabaret-style set featuring a rendition of the song, "Memory" from the Andrew Lloyd Webber musical, Cats.

In contrast, Harris characterizes Being Alive as "an up day." She continues, "The first days back in the saddle after a break, maybe. Full of affirmations, positive identifications, habits. The habits progress from Memory to Being Alive. I learn new habits and practice them, and sing different songs." One of which will certainly be "Being Alive" by Stephen Sondheim from the musical Company.

Harris describes the experience of undertaking such a personal project as comical. "It is always fun to act 'extra,'" Harris says. "It has been really cathartic and enjoyable as well because I get to put my theories into practice, and to share with the public some of my true inspirations and anxiety. The tragicomedy that is self-realization." On the idealization of our childhood she mused that, "Everyone has a childhood and childhood is an important part to our design. A place full of firsts, good and bad, is pretty ideal. I think former child entertainers have mixed experiences about childhood, mainly because they had to do so much for the first time, including be children and grow up."

The inspiration for the show came when Harris recently found some old tapes of her performances as a child. She was amazed at how terrified she looked as a child and how critical she was of her first performance. Harris noted, "That moment of reckoning, plus my three year participation in the social practice phenomenon known as 'taking selfies' inspired me to make a piece addressing the ego and self relationship."

So how does a former child entertainer survive as an adult? "You know, I am still researching," Harris says. "It seems that having some positive reinforcements behind the scenes really proves helpful though." For those of you that are wondering, Lisa also shared information about a support group, "The first ever, Third Ward Support Group for Former Child Entertainers/Third Ward Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers Fan Club. Also known as TWGfFCE/TWFLatTFC. But it costs to join. I'm the president."

Too bad my attempt to fly from the roof as a junior firefighting astronaut superhero doesn't qualify me as a child entertainer. Though, I seem to remember the neighbors being pretty entertained. **FPH**



PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Opening reception:
Thursday, August 29, 6:00 p.m.
Fresh Arts, 2101
Winter Street, Studio B11,
Houston, TX, 77007

Performance 1: Memory
Friday, September 13, 6:00 p.m.

Performance 2: Being Alive
Friday, September 20, 6:00 p.m.

Closing party:
Friday, September 27, 6:00 p.m.


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FORGIVENESS

NICOLAS WINDING REFN LOVES FILMMAKING. No, seriously. Refn approaches the act of directing like the act of love. "You establish an intimacy with your lead actor and it's different than the intimacy you have with your lead actress," Refn tells Free Press Houston in a phone interview. Refn is a Danish writer and director who divides his time between Denmark and America.

Refn's go-to actor is Ryan Gosling, who starred in Refn's previous film Drive and headlines in Only God Forgives, Refn's newest film. "In many ways the director finds his alter ego in the actor," Refn reminds.

Audiences were already familiar with Gosling before Drive and Only God Forgives, but it's interesting to see the way Refn has made previous films that showcase actors who are now known to American audiences through other roles. For instance, Refn's Bronson (2008) starred Tom Hardy in a tour de force role as a career convict, and subsequently Hardy became a recognizable character actor in movies such as Inception and The Dark Knight Rises.

In a similar manner, Mads Mikkelsen, an actor who was perhaps Refn's first cinematic alter ego, recently burst onto the scene in a series of domestically-distributed foreign films (A Royal Affair, The Hunt) and the television series Hannibal. Mikkelsen was a supporting player in Refn's debut Pusher (1996), the star of Pusher II: With Blood On My Hands (2004) and Valhalla Rising (2009), as well as a cast member of Bleeder (1999). Refn helmed Valhalla Rising in 2009 and it's his only period piece, a tale of Norsemen in 1000 A.D. Refn refers to Valhalla Rising as "my silent film" due to the fact that Mikkelsen plays a mute warrior.

Only God Forgives unwinds in Bangkok, but the slow methodical tracking shots down red corridors could be located in any alternative universe in the world. A bloody battle ensues between a corrupt and evil law officer Chang (Vithaya Pansringarm) and foreigner Julian (Gosling) after the murder of a prostitute. Julian's brother killed the prostitute.

Chang orchestrates a series of escalating violent episodes by the different characters involved. Chang also has a bizarre ritual where he cuts off the arm of his victims with his personal rapier. It reminds you of the ritual of cutting off the little finger in The Yakuza (1974). Maybe honor is involved and then maybe it's not. And Chang's penchant for singing in a karaoke bar somehow has a David Lynch vibe. Likewise, the way Refn tracks down hallways shrouded in pure red only to have the right angles blend into perfect darkness seems like a cinematic missing link that connects today to movies such as Twin Peaks and Lost Highway.

The brilliant music soundtrack by Cliff Martinez seems to play homage to great '80s synth scores. Bold themes and melodies are bridged by low frequency rumbling sounds. "Those are the sounds of Julian's emotions," Refn explains.

A feature-length documentary, Gambler, about Refn and his quest in and out of debt to complete the Pusher trilogy depicts him as whimsical, at times with a self-deprecating façade. And that's the voice that comes over the phone, confident but still ready to roll with the punches. No, Refn is no longer attached to the remake of Logan's Run. Yes, Refn would like to work with Carey Mulligan, the femme star of Drive, again.

Julian's mother, Crystal (Kristin Scott Thomas), the kingpin in an international drug smuggling ring, comes to Bangkok to avenge her son and order a hit on Chang after Julian refuses to kill him. "I met Kristin to talk about the role, and she immediately flicked on the bitch switch. I knew she was perfect for Crystal," Refn says. Having shot films in Copenhagen, Los Angeles, and now Bangkok, Refn describes his process of arriving at his new location: "I want to be a stranger in a strange land; that's how I discover everything. What arouses me—that's what I want to see up on the screen."

Only God Forgives escalates into a series of confrontations between Julian and Chang and Julian and Crystal, each more perfectly choreographed than the last. The final credits reveal a dedication to Alejandro Jodorowsky, perhaps the godfather of surreal violence with such films as El Topo (1970) and The Holy Mountain (1973). Refn mentions a film about Jodorowsky that he contributed to as an interviewee – Jodorowsky's Dune, a documentary that examines an attempt to film the celebrated sci-fi novel in the 1970s that is set for release later in the year. "Jodorowsky had cast Salvador Dali as the Emperor," Refn states.

Glancing at Refn-related material on the Net, I come across Refn's Criterion Top 10. Among his choice favorites are Vampyr, Sweet Smell of Success and Flesh For Frankenstein. Based on those selections alone, it makes one eager to experience the vision of the director of Only God Forgives. **FPH**



By Michael Bergeron

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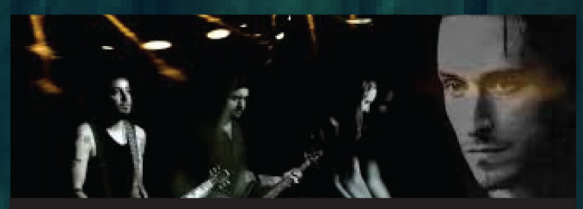
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WITH **ROADKILL GHOST CHOIR**



AUG. **09** **PETE HOLMES**
WITH **CHRIS THAYER**



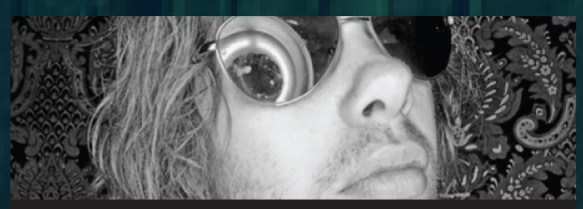
AUG. **11** **OURS**
WITH **LUNA ARCADE**



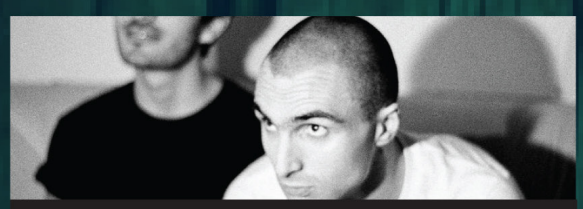
AUG. **21** **ICONA POP**
WITH **K FLAY • SIRAH**



AUG. **24** **DAVID RAMIREZ**
WITH **ERIN IVEY**



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THE ACACIA STRAIN AUG. 22 | **THE WHEEL WORKERS** AUG. 23 | **HELL CITY KINGS** AUG. 23

SUMMER SOUNDS

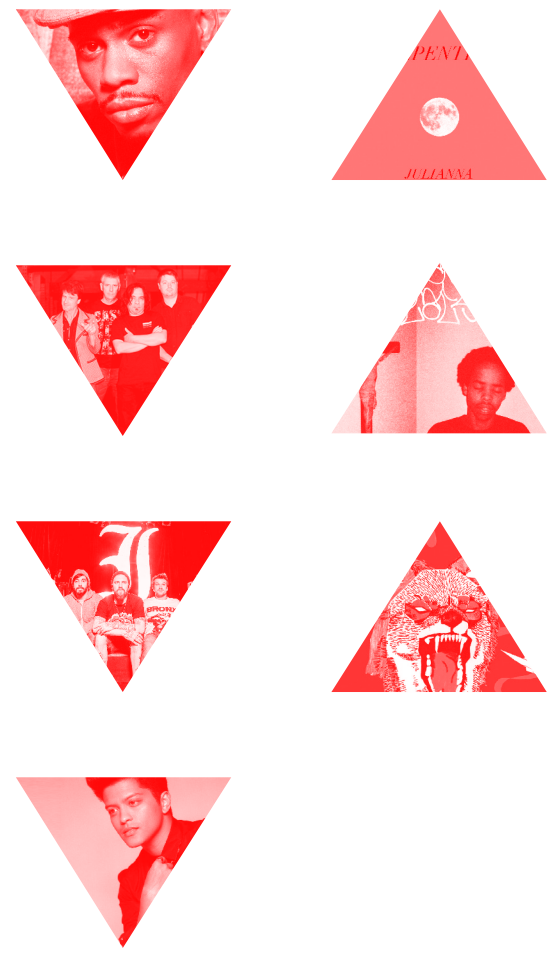
By Will Guess

IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE we're already more than halfway through 2013. This year has brought some truly fantastic shows to our city, and I think it's safe to say that Houston is back on the map as a music city. In years past, it seems that artists have opted out of performing in Houston, but recently, I'd say it's the complete opposite. August will bring performances by both up-and-coming and established artists. Thanks for continuously supporting the re-emerging music scene here. We're well on our way to solidifying our city as a "must stop" place for bands.

Lil Wayne
August 18_Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion
While it seems Weezy has gone downhill with his past couple of albums, his career as a whole has made him among AT LEAST the top 10 rappers of all time. He's one of today's hardest working artists, releasing countless tracks, and he has always been one of the most interesting characters in pop culture. From stints in prison to number one albums to a questionable dive into skateboarding and its culture, it's hard to take your eyes off of him. He's constantly reinventing himself. While an image change might be a death sentence for other artists' careers, Wayne has the luxury of being able to try new things without worrying about repercussions. Plus, he puts on a live show that most hip-hop artists can 't touch. His show is a must-see, just in case he goes the way of Amy Winehouse. Pray 4 Weezy.

Funny or Die Oddball Fest:
Dave Chappelle, Flight of the Conchords
August 24_Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion
Chappelle is one of the best comedians of all time. With some of the best hour-long stand-up sets in history, as well as one of the smartest and funniest television sketch shows ever, it's impossible to argue that he's not a top comedian. After quitting his own show, declining a $50 million payday, and sticking it to the man, we all thought that we had lost a comedic genius forever. For years, Chappelle has remained almost invisible to the public eye. Now, in what I thought was a cruel joke but turned out to be real, he's doing stand-up again AND he's bringing it to Houston. But this is no ordinary comedy show—it's a comedy festival. Possibly one of the first. Not only will Dave Chappelle perform comedy in the flesh, but also a slew of other great comedians, including Flight of The Conchords. Catch Chappelle before he disappears again.

Black Flag
August 26_Walter's
When Black Flag announced a new album and a reunion tour, the hardcore community was split over whether this was the greatest or the worst thing to ever happen. Add to that the whole confusion that there are actually TWO bands playing as Black Flag currently with different members. This particular lineup includes original guitarist Greg Ginn, Ron Reyes on vocals, as well as some new faces. The backlash from hardcore fans was no surprise, but hopefully this reunion will expose heavy music fans to the Black Flag discography that influenced hardcore music arguably more than any other band. It's fitting that this legendary hardcore band is performing at a legendary Houston hardcore venue that is also on the rebound. I fully expect to see a division in the crowd—old school fans in the back with their arms crossed, and the people who are brave enough to sacrifice their cool cred to fully immerse themselves in the music as if it were the late '70s all over again.



Every Time I Die
August 10
House of Blues

Bruno Mars
August 15
Toyota Center

Alice in Chains, Jane's Addiction, Coheed and Cambria, Circa Survive
August 29
Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion

MUSIC OPINIONS

(LIGHT RAISES TO REVEAL A MAN ASLEEP ON A TABLE. STARTLED BY THE LIGHT, HE RISES QUICKLY AND A GLASS OF BEER TOPPLES OVER…)
By KM Anderson

JULIANNA BARWICK_Nepenthe_Dead Oceans
Julianna Barwick's album The Magic Place was a sanctuary away from the club, or the street, or a dysfunctional relationship. It provoked the listener without the need to overdramatize—its subtlety was its power. Her newest album, Nepenthe, holds this same quality. Songs seem to appear and dissolve. Composed of vocal loops and sparse instrumentation, although more instrumentation than her last, Barwick's latest album presents and extends a transcendental moment. Lead track "Offing" is like watching a flower bloom—its color and texture more apparent with each sound. "Labyrinthine" is like noticing a beautiful city in the distance, only to become totally enthralled in its splendor upon arrival. The music of this album demands your time and attention more than your sense of fashion, trend, or level of sobriety.

EARL SWEATSHIRT_Doris_Tan Cressida/Columbia
To truly appreciate Earl Sweatshirt, you've got to know a little about his backstory—a great rapper who disappeared at the height of his crew's fame, was hunted down by an overzealous magazine, and eventually returned to music. It is perhaps this story and the fact that Sweatshirt was pretty much the only member of Odd Future who could actually rap that garnered the initial interest. However, his disappearance was a sign—he ultimately wanted to be left alone. He didn't want to be famous. Anyone who listens to Doris will not hear a person rapping about the spoils of fame and glory. Take the lead single, "Whoa," a dizzying display of rhyme stanzas, words linked by the end of phrases spun through alliteration and wild metaphors. It's amazing, but it's the Odd Future middle-finger funk at best. "Chum," on the other hand, is dark. It is driven by a somber piano line with raw, honest lyrics like "I'm indecisive, I'm scatterbrained and I'm frightened it's evident /And them eyes where he hiding all them icicles at." It is the songs like "Chum," the ones filled with so much complexity and candor, that makes Doris worth the listen.

HIATUS KAIYOTE_Tawk Tomahawk_
Pineapple Spaceship/Sony
I've gone long, so let's be brief. This album is bananas. "Nakamarra" will reaffirm your love for all soul music. The album's biggest endorsement? Opening for D'Angelo and Erykah Badu in Detroit(!) at their request. Classical, jazz, and rock leanings that return to the soul and boom bap drums. "Malika" is maybe the best song I have heard this year. DO NOT SLEEP ON THIS ALBUM!

…and these have been my MUSIC OPINIONS (echo and fade…)

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RJD2

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AUGUST BURNS RED

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STAR SLINGER

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WHITE LUNG

ACTIVE CHILD

BEACH FOSSILS

SMALL BLACK

POOLSIDE

CODE ORANGE KIDS

CAYUCAS

QUASI

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LEMURIA

DESSA

UNDERACHIEVERS

NARROWS

RETOX

OLA PODRIDA

FRANK SMITH

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RATKING

UNLOCKING THE TRUTH

PHRANCHYZE

ROGER SELLERS

LNS CREW

TRUE WIDOW

SPRAY PAINT

VENOMOUS MAXIMUS



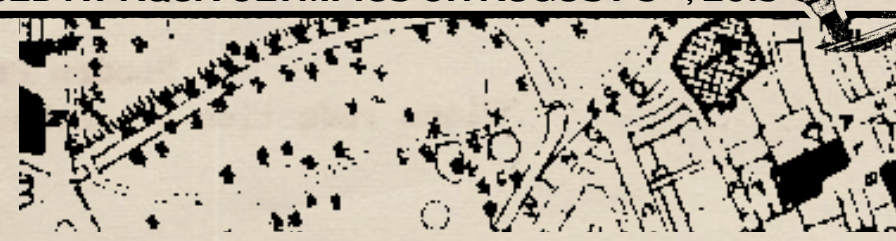
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KTSU 90.9,
THE LAST OF THE GREAT RADIO STATIONS

OF ALL THE RADIO STATIONS IN HOUSTON, I've found that the only one I consistently enjoy is 90.9 FM The Choice. It's like a non-stop party, whether they are blasting oldies and soul hits from the '60s or laying down funk and dance hits from the '70s and early '80s. When the mood is right, they play some of the sexiest sexy time music and the bluest blues. There are never commercials, and the music is always soulful. If you want to catch some gospel, tune in on Sundays and you'll be doing cartwheels around your living room. Free Press Houston reached out to Donna Franklin at KTSU to learn more about the station's history, the best places in town to catch a good live show, and details about some of their most popular shows and DJs.



Photos courtesy of KTSU 08_13

How long has KTSU been on the air?
KTSU is in its 41st year of broadcasting.

What is the station's longest running show?
The longest running show, including longevity, goes to James "The Original Sinbad" Lancaster. He has been with the station since 1976 and is currently KTSU's Interim General Manager.

What is the KTSU's most popular show? Who is considered the station's most popular on-air personality?
That is a tough one. If you like Jazz in All Its Colors, then you would probably say Sinbad, Donna Franklin or Chris O'Neal. If you like blues, Dr. Freddie Brown; neo soul and R&B—Ms. Melodic; reggae—Supa Neil and DJ Uncle L; R&B oldies—your choice might be Larry "The Chatta Box" Hale, Ms. Melodic, Donna Franklin, Devan Wade, Jay Edwards, Deon Haywood, Terry Franks, Vernon J, James Eaglin or Lorenzo "LL" Livas.

On the other hand, if you like gospel—Rev. Ricky Williams, Marilyn Bolden-Grant, Rev. Charles Hudson, Ebonee Brown, Tyrone Campbell, Paul Davis II, Chelsea Lee, or Brother Blakes. If news and public affairs is your thing—Donte Newman, Samantha Vallejo, Damien Thaddeus Jones, Bruce Brown or Dr. DZ Cofield.

What do people enjoy most about working at KTSU?
We enjoy the freedom of designing our playlist with the listener in mind. We can all agree that our Choice listeners enjoy KTSU for the variety of music that is played—less talk and more music on a daily basis.

There are no commercials, which makes listening to KTSU such a treat. How do you stay on the air?
We do have underwriting spots. However, KTSU is a public radio station and a member of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Our primary funding comes from membership. We have two membership drives per year. Spring Membership Drive is held on the last Friday in April—it runs for 10 straight days. Our Fall Membership is held the last Friday in October and it also runs for 10 straight days. Membership is good for one year. Membership begins at $45. You don't have to wait until our membership campaigns to become a member—membership is 365 days a year.

Whenever I turn the radio to KTSU, it seems like there is always a dance party happening. How do you keep things poppin'?
You are exactly right! It is a party every time an announcer is on the air. We enjoy what we do—and that is bringing you a variety of music. Music is good for the mind, heart, body, and soul.

What are some of KTSU's favorite joints in town for live music?
There are a number of places: Café 4212, Phil & Derek's, Club Divus, House of Blues, Kingston's Rum Bar, Club Hole in the Wall, and Red Cat Jazz Café. These are just some of the few places in town that support KTSU.

Who are some of the station's absolute favorite artists of all time? What about local artists?
I get that question all the time. My answer: ALL OF THEM. How can you choose with such great artists not only in our country but around the world?! Local artist: ALL OF THEM. Houston has such great talent; it is hard to just name one.

Is there anything else you'd like our readers to know about KTSU? Anything big happening soon for the station?
We have several events happening at KTSU: August 16, KTSU will have a Back To School, School Supply Drive. August is Jazz Appreciation Month in Houston. KTSU will host a Choice Evening of Jazz at Café 4212, located at 4212 Almeda every Thursday in August, beginning August 1 from 6 p.m. – 10 p.m. Cover is $5 for members and $15 for non-members. September is Gospel Heritage Month. KTSU will host a Gospel Brunch at the Downtown Aquarium on Saturday, September 7 from 1 p.m. – 4 p.m. October is Fall Membership Campaign.

Thank you to our listeners and supporters of KTSU. If you have not had the opportunity to listen to KTSU, please, by all means, check us out KTSU 90.9 or online at ktsufm.org. **FPH**









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NON-ITALICIZED TAMARIE COOPER'S FPH INTERVIEW

MUSIC **By Mills-McCoin**

FPH 016
08_13 **Photos by George Hixson**

ON JULY 12 OF THIS YEAR, Non-Italicized Tamarie Cooper (a name I have chosen to represent the interviewee and will henceforth be identified as "NITC") released to the world her 16th original musical production. Along with writer/director Jason Nodler, NITC co-founded Houston's Catastrophic Theatre in September of 2007. NITC is more than a seasoned professional of the theatre as she has been performing her entire life in nearly every capacity including, but not limited to, designer, writer, director, choreographer, actor, producer, sergeant major, greens keeper and Zamboni driver. Her most popular productions include: Tamarie Cooper's Doomsday Revue, The Tamarie Cooper Show, The United States of Tamarie: An All-American Revue (Made in China), The Tamarie Cooper Show: Journey to the Center of My Brain (in 3-D!).

Where did you get the inspiration to humorously highlight your own age and industry? Is Tamarie Cooper's OLD AS HELL something you've wanted to write for a while?
The idea for this theme came to me last year, actually, while hanging out with my writing partner, Patrick Reynolds. Every year, around this time in the run of my summer show, people start asking me what the next year's show will be about. Patrick pointed out that we had already tackled broad topics like love, America, and the apocalypse, and that maybe we should do something about me getting old. I snapped back that I would only be 42. Of course, I then realized that 42 + 42 = 84, which is a pretty goal number and that statistically speaking, I am indeed "middle-aged." My midlife crisis seemed like good material.



What's the difference between the non-italicized Tamarie Cooper *and Tamarie Cooper?*
I suppose the italicized version is the caricature version of me. Red wig, jazz hands, a bit more daffiness, and more dick jokes. Wait… the dick jokes are present in both versions of myself.

Does non-italicized Tamarie *write with the intention of continuing to develop and enhance Tamarie? Or is* Tamarie*, as a character project, completed?*
The Tamarie character continues to evolve/morph/expand just like the non-italicized Tamarie.

You've written 16 original musicals, all of which have been successes. Where do you start writing usually—with the music or the plot?
I start with the "plot" as loose as it may be. Basically, I storyboard a bunch of ideas for musical numbers and scenes, toss it back and forth with my writing partner, Patrick, and then get him started fleshing out the book. I then meet with my composer and lyricists and get to work on the tunes.

Have you considered adapting one of your musicals for the silver screen? Are there plans to write an original musical for the screen in the future?
No current plans for the screen, but I would certainly jump at the opportunity if it presented itself. Same goes for television. I love TV. I could easily see some of my most humiliating real-life moments presented in an HBO-type format like Girls. Although the singing and dancing would have to be handled well—don't want to be another Cop Rock or Glee. (Note: I like mainstream TV and enjoyed the first season of Glee—after that it went south. There I said it. I've even been known to laugh at Everybody Loves Raymond)

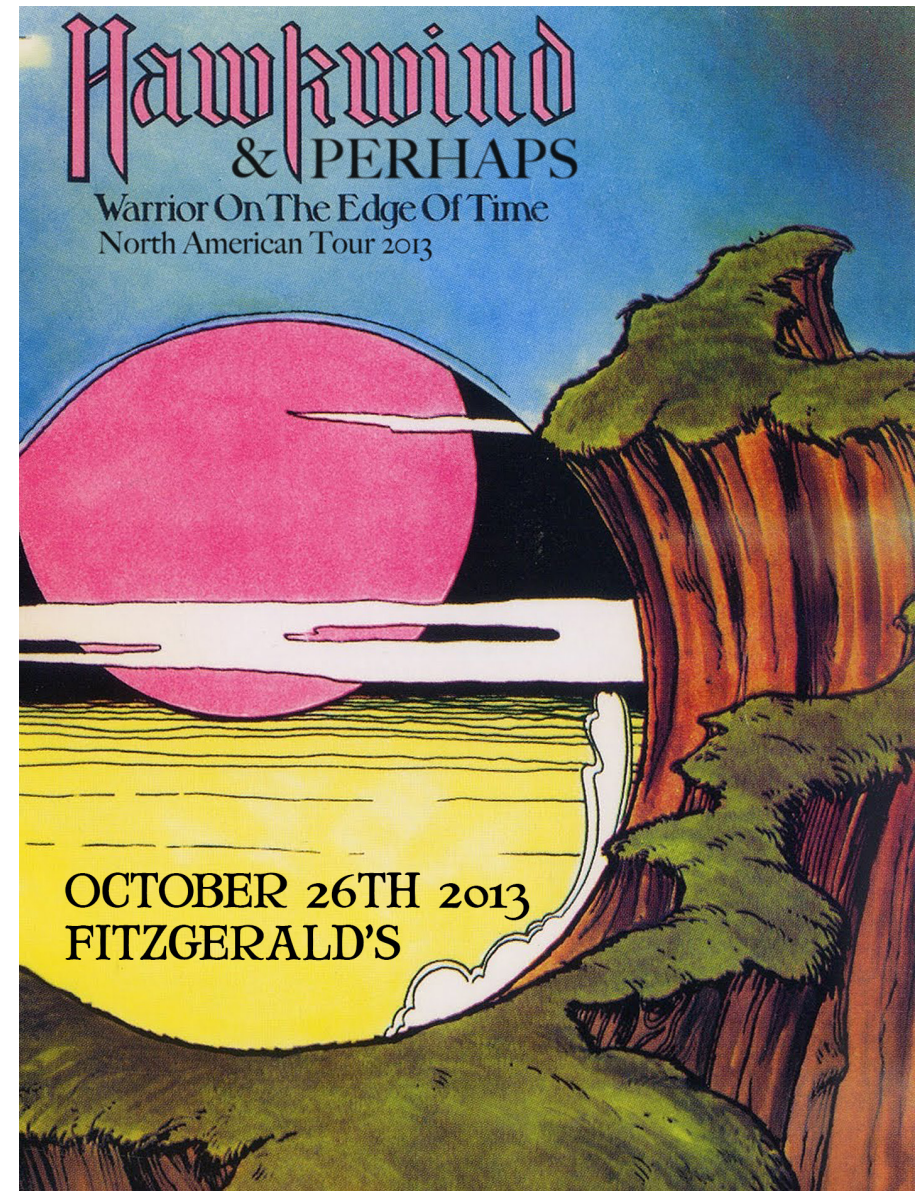
In 2007, you co-founded The Catastrophic Theatre. How does the success of that experience determine what projects and shows you choose to work on now?
Jason Nodler and I founded The Catastrophic Theatre in 2007, but we have been involved in each other's lives since high school. We have experienced success and failure together, whether working on a play or running the local back in 1992. We don't have specific rules for what types of plays we choose to direct or create, other than that they are plays about life on earth. I love the diversity in our programming: rock operas, crazy musicals, modern classics, original works by exciting playwrights like Miki Johnson, Mickle Maher, and Lisa D'Amour. Regarding my original work, Jason has always put great trust in my instincts and encourages me to run with whatever ideas bubble up every year. I also enjoy working on other Catastrophic productions, although I have limited my involvement as I am taking time to raise my daughter, Rose, who is three. I will be acting in Marie and Bruce by Wallace Shawn later this year, which is very exciting. Jason originally directed me in the role of Marie back in 1999.

True or False: Catastrophic Theatre's artistic director, Jason Nodler, is the only thing standing in the way of you exclusively using wild animals in your next musical?
Completely false. The animals are standing in the way. Because I might eat them. Actually, I did try to use a dog once in my 1930s salute, Tamalalia 6. Unfortunately, it was a cast member's ancient, deaf, blind, little poodle thingy. The poor thing was terrified and confused. It was one of the saddest things I have ever seen. Needless to say, the gag was cut.

Speaking of wild animals, how delightful is it working with Jessica Janes?
Jessica is awesome. She perfectly plays a young version of myself. And really, she's not that wild—she's got her shit together way more than I did at her age. She does, however, look great in animal prints. **FPH**

Tamarie Cooper's OLD AS HELL runs through August 24 at Catastrophic Theatre (1119 East Freeway)


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WHAT IT DO | AUGUST 20

Say Hello to FPH's guide to August, a calendar of events featuring choice picks from our delightful staff of heathens.

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



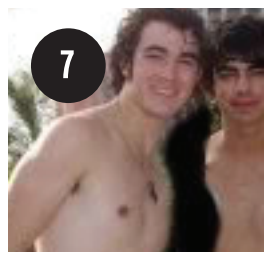
GIRLS ROCK CAMP HOUSTON
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"YOUR MOTHER SACRIFICED EVERYTHING FOR YOU. WHY DO YOU TREAT HER LIKE THIS? SHE DESERVES BETTER. TAKE HER SOMEWHERE NICE AND TREAT HER LIKE THE QUEEN SHE IS. " - O.AFRA



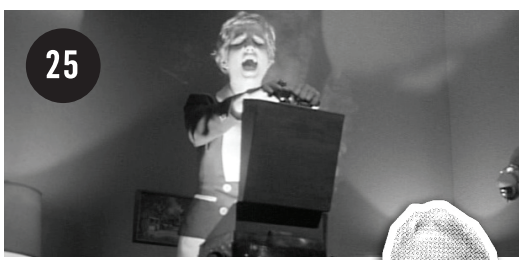
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ART OF ISLAMIC LANDS
MFAH | 5601 MAIN ST 77005
"BACK BEFORE WE WERE CHANTING 'DEATH TO AMERICA' AND BEHEADING FOLKS FOR SHITS AND GIGGLES, US ARABS WENT THROUGH A FEW GOLDEN ERAS WHERE WE SPARKED THE EUROPEAN RENAISSANCE AND CONJURED UP SOME PRETTY BALLIN' ARTWORK. THE MFAH HAS SELECT PIECES FROM THE KUWAITI AL-SABAH COLLECTION. JEWS ARE WELCOME. " - O.AFRA



TAMARIE COOPER'S OLD A
THE CATASTROPHIC THEATRE
"LATEST IN THE TAMARIE COOPER
BY CATASTROPHIC.*TAMARIE COOP
HELL!* FEATURES MORE OVER-THE-
THAN YOU CAN THROW A PIE AT." -



FEMME FATALES:
THE WOMEN OF FILM NOIR SERIES
MFAH | 5601 MAIN ST 77005
"AS PART OF THE 'FEMME FATALES: THE WOMEN OF FILM NOIR SERIES,' THE MFAH WILL SCREEN KISS ME DEADLY (1955, D. ROBERT ALDRICH). 5 PM. " - M.BERGERON



BLACK FLAG
WALTER'S | 1120 NAYLOR
"BLACK FLAG? MAYBE NOT, BUT IT'S AS CLOSE AS YOU'LL GET IN 2013, AND ALL YOU REALLY NEED IS GREG GINN'S GUITAR PLAYING ANYWAY. " - R.MCCARTHY



LITTLE JOE WASHINGTON
BOONDOCK'S | 1417 WESTHEIMER
"LITTLE JOE HAS NOT LET GLAUCOMA, KIDNEY PROBLEMS OR SUBSTANCE ABUSE SLOW HIM DOWN. HE IS BOTH 86 YEARS OLD AND WEIGHS 86 POUNDS BUT HE CAN PLAY THE SHIT OUT OF SOME 1-4-5 BLUES." - O.AFRA



GRAPHIC DESIGN: NOW IN F
CAMH | 5216 MONTROSE BLVD, 7
"DESIGN NERDS EXPLORE SOME OF
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GRAPHICS. TOTAL FUCKING DEBAU

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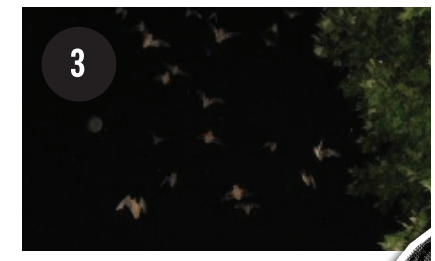
2013



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LAWNDALE ART CENTER | 4912 MAIN ST.
"GET TO LAWNDALE BY 6 PM TO HEAR PRESENTATIONS FROM PARTICIPATING ARTISTS ABOUT THEIR WORK. - S.JAM



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"PEOPLE NEED TO STOP STANDING AROUND WITH THEIR ARMS CROSSED AT SHOWS. GO GET FUCKING DIRTY AND RAGE." - S.HOHL



BAT WALK!
HOUSTON ARBORETUM | 4501 WOODWAY
"WINE, CHEESE, BATS! THE ARBORETUM HOSTS A BAT WALK TO SHARE THE WONDERS OF THESE OBLIGING CREATURES. SO COOL!" - A.AFRA



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ITCHELL PAVILION
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I HEARD KEVIN IS THE QUIET,
MES



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WAREHOUSE LIVE | 813 ST. EMANUEL ST.
"I LOVE THE MELVINS. I'VE NEVER BEEN DISAPPOINTED BY THEIR LIVE SHOWS, EVEN THE ONES WITH BIG BUSINESS PLAYING." - R.MCCARTHY



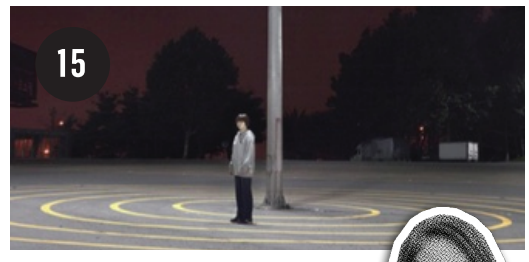
PETE HOLMES
FITZGERALD'S | 2706 WHITE OAK
"CATCH PETE HOLMES' STAND-UP ROUTINE BEFORE HE STARTS HIS NEW JOB AS THE HOST OF THE NEW TBS SHOW FOLLOWING CONAN." - M.MCCOIN



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HOUSE OF DEREON | 2204 CRAWFORD
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I CLASSES
TUM | 4501 WOODWAY
R IN THE HEART OF THE FOREST
RBORETUM WITH TAI CHI AND
S AUGUST." - A.AFRA



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THREE ALLEN CENTER | 333 CLAY ST.
"TAKE A 'REALLY SHORT TOUR' OF ONE OF FOUR DOWNTOWN BUILDINGS EXHIBITING 15 INTERNATIONAL, CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHERS." - L.COBURN



KICK-ASS 2
LOCAL THEATERS
"THE FIRST ONE WAS RAD. PLUS, THAT LITTLE GIRL IS GROWING UP AND KINDA GETTING HOT. INTO IT." - S.HOHL



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C THEATRE
MARIE COOPER CYCLE OF PLAYS
'TAMARIE COOPER'S OLD AS
ORE OVER-THE-TOP HILARITY
OW A PIE AT." - H.SANDHU



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RUDYARD'S PUB | 2010 WAUGH
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FEATURING DAVE CHAPPELLE, FLIGHT OF THE CONCHORDS
CYNTHIA WOODS MITCHELL PAVILION
"IF EVER YOU WERE A FAN OF CHAPPELLE'S SHOW, YOU SHOULDN'T MISS THIS RARE OPPORTUNITY TO CATCH THE MAN DOING STAND-UP." - R.MCCARTHY



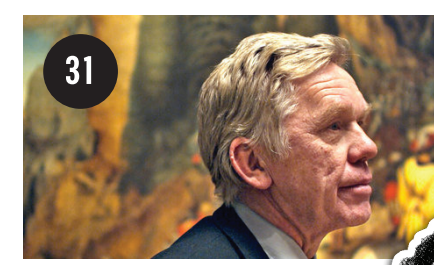
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PLORE SOME OF THE 'WORLD'S
PHIC DESIGN WORK SINCE 2000'
S, TYPOGRAPHY, AND TITLE
UCKING DEBAUCHERY." - O.AFRA



THE POLYPHONIC SPREE
FITZGERALD'S | 2706 WHITE OAK DR 77007
"A BAND THAT SPAWNED ST. VINCENT, HAS OPENED FOR DAVID BOWIE, AND CITES OZZY OSBOURNE AS AN INFLUENCE. WHAT'S NOT TO LIKE?" - B.JONES



MIDNIGHT MOVIE
RIVER OAKS THEATRE | 2009 W GRAY
"MIDNIGHT MOVIES LET YOU GEEK OUT TO OLD FAVORITES ON THE BIG SCREEN WHILE YOU DRINK BEER. DONE." - B.ZABAK



FILM SCREENING | "MUSEUM HOURS"
MFAH | 5601 MAIN ST
"AN AMERICAN IN VIENNA AND A MUSEUM SECURITY GUARD BECOME FRIENDS AND CONSIDER HOW ART CAN REFLECT AND SHAPE DAILY EXPERIENCES." - H. SANDHU

W | T | F | S

TOP TEN ANNOYING FOOD TRENDS

HEY, FOODIES! STOP DOING THESE THINGS

Images by Arthur Bates FPH

SO, YOU OWN A RESTAURANT and are hell-bent on impressing everybody. Maybe you've got some wild idea to drench your macaroni and cheese in truffle oil or perhaps you want to freak everyone out with your creative ideas for cross-cultural fusion cuisine. But what if your food is just so typical that the only way you can jazz it up is by throwing a fried egg on top—or worse, junk food? For some strange reason, young chefs today feel as if they can be "creative" enough to supplant eons of trial and error with silly innovations in cuisine.

Well, if any of those played-out ideas have found their way onto your menu, chances are, you're probably pretty impressed with yourself. Worse still, there are people out there actually celebrating this tragic excuse for unimaginative cuisine all over Yelp and beyond, so we've decided to warn our readers about this bastardization of good food.

OVER-GLORIFIED JUNK FOOD

No, I don't want to see "Flamin' Hot Cheetos" in my sushi, unless my sushi comes from a damn vending machine. I don't want to see Cheetos in any of my dishes, period. If we wanted Cheetos or Doritos or whatever else in our food, we'd go back to snack time or just wait until the munchies set in when stranded in Buttfuck, Texas with only a gas station around for miles. Otherwise, keep that noise out of your cuisine.—R.M.

TRUFFLE OIL

Sure, come shave some black truffles on my pasta when I'm chowing down at Mark's. However, if you aren't the chef at Mark's, please don't try to make up for that fact by drowning your culinary creations in truffle oil. It's not original, and it's not inspired.—R.M.

FRIED EGG TOPPER

One oddity that has infiltrated many local menus lately is the addition of a fried egg—on everything. Whether you are ordering a sandwich, a hot dog, or a bowl of chili, chances are there is an option to top it off with a fried egg. Are you that hungry or desperate for protein? Is your cholesterol that well maintained that you can just enhance your lunch experience with a fried egg? Unless it's an ostrich egg or something wild, we're over it.—R.M.

BACON EVERYTHING

Everybody loves bacon, right? But when is too much, too much? Bacon finds it's way into salads, sandwiches, but when is it wrong? How about a bacon shake or bacon ice cream? Bacon shouldn't be a substitute for real protein, and as a garnish, it's anything but decadent.—R.M.

CROSS-CULTURAL FUSION POSERDOM

Indian burritos. Mexican spaghetti. Cajun sushi. What in the world? Customs and traditions have kept food interesting and alive for years. When you start mixing cultures in a way that isn't creative, you bastardize what's good about both to benefit a small group of people. Don't ruin what's great about one culture to capitalize on what's popular with another.—R.M.

KIMCHI

The most annoying food trend the Aryan race has imposed upon us is kimchi on everything. I mean everything—kimchi hot dogs, kimchi burgers, kimchi ice cream. Kimchi is nothing more than pickled cabbage, but it has helped several uncreative minds escape the task of simply making good, quality food.—O.A.

LOCALLY SOURCED

Don't get me wrong, some locally-sourced ingredients are great: tomatoes, spinach, cows. Others, not so much. For instance, I want my olive oil from the Mediterranean, not the Gulf Coast. I want my coffee from Ethiopia, not the Heights. I want my vodka from Russia, not Austin. Ya feel me?—O.A.

WATER, NO ICE (THIS IS AMERICA)

Are you afraid of freedom? Every time you order "water, no ice," a terrorist is born.—O.A.

HAVE IT THEIR WAY

I am the asshole who has to revise everything. I tend to merge different menu selections, always ask for this or that on the side, and am not afraid to bring in my own ingredients. I feel completely entitled to have the food that goes into my mouth prepared exactly as I want it. Restaurants that don't let me modify my order really need to be shut down by the federal government and have their staffs locked up at some secret internment camp where strange and horrific medical experiments are performed. So when I ask you why I can't modify my selection, "I am just following orders" will not be a sufficient response.—O.A.

SCIENCE "FOOD"

Your cute use of emulsifiers, Bunsen burners, and lasers does not translate into a pleasurable dining experience. Though overly-pretentious food makes for great photos in glossy magazines, I would much rather eat an artichoke then have a baby spoonful of "artichoke gel" served on a plate of eggshells.—O.A. FPH



LOCAL **By Omar Afra and Rob McCarthy**



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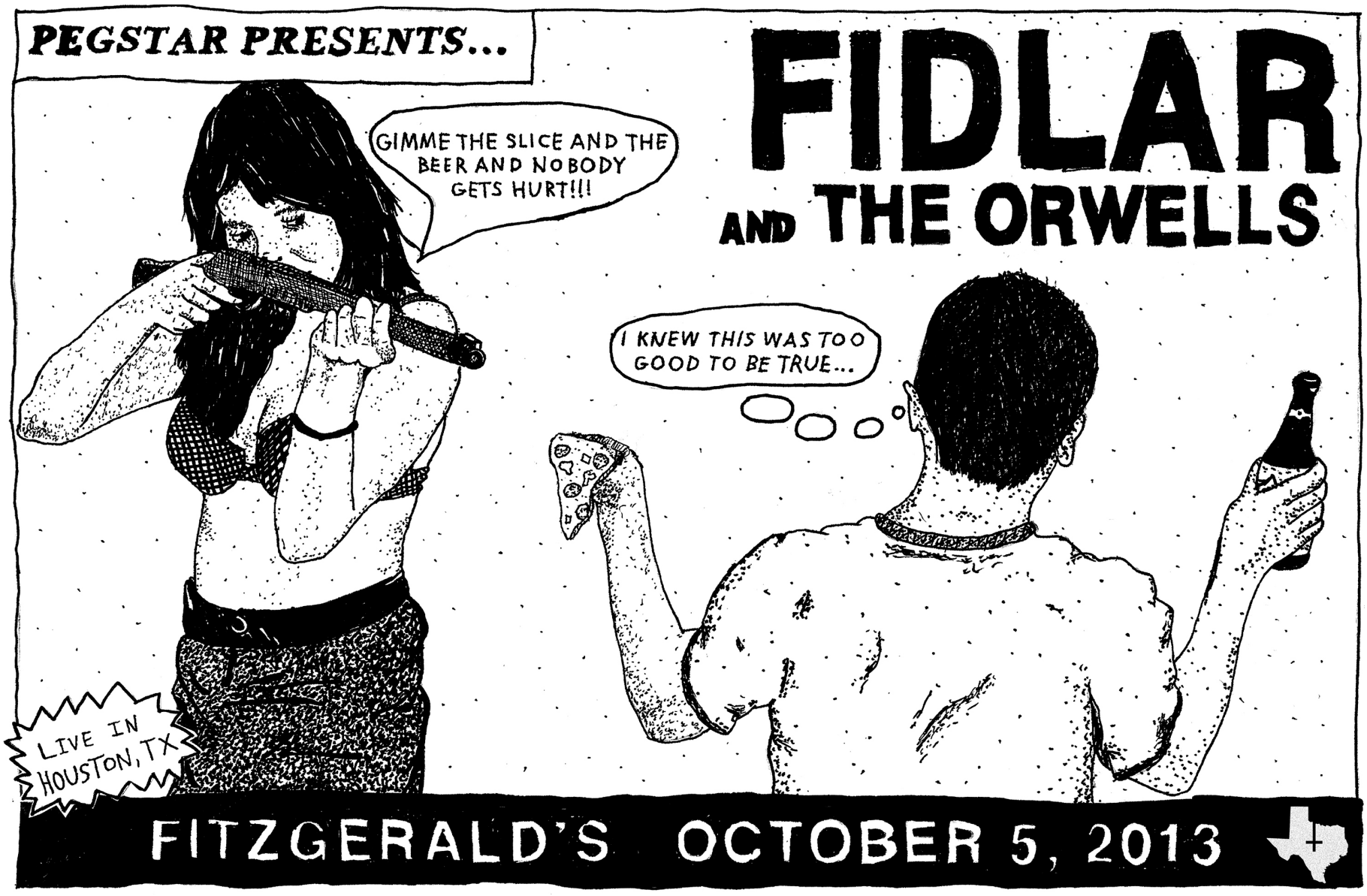
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THE FUTURE OF HOUSTON CHILDREN

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE PRESIDENT OF CHILDREN AT RISK, DR. ROBERT SANBORN

Photos courtesy of Dawn Lew - Children at Risk

By Amanda Hart



CHILDREN AT RISK IS A NONPROFIT organization that, according to their mission, "serves as a catalyst for change to improve the quality of life for children through strategic research, public policy analysis, education, collaboration, and advocacy." The organization recently released its eighth annual School Rankings across the state of Texas, as well as the 12th edition of its biennial publication, Growing Up in Houston, which tracks over 100 indicators impacting the quality of life of Houston's children. FPH had the opportunity to speak with CHILDREN AT RISK President Dr. Robert Sanborn about the state of Houston's youth.

CHILDREN AT RISK recently released their 2012-2014 "Growing up in Houston" report. In the report you identified that 27 percent of children live below the federal poverty line in Harris County. Can you explain to our readers what this statistic means in real life scenarios for the children in our community? What hardships are children facing on a daily basis in Harris County?

Unfortunately, the child poverty rate is higher in Harris County than it is in Texas or nationwide. This is a cause for concern because poverty is clearly linked to many negative outcomes. For kids, poverty is linked with impaired cognitive and emotional development, poor academic performance, and lasting health consequences. The federal poverty line for a family of four is only $23,500. For families with this budget, it's difficult to obtain even the most basic necessities such as adequate housing, access to health care, nutritious meals and other things many families take for granted.



Has the percentage of children at risk in our community grown over the last decade? If so, why?

Well, there are a lot of circumstances that can put children at risk. Child poverty rates have been up and down over the past couple of decades, but for the most part, they have been increasing over the past ten years. Twenty-seven-and-a-half percent of Harris County children lived below the federal poverty line in 2010 compared to 19.1 percent in 2000. Rates of child food insecurity have decreased slightly in recent years but still one-quarter of Harris County kids live in homes that are food insecure. We've seen fallout from the recent economic downturn as well as cuts to various programs. The percentage of children who don't qualify for public assistance is growing. These are the children of the working poor who make too much money to qualify for services but not enough money to satisfy their basic needs, and their families rely on charitable support. Finally, our diverse community is simply growing much more quickly than the rest of the country and much of that growth has been within at-risk populations.

In 2009, Texas ranked 49th in the nation for uninsured children. What percentage of that is in Harris County and what are the real life implications for a child with no access to health insurance? What, if any, progress have we made in this area?

These rates can be difficult to estimate, but it appears there has been progress. Back in 2006, it was estimated that 24.6 percent of children in Harris County were uninsured. By 2010, that number had dropped to 18.1 percent. Community health workers have been a major asset in providing a connection between health services and the underserved or uninsured communities. Unfortunately, there is a large number of kids who are eligible but unenrolled in various programs and we continue to need progress in this area. What this means is that families are waiting for medical issues to escalate to warrant an emergency room visit, when these issues could have been treated earlier on with regular health care. The impact of this is great: children have more missed days of school, parents have more missed days of work, and more taxpayer dollars are used.

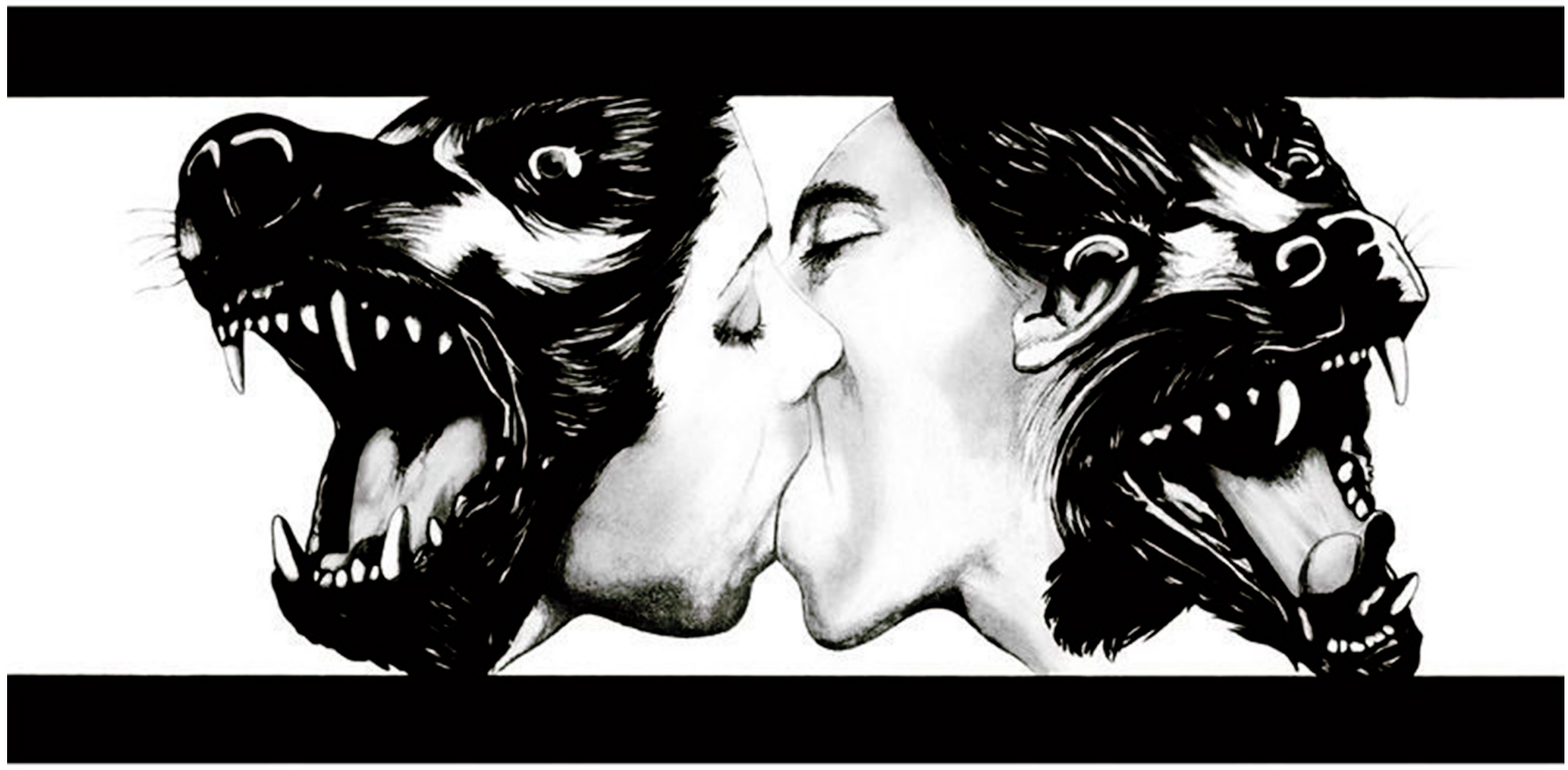
In 2011, 52 percent of Harris County students were identified as being at risk of dropping out of school and only 69 percent received their high school diploma. What factors are contributing to such alarming numbers in our public schools? And what does this mean for Houstonians as a whole for the future?

Children are identified as being at risk for dropping out based on a variety of factors such as failing a core class, being held back a grade, homelessness, failing standardized tests, and a number of other factors. We find that economically disadvantaged students, Latino students, and African American students are disproportionately more likely to drop out and a large portion of our student body in Harris County fits into these demographics. We are failing to reach a significant number of children and the repercussions are serious. In his lifetime, a high school graduate will earn about $260,000 more than a high school dropout. It has been estimated that the Texas gross state product would lose nearly $5 billion due to the loss of potential earned wages from class of 2012 dropouts. Another cause for concern is the fact that over 80 percent of our state's prisoners are high school dropouts.

What can we do as a community to ensure that our children have the proper resources to excel in life?

Education is one of the major keys. If we can provide all kids with a quality education, we will be putting them on a path toward success. We also need to educate the community about issues impacting our children and empower them to take action. It would be a mistake to think Houstonians don't care about kids; many of them are doing amazing things for children and many of them are simply unaware of the problems. Nobody in this town wants to see a child go hungry, but we have to acknowledge the issues so we can work toward a solution. There is great promise in improving lives if we take a look at the data and research and use evidence-based practices to serve our children. They say it takes a village to raise a child. I think if we can convince Houston citizens and businesses that we are all part of that village, we can pool together our time, treasure, and talents to provide a brighter future for all kids. **FPH**

HOLY GHOST!



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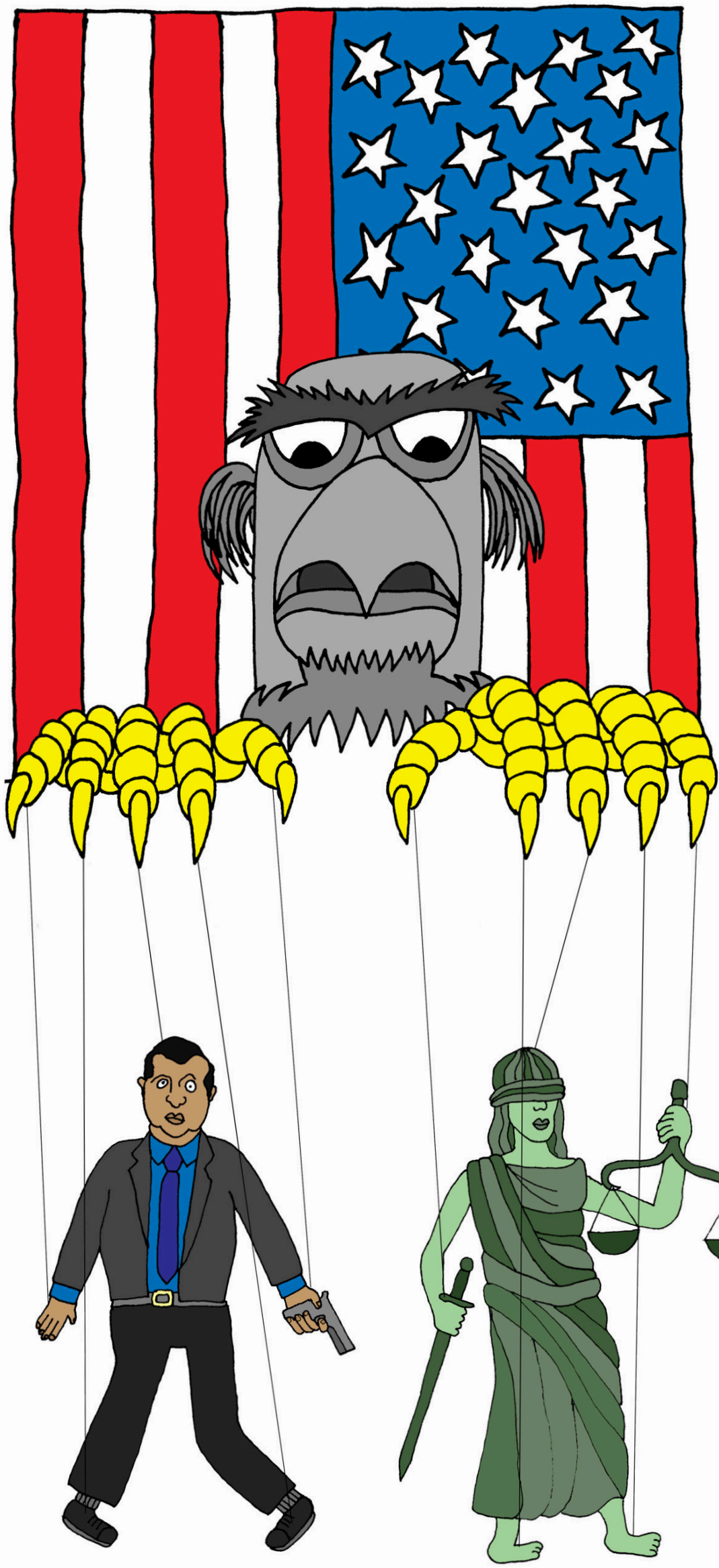


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PROTEST PRIVILEGE

At the Trayvon March in NYC, I marched and drummed for three hours, and then we arrived at 42nd Street—Disney territory. The cops were setting up barricades, and I was pretty wiped out. So I packed up my drum and sign and appeared, once again, like a white adult. The cops didn't even look at me as I walked through the opening in the barricade. I walked over one avenue and felt exhausted, so I hailed a cab. In a split second, the cab driver decided I was OK and pulled over. I had enough on my debit card to pay and tip him, and was soon home and in the shower. I read later that the marchers continued up to 125th Street, a predominately black neighborhood where the cops stopped being so gracious. I may not be racist, but I'm still privileged, even at a protest.

By Nick Cooper and Harbeer Sandhu
Images by Arthur Bates

THIS PARTICULAR CASE IS NOT JUST ABOUT THIS PARTICULAR CASE

It really is what happened during the altercation that's important in this case, right?

Says who? Says you? No, I do not accept this premise. If Trayvon had a right to "stand his ground," then the guy who initiated the confrontation is at fault and Trayvon had the right to kill him in self-defense. If Trayvon did not have the right to defend himself, then the law is being selectively applied. What is the criteria for that selection? Why does Martin not have the right to defend himself against aggression, but Zimmerman does have the right to "defend" himself against a response to the aggression he initiated—which the police dispatcher actually advised him against?

Those are the rules, right? Innocent until proven guilty.

Who makes those rules? A bigger problem in this case is which evidence was allowed in court and which evidence was not allowed. Who makes those rules, friend? Are the rules "fair?" Are they evenly applied?

I'm going to accept the verdict and assume the people who came up with it had a lot more information about the case than me.

Not necessarily—those jurors were sequestered, and much evidence was denied to them—you may actually have MORE information than they did.

KNOWLEDGE IS AN IMPEDIMENT

[W]ho in the United States could have possibly NOT known who George Zimmerman was?...[T]he ignorance of these jurors was positioned as neutrality and in fact was what made them QUALIFIED to serve as jurors. It is the hallmark of our “post-racial,” “color-blind” society that the willful white ignorance that could make a person so unaware of how race/racism and oppression operates could be framed, in fact, as expertise.

- Bree Picower, Ph.D., “On Juror B37 and the Willfully Passive Consumption of White Supremacy”

AC: I want to ask you about some of the different witnesses. Rachel Jeantel, the woman who was on the phone with Trayvon Martin at the start of the incident.

What did you make of her testimony?

JUROR B37: I didn't think it was very credible, but I felt very sorry for her. She didn't ask to be in this place. She didn't ask—she wanted to go. She wanted to leave. She didn't want to be any part of this jury [sic]. I think she felt inadequate toward everyone because of her education and her communication skills. I just felt sadness for her...

AC: What did you think of George Zimmerman?

JUROR B37: I think George Zimmerman is a man whose heart was in the right place, but just got displaced by the vandalism in the neighborhoods and wanting to catch these people so badly that he went above and beyond what he really should have done. But I think his heart was in the right place. It just went terribly wrong.

AC: Do you think he's guilty of something?

JUROR B37: I think he's guilty of not using good judgment.

Zimmerman’s heart was in the right place. Trayvon’s was right on target, too.

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DEAR WHITE SUPREMACY,

You brought black people here as slaves for hundreds of years. Then you kinda set them free but without rights for another hundred years. Then you were forced to give them some rights around voting and other things, but never addressed the unjust history. Then you elected a black president and simultaneously started taking away some of those rights again. Today, lighter skin is some protection from being profiled, stopped, frisked, imprisoned, and sent to jail for minor drugs charges. Black prisoners in the South are picking cotton in the same fields their ancestors worked as slaves. When a black youth is killed, he doesn’t get the same treatment that a white youth would. Black people and allies respond by peacefully protesting. You are annoyed about the protests and say, "They're the ones with the racism problem. We're already over it."

FPH

WHY CAN'T BLACK MEN JUST LIFT THEMSELVES UP BY THE NOOSE-STRAPS LIKE THE FOUNDING FATHERS INTENDED???





“THESE PEOPLE THINK BLACK RACISM AGAINST WHITES DOESN’T EVEN EXIST!”

Black discrimination against whites certainly exists, but without the power of a racist system tilted in its favor, it has little impact. A black father might dislike his daughter's boyfriend for being white, a rap label or a reggae club might be uninterested in white artists, or an employer might prefer black workers. These scenarios are not insignificant, but they can’t compare to discrimination against blacks. Even black cops, prosecutors, and judges are harder on black suspects. Even black loan officers, landlords, and employers are tougher on black applicants. In our system, white households have 20 times the net worth of black households, black people go to jail eight times as much as whites for drug charges, and white people who kill blacks are far less likely than blacks who kill whites to get the death penalty.

RACE IS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT

Race does not exist, genetically. Though appearance and skin color factor into our perception of race, it is a social construct with no genetic boundary lines. Racism, however, does exist, and in America we have a system based on white supremacy. It is so ubiquitous that many white people can't see it. White people in New York wouldn’t notice that they aren’t being “stopped-and-frisked” while black people are. White people wouldn’t notice that their treatment by storeowners is different than the treatment of blacks. White defendants wouldn’t know that their chance of their homicide being ruled as justifiable under stand-your-ground or self-defense is much greater than black defendants. Why would they? To see these imbalances, white people have to look for them.

ZIMMERMAN DEFENSE COMMENTS ON PRESIDENT OBAMA'S REMARKS

We acknowledge Mr. Obama's remarks regarding the frustration felt by some when viewed in context of our nation's history, which includes racial insensitivities spanning generations...

Insensitivities, they say. Racial "insensitivities." They are not wrong. That is indeed one way to describe kidnapping a people from their home, the Middle Passage, captivity, forced labor, tearing families apart, selling children downriver, beatings, rapes, mutilation, lynchings, the daily indignities of Jim Crow, and adding insult to injury by denying that these manifold "insensitivities" might have something to do with lingering, present-day poverty and violence in traumatized communities.

"BUT ZIMMERMAN ISN'T WHITE!"

In the streets with a gun in his hand, and in court with legal fund donations from whites around the country, Zimmerman represented the machinery of white power. Zimmerman, like Obama and many other people of color, held a position in the white system. Throughout history in America, different groups have gained access to the 'white' designation by finding a role for themselves within white patriarchy. For example, Irish weren't considered white originally, but they took on roles as police, enforcing white hegemony, and won access. Regardless of how long, Zimmerman will continue to be supported and protected by the white power structure, until now he has been its proxy. In 1956, one of Emmett Till's (also acquitted) killers said in an interview, "I'm no bully; I never hurt a nigger in my life. I like niggers — in their place — I know how to work 'em. But I just decided it was time a few people got put on notice." Zimmerman's family has asserted that he is not racist. It's true that Zimmerman didn't use the N-word when he said, "fucking punks ... these assholes, they always get away," but aside from the choice of epithet, what has changed? He told black Americans that white people can still harass them and shoot them even when they have no badge. 58 years after the murder of Emmett Till, we're still acquitting men who kill black teenagers.

Only in America could a kid with a Peruvian mother and a Jewish-sounding last name grow up to be a creepy-ass cracker.



CHANGING BAD LAWS IS NOT ENOUGH

Florida and Texas have problematic stand-your-ground laws that allow people to shoot others, even when they could have easily retreated, if they feel unlawfully threatened. The superior, and more universal principle, self-defense, allows the use of an equal and opposite force to deter an imminent attack. Both of these (along with not-guilty-by-reason-of-insanity) are granted unevenly by juries in our racist system. Getting rid of a few bad laws won't fix things because the deeper problem is that a significant percent of people don't give black folks the benefit of the doubt. Since the law was lenient to Zimmerman, it should be lenient to black people, too—like Marissa Alexander who got a twenty-year sentence in Florida for firing a warning shot at her abuser. Cops, security guards, juries, and the public give the benefit of the doubt to white people more than to blacks. When Zimmerman saw Trayvon, he didn't see a kid coming back from the store, he saw trouble.

I DON'T "PLAY" THE RACE CARD, I AM A RACE CARD "DRIVER."

I am willing to go so far as to say that the verdict handed down was the "legally correct" verdict, but I cannot say that it was "right."

What would have been the right verdict? Manslaughter? If so, then perhaps we should blame the prosecution?

The "right" verdict would be cold-blooded murder. Zimmerman hunted down that child like an animal. Clearly Zimmerman has got some mental problems, so I would feel like justice was served if he even just got committed to a mental hospital for life.

As for "blame," it's the whole system. It's that fucked up "stand-your-ground law." It's the selective application of that law. It's the police in Sanford who did not even properly investigate this murder until massive community pressure came down on them. It's the judge who did not allow evidence of Zimmerman's previous record into court but did allow the defense to portray Martin like a hoodlum. It's the half-assed prosecution. It's the jury giving Zimmerman the benefit of every doubt. It's the people who are sick of hearing about Trayvon.

It's all of us!

USA TODAY: AFTER ZIMMERMAN VERDICT, CAN NATION HEAL RACIAL RIFT?

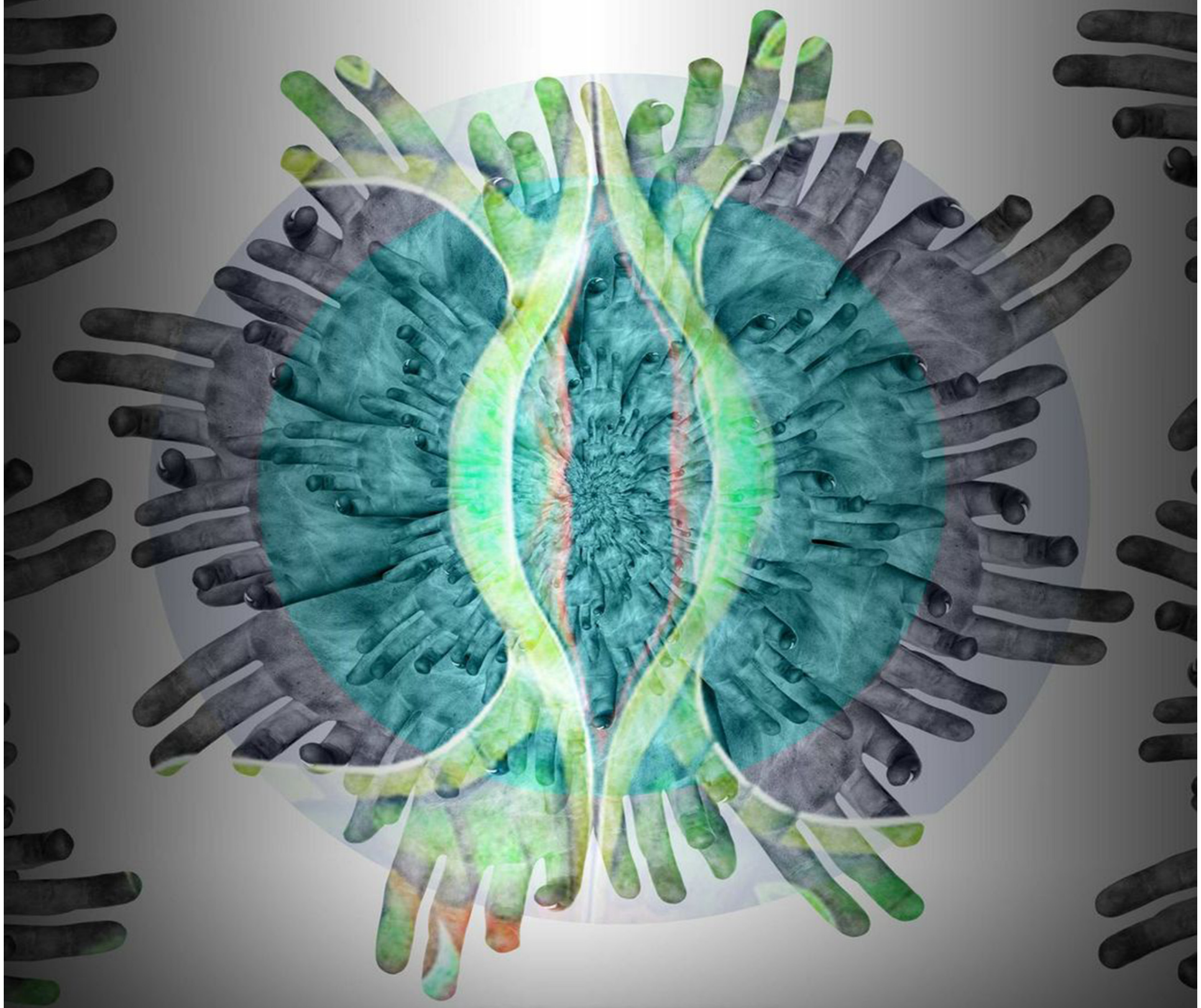
The time to talk about healing would be after the abuse has ended. "We wish things would just quiet down so we can go back to ignoring them," is not a viable, long-term plan. This verdict is just the latest manifestation of an ongoing problem. This verdict did not create a rift—it ripped open a festering wound.

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WORKIN' FOR FREE?

By Laura Coburn

FPH

Image by Blake Jones

LOCAL

YOU NEED EXPERIENCE TO GET A JOB, but you need a job to get experience. And getting paid for that first job is as unlikely as Fox Searchlight Pictures getting sued for not paying their "unpaid intern" working on the set of Black Swan. Except Fox Searchlight did get sued, along with NBC Universal, Hearst Magazines, PBS, Warner Music Group and Condé Nast — and more and more lawsuits are being filed as unpaid interns sue their employers for violating U.S. wage and hour laws.

With unemployment nearing eight percent, Americans are faced with the challenge of scoring a job in a competitive market still recovering from the financial crisis of 2008. Aspiring workers may be competing against those with prior paid work experience, relevant school or community volunteer work, or a more advanced education. But what really sets one applicant apart from another is direct experience in their respective field.

"If you want to go to Hollywood or want to go to New York to work in the fashion industry, you're going to do whatever you can to get your foot in the door," says Houston employment lawyer Todd Slobin of the Shellist | Lazarz | Slobin law firm. "A lot of those opportunities are based on unpaid internships so you can get noticed or meet the right people."

Without credentials, it is hard enough to find a paying job in any field, let alone a paid internship to gain experience. So, many students today are resorting to unpaid internships, and despite the series of recent lawsuits, college students and recent college grads do appreciate the opportunity.

"I think there's value if you put in the effort to make something of it," says Ronit Joselevitz, who interned in the fashion industry in Mexico City and New York this summer. "Because I was putting a lot into it, I got a lot out of it."

While apprenticeships across all industries have been around for centuries, only recently have internships been considered an essential stepping stone in reaching career goals. A New York Times article notes that "employment experts estimate that undergraduates work in more than one million internships a year, an estimated half of which are unpaid, according to Intern Bridge, a research firm." The National Association of Colleges and Employment 2013 student survey supports this data, citing 63.2 percent of graduating seniors from the class of 2013 reported having taken part in an internship, co-op or both. Today, many universities and high schools require internships as part of their curriculum, recognizing the importance of gaining work experience outside of the classroom.

Judge William H. Pauley III ruled in the Fox Searchlight lawsuit that if interns do not receive monetary pay, they must receive course credit. This is one approach employers will likely take to curb potential lawsuits while still providing their interns with substantial work.

Ann Marie Trent, a native Houstonian and undergraduate student studying Baking and Pastry at Johnson & Wales University, says that her internship in the pastry kitchen at the Four Seasons Hotel in Denver was unpaid but provided course credit as required by her university. A passionate baker and dedicated student, Trent was always up to learning the best ways to whip up a frosting or the quickest way to bake enough cupcakes for a banquet.

"I know [unpaid internships] are very common in the food industry and people accept it," Trent says. "I think it has something to do with passion. If you're not getting paid for something and still doing it, there's obviously a reason you're still doing it."

But there are other students who echo Trent's enthusiasm, yet are working without pay or course credit — they truly are working for free, and according to the recently highlighted laws, are working illegally. Texas law follows federal law mandated by the Department of Labor. The regulations entail a six-prong test for unpaid internships: the internship experience must be for the benefit of the intern; the internship must not be to the



immediate advantage of the employer; the work must be similar to training given in an educational environment; the intern is not necessarily entitled to a job at the conclusion of the internship; the employer and intern understand that the intern is not entitled to wages for the time spent in the internship; and the intern must not displace regular employees.

However, unlike the Black Swan interns, these unpaid interns would never consider suing their employer for deviating from these stringent standards.

"I think they did want me to learn to see how a small company works because I had never done anything of that kind," Joselevitz says. "And I really wanted to just see if design was the way I wanted to go. I think my internships fortified that desire because now I know I really would like to continue to work for a design company."

While Joselevitz says that she learned invaluable skills negotiating the nuances of the fashion industry, and was even offered a job after graduation, she reflects that she was at times given work that she did not believe lent itself to the learning experience.

"I told them by the end … you can't just make me go across town to return a lipstick," Joselevitz says. "They wanted me to do errands they didn't want to do because they take time, but I realized doing these unglamorous tasks are necessary in the fashion industry."

Eric Glatt and Alexander Footman, production interns on Black Swan, saw these tasks differently. In their lawsuit against Fox Searchlight, "Mr. Glatt and Mr. Footman said they did basic chores, usually undertaken by paid employees. Like their counterparts in other industries, the interns took lunch orders, answered phones, arranged other employees' travel plans, tracked purchase orders, took out the trash and assembled office furniture," according to a New York Times article. Slobin emphasizes that this type of non-educational menial work does not directly contribute to the interns' educational experience and is, therefore, unacceptable under U.S. federal law. If the task would require paying another employee to do the same job, then it's off the table for the intern.

"If you are an employer and you're in the position that you want to mentor somebody, give them the guidance, and let them see what your world is really like, I think it's great to have an unpaid intern," Slobin says. "Follow the guidelines and you can make a difference in somebody's life. If you're just looking to basically get free labor, watch out, you might get sued."

But like Joselevitz, many college students say the overall experience usually outweighs the grunt work, paying off either by landing them a job with the same company or by building a portfolio for their next application. However, not everybody can afford that initial investment.

When it comes to unpaid internships, it is an unequal playing field. The interns that can afford to work full-time for free are the ones that have their family's financial support or have living expenses covered. Students that must support themselves—and even other family members or friends—may not be able to sacrifice their limited time for unpaid internships. Aspiring workers, regardless of their field, may have to dedicate their hours to work in jobs that pay, even if they don't support their career goals, gaining relevant experience through an extra job or volunteering.

However, Rebecca Castillo, who works in job placement for the staffing agency Clearpoint Creative, emphasizes that those who have not worked an unpaid internship can still be hired for jobs in their field of interest.

"If there are internships on a resume, that's fantastic." Castillo says. "It shows they've worked in that particular area. But I don't think [not having an internship] is an impediment as long as they have some type of working experience in their career line."

Without transferable work experience or an internship, these students are left with less of a chance to gain the experience needed to excel in the long run and thus, may have a harder time climbing the ladder to reach their ultimate goals.

In theory, enforcing paid internships would remedy this dilemma. However, according to Ann Liberman, the director of alumni and career services at University of Houston's Graduate College of Social Work, companies on a tight budget are unlikely to add the extra expense of an intern.

"I think it depends on the economic status of that company," Liberman says. "Exxon and Shell, I'm sure, will come up with the payment for an internship program. Some of the smaller programs may not, and I think that is probably just a reality."

One production company, National Boston, has already decided to close their internship program. Hannah Rimm, who worked as an unpaid production intern this summer, was their last. Rimm says three weeks before the end of her internship she was told that she was no longer allowed to help out on set nor touch any equipment. According to Rimm, she could only watch the employees work.

"They can't keep up with the labor laws," Rimm explains. "They can't have unpaid interns and also follow the guidelines."

In addition to the restrictive nature of the labor laws, interns often place an extra burden on their mentors. Untrained interns can slow down the workflow and expose the company to risk. Companies may simply believe it is not worth the potential risks, extra stress, and extra cost of supporting a short-term employee. With fewer internship opportunities, students who have less prior experience that want to get their foot in the door in a certain field may be entirely filtered out when competing against more experienced candidates.

While more students would feel the brunt of internship reductions by having less access to "real world" experience, the employers, too, could suffer long-term. When hiring recent grads as employees, the candidates would lack the in-house training they could have otherwise gotten during their internship experience. Training all employees after starting the job would increase training costs, as well as reduce a pre-screened pool of candidates.

While people are actively hunting for the best internship and the majority are settling for unpaid positions, there are some individuals who are being sought after for their highly-specialized skills. In order for companies to attract these internship candidates and potentially gain a future employee, they often offer a salary and sometimes additional benefits, such as housing or transportation. Daniel Dietz, a process-engineering intern at the Yates Gas Plant, says that although he is working at one of the top oil companies in the nation, he would not have accepted the job in Iraan, Texas if it was unpaid.

"I would not want to live in a town with 1,100 people in it," says Dietz, a University of Texas at Austin student. "There's two restaurants in town."

Dietz says that he believes his employers made the decision to pay their two interns the $38 an hour salary and provide a 3-bedroom apartment for something more than simply swaying them to take the internship.

"We're providing valuable service for them that they're directly making money off of," Dietz explains. "But most importantly, they're trying to retain us — they're trying to keep us around to sign on full time."

However, these are the lucky ones. It helps if applicants are proactive, have had prior experience or relevant coursework, excel at interviews, or perhaps are entering a highly technical or specialized field with a good job market. The others must take advantage of what is available, and the unpaid internships may just be their gateway to success.

"Just try your hardest to get an internship even if it's unpaid," says Trent, who now works as a Pastry Chef III at the Four Seasons. "Whatever industry you're in, you learn so much just from experience. And that will get you further than just getting a paycheck." **FPH**



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WHO **DOES HOUSTON** WORK **FOR?**

A COMPREHENSIVE LOOK AT POVERTY IN HOUSTON

RECENTLY, HOUSTON HAS BEEN RECEIVING PRAISE from some rather noteworthy places. Forbes Magazine named us “America’s Coolest City.” The New York Times thinks we are the seventh best city to visit.

TRAVEL and Leisure said we are the best burger city in the country. We can't help but smile every time we hear or read about how we have the lowest cost of living, a flourishing real estate market, a vibrant art scene, and more bike paths and parks than most other major American cities. It seems like every month we get a new award or make another "Top 10" list. Due to our growing popularity, it's easy to convince ourselves that everything is looking up for the city we all know and love. Four days after Rick Perry announced he wasn't going to run for re-election, he made his first public appearance at a market briefing here in Houston. According to Perry, the city and the state are leading the way in job growth and have shown the rest of America how to effectively evade a recession. Houston is presented as a poster child for the future of prosperity. Houston is being made out to be a beacon of hope during a time when many cities are struggling to keep afloat. If we really are the city of the future then we need to address the economic, gender, and racial inequalities that we either have the privilege of ignoring or the misfortune of living.

In March of 2012, the Kinder Institute of Urban Research released a report that identified Houston as the most ethnically diverse city in America. According to the most recent census data, 39.7 percent of Houston identifies as white, 35.3 percent as Latino, 16.8 percent as African American and 6.5 percent as Asian. It was due to this diversity that Houston and the Kinder Institute started spreading the diversity gospel. The gospel is correct in that we are the most diverse city in America, but what's missing from this discourse is the extent to which segregation exists within our communities.

The Kinder Institute report failed to adequately depict the reality of what is actually happening throughout our Houston neighborhoods. The report practically danced around the fact that while Houston is diverse, it is also extremely segregated. Neither the Kinder Institute nor Houstonians ever choose to divulge this part of the report every time we share the gospel and mention diversity and Houston in the same sentence. Furthermore, the report made no attempt to explore the wage disparities and percentages of uninsured among each ethnicity. According to the Pew Research Center, Houston is the most socially segregated city out of the nation's 30 largest metropolitan areas. In fact, Texas accounts for the top three cities on the list when it comes to economic segregation: Dallas and San Antonio are second and third, respectively. It was discovered within a U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey that the per capita income for Houstonians identifying as white is $40,231, compared to $19,171 for African Americans and $14,557 for Latinos. This means that Latinos in our communities make $25,674 less per year and the African American communities make $21,060 less per year than that of the white communities. The economic and racial gap is further widened by the percentage of uninsured Houstonians when it is broken down by ethnicity. According to the Texas Department of State and Health Services, of the uninsured in Harris County, 59.6 percent identified as Latino and 36.1 percent identified as African American while whites only made up 10.4 percent of the uninsured Houstonians that are struggling to remain healthy in our prosperous economy. Ethnic diversity will only take us so far. We cannot fully actualize our city's wealth in diversity until we begin the process of also discussing why such staggering inequalities exist among the majority of Houstonians. While our diversity is just one of the ways in which Houston is a "world class city," the opportunities to grow within and beyond our city walls seem to be limited by the color of one's skin.

While it is important to highlight our city's success, what also seems to be missing from the public dialog are all the other areas in which we lead the nation and the state. Texas has the highest rate of uninsured residents and the second highest percentage of uninsured children in the country. In 2009, 19.5 percent of Houston children had no access to any form of healthcare. Texas is ranked third in the percentage of a population that experiences food insecurity. In Harris County, 25.5 percent of children currently live in food insecure households. Texas ranks forty-ninth for education spending—we spend $3,000 less per student than the national average. In 2011, nearly 52 percent of Houston children were identified as being at risk of dropping out. Texas is tied for seventh in the percentage of children living in poverty and also seventh for income inequality between the rich and the poor. In Houston, 27 percent of our children live below the federal poverty line—which is higher than the state and national average. Currently, 452,000 Texas residents make at or below minimum wage, which is just one more way we get to claim that we are number one. Of those 452,000 workers making $7.25 or less an hour, 63 percent are women. The statistical analysis of our current reality and future is quite bleak for many Houstonians and Texans. If we are going to be used as a blueprint for the future, then we have to address the stark differences between what should be considered success and what is pure failure.

In Houston, over 20 percent of our workforce is trapped in low-wage occupations—a significantly higher percentage than Chicago's 12 percent or New York's 10 percent. Even in Detroit, where cost of living is lower than that of Houston's, only 10 percent of their workforce makes minimum wage. In the Houston metropolitan area, 35 percent, nearly 900,000 people, make less than $20,000 a year. Many economic experts, along with state and local politicians, claim that Houston has mostly evaded the recession. That statement might be true in certain ways, but it doesn't mean anything to the nearly 50 percent of single mothers living in poverty or the 64 percent of Houstonians who live in zip codes where the poverty rate is higher than that of the national average. According to the Houston Food Bank, more than 400,000 children living in Houston were fed by a local food pantry in 2011—an 85 percent increase over the last four years. Our staggering poverty rates are really put into perspective when you think about the 23 Fortune 500 Companies that call Houston home. Our city is home to over 100,000 millionaires and was even named America's #1 "Millionaire City" by Forbes Magazine. Houston's economy is doing so well, in fact, that we experienced the highest income growth rate of any U.S. city and the second highest in the world between 2010 and 2011. The extreme disconnect between these two worlds seems to only get worse as our economy gets "better."

Annishia Anderson, a Bush Intercontinental Airport passenger assistant for service contractor Huntleigh USA, is one of the many Houstonians struggling to thrive in our flourishing economy. Annishia is responsible for escorting elderly or disabled passengers to their flights safely – a responsibility she enjoys because of her love for people. It is a position Annishia takes quite seriously because she understands the importance of making sure passengers arrive safely to their destination. Despite working full time, Annishia and her fellow workers are forced to survive on less than $13,000 a year—an income that is far below the national poverty cutoff of $22,350 for a family of four. By contrast, the Economic Policy Institute's family budget calcula-


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AUGUST 6TH
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CALEB FRAID

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AUGUST 10TH
PRP
THE BAD DRUGS
THE BLOODY VON ERICHS
SHUT UP SIDNEY
IDENTITY CRISIS

AUGUST 11TH
THE DIRECTIONALS

AUGUST 15TH
ODD THURSDAY'S POETRY
OPEN MIC NIGHT

AUGUST 17TH
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FREE LEO T-SHIRT
POOPY LUNGSTUFFING
CALEB FRAID
BALD EAGLE BURGER
CINEMA BOMAR
THE 24TH
THERA
BUJIE AND THE HIGHRISE
DARWIN'S FINCHES

AUGUST 18TH
JACOB ACOSTA
THIRD EAR CARAVAN
LIQUID CASING

AUGUST 20TH
DOUGLAS AND THE FURS

AUGUST 24TH
"YOUR GREATEST OBSESSION",
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CHEMICAL COMPANY"

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THE LATCH KEY KIDS
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THE SELLOUTS

AUGUST 26TH
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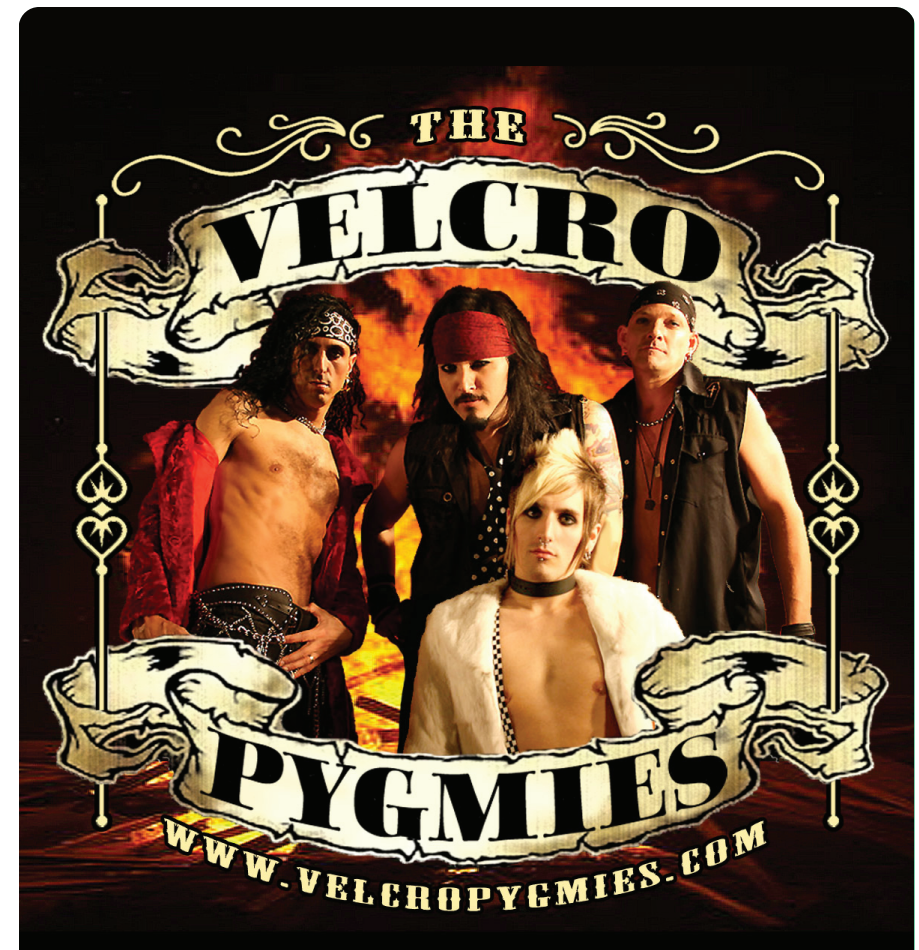
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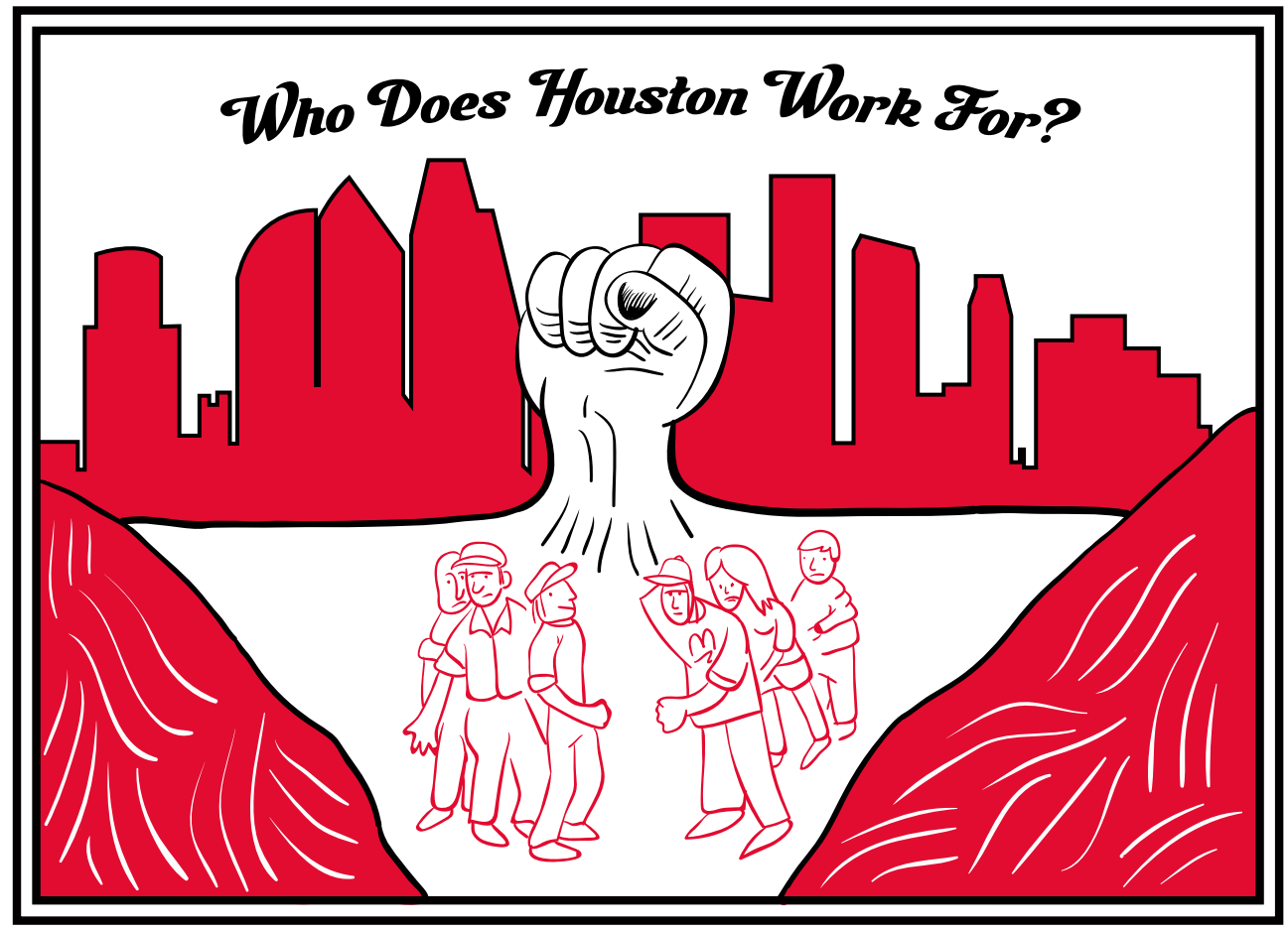
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tor estimates the basic cost of living for a family of four in the Houston area to be $63,600 annually.

Over the last five years of employment at the airport, Annishia has never once received a raise. “After I pay my rent, electricity, and phone bills, I am normally only left with about $50 out of each paycheck,” Annishia explains. This is a common problem that low-wage workers face every month. Describing how she utilizes what little money she has remaining out of each check, Annishia emphasizes, “I only get to buy groceries once a month if I’m lucky.” Like so many other Houstonians struggling to survive, food security is just one of the weekly hardships low-wage workers face. Even in the Houston heat, Annishia rarely runs her air conditioner and relies mostly on fans to keep her “cool” because she just can’t afford the added expenditure in the summer. Annishia explains how she often has to rely on her parents or credit cards when there is an unforeseen emergency. Recently, she was forced to foot a $3,000 medical bill with a credit card and now is finding it difficult to pay off because of her low wages. “It’s just not sustainable, but what choice do I have?” Annishia says. “My coworkers and I work extremely hard for very little money and no one seems to notice or care that we don’t even have access to the basic necessities.” The low wages Annishia is paid compounded by the grinding labor has taken its toll on her health. Many years back, she began gaining weight and was eventually diagnosed with a thyroid condition but is currently unable to access treatment because she cannot afford a doctor’s visit or the proper medication. Her medical condition could be easy to monitor if only she had access to any form of healthcare. Annishia is part of the 25 percent of Houstonians who are uninsured, the highest percentage out of any city in our state. With no access to healthcare, paid sick days or a living wage, Annishia, like so many other workers, finds herself in an endless cycle of poverty fueled by inescapable debt.

In late June, Annishia was invited to speak at a minimum wage hearing at the White House. The event was held to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act, a law signed by President Franklin Roosevelt that established our national minimum wage. The FLSA also ended child labor and created paid overtime for workers. Annishia, along with other workers from all over the country, came to the Capitol to express the economic hardships they face as Americans living off of $7.25 or less an hour. Annishia stood on a stage next to Joe Biden while he proclaimed, “A minimum wage increase ripples all through the economy benefiting the country as a whole as those workers spend their additional income on necessities such as food and utility bills.” President Obama recently proposed a minimum wage increase to $9 an hour by 2015. "Corporate profits have skyrocketed to all-time highs—but for more than a decade, wages and incomes have barely budged … Let's declare that in the wealthiest nation on Earth, no one who works full-time should have to live in poverty,” Obama stated during his 2013 State of the Union address. A sentiment echoed by Annishia and every other Houstonian, Texan, and American who feels and sees the effects of low-wage jobs in their communities. When asked about what it was like to visit the Capitol, Annishia expressed that “it’s good to see our leaders discussing this issue and I am grateful I was invited to the White House but, at the end of the day, I would like to see less talking and more acting not just from our national leaders but our local leaders, too.”

Annishia’s story not only highlights the problem of poverty jobs at our airports, but also another systemic issue no one seems to want to address. The same airport that refuses to pay their workers a living wage also happens to generate $27.5 billion a year through the Houston economy. With this in mind, Annishia has begun to form a union with her coworkers in an attempt to ensure airport employees not only receive a living wage and access to benefits, but also have proper training on emergency preparedness and safety. Annishia and other workers from service contractors Huntleigh, Air Serv, and Menzies operating at Bush Airport would like to be given a chance to lobby, the same right that corporations are granted in our society, for what is in their best interest. However, instead of advocating for extra millions and billions, the workers just want enough for their families to have access to basic needs. Elsa Caballero, property service director for SEIU



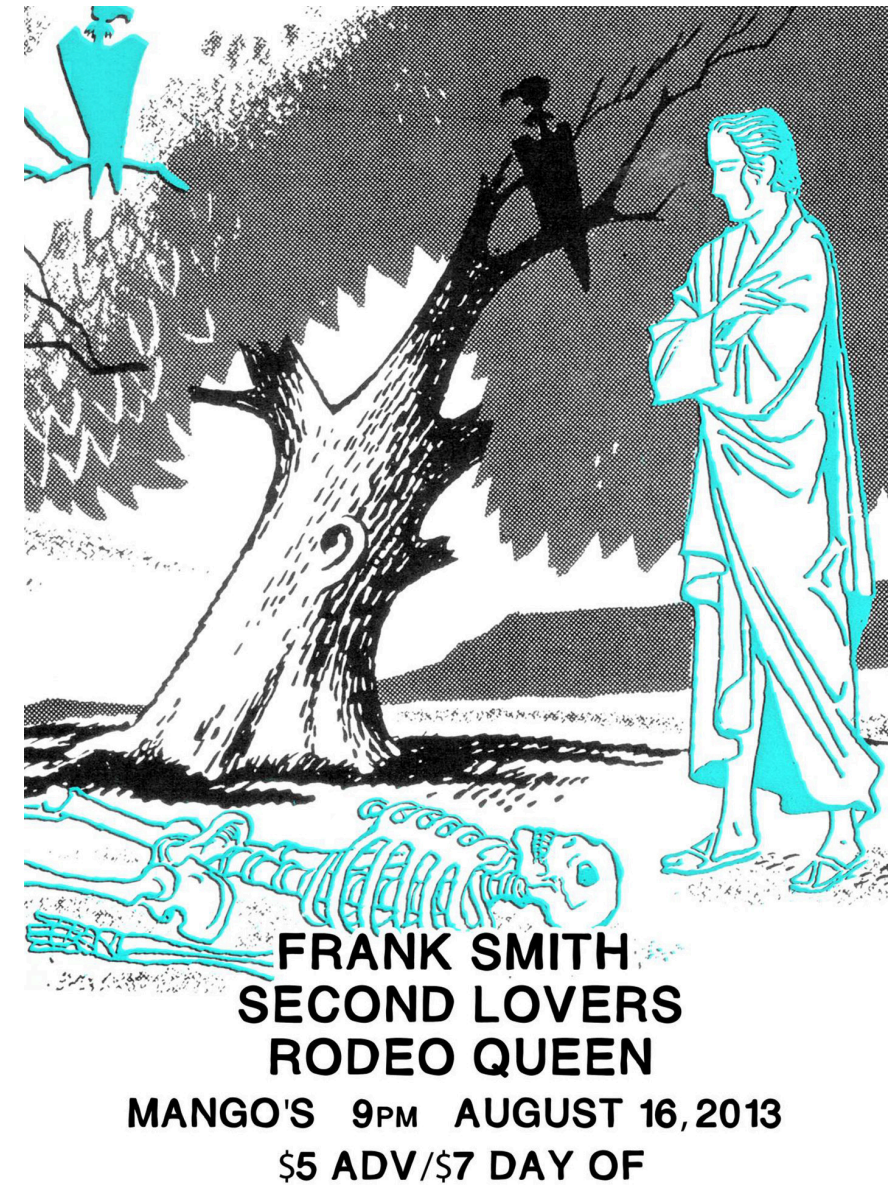
Texas, is working with Annishia and her coworkers in an attempt to help them organize for better living standards. “Under the slogans and the PR, there’s a real problem brewing under the surface in Houston,” Caballero says. “The middle class in Houston isn’t feeling this so-called boom; their reality is a paycheck-to-paycheck reality. You see this in Houston’s airports, where poverty persists under the shiny surface. Texans have less access to affordable healthcare than all other Americans and the worst high school graduation rate in the nation. The shocking lack of real investment in the lives of working class Texans threatens our state’s economic security.”

If Houston is the city of the future then we need to begin the process of bridging the gap between the rich and the poor. Our city leaders tout the Houston economy at every turn but rarely do we hear a peep from them about the workers who hold this city up on their overworked and underpaid backs. The same workers who watch corporate profit margins continuously rise and yet never see their own paychecks or communities prosper from these extravagant gains. Both elected officials and companies must be held accountable for allowing the workers in our communities to live in poverty. One highly effective solution would be for Houston to join the other 125 municipalities who currently have living wage laws on the books. These laws establish wage standards for companies who want to operate within our city limits. Enacting such laws on a local level gives the city a practical way to ensure that quality jobs are generated for all Houstonians and incentivizes employers to provide benefits such as healthcare. The easiest way to do this might be through a community partnership agreement specifically designed for businesses that receive contracts or subsidies from our state and local governments.

Many corporations are already taking advantage of these subsidies but our elected officials aren’t asking for anything in return. Recently, The New York Times released a series examining business incentives and their impact on jobs and local economies. Turns out, we aren’t just striving to be number one in poverty but also in the amount of taxpayer-funded corporate welfare that gets handed out every year. Texas shells out at least $19.1 billion a year in subsidies to multibillion-dollar corporations just to say thank you for operating in Texas. This breaks down to $759 per capita annually or 51 cents of every dollar of our state budget.

So while many Texans are forced to live without access to the most basic human needs, elected officials are investing our tax dollars back into the profit margins of the same companies that refuse to pay our workers a living wage. A quick scan of the data compiled by The New York Times yielded nearly $254 million in subsidies being utilized by Houston businesses. It’s time that our collective community stands in solidarity and holds our local and state officials, as well as corporations, accountable for the gross inequality they have created and perpetuate in our communities. We can’t continue to allow them to operate without demanding that they invest not just in their futures but ours as well. These subsidies can and should be used as a bargaining chip to demand employers provide living wages and benefits for all Houstonians – not just a select few. **FPH**





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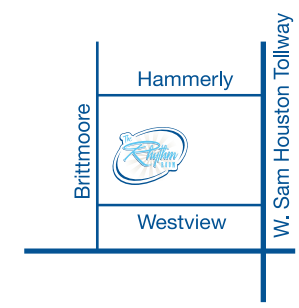


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