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Freedmen's Town
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End Apathy



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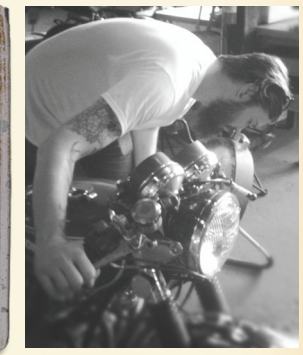
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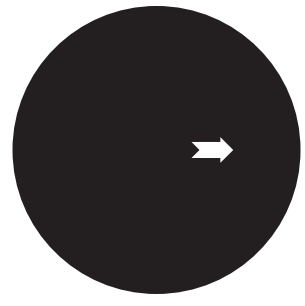
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letter from the editor

"Procrastination is the grave in which opportunity is buried." – Unknown

While all the cool kids are hanging out, others are busy creating cool things. We all can get caught up in celebration but often times we celebrate nothing. We waste our time discussing over drinks what we will do all the while others are doing them. How many great things would we have done if every idea we dreamed up while goofing off actually came to fruition? There is always another day to get sauced with friends; let's get to work now.

-Omar Afra
Publisher



A Frame-Worthy Affair

BY MICHAEL PENNYWARK

SEPTEMBER IS HERE ALREADY, and that means two things. The first is that Oktoberfest is only a few weeks away so you need to start your training by drinking at least a quart of beer a day and eating nothing but pretzels and sausage- anything with 'wurst' in its name should do. Hopefully you won't end up doing the chicken dance naked on top of the table again this year. The second thing is that it's time for a few fun-filled festivals and fairs for art fanatics in our fine city—which might help distract you from the indigestion you'll probably be feeling thanks to your new diet and my annoying use of alliteration.

To kick the month off, Houston's fifth annual Fringe Festival, presented by Freneticore, will feature performance and visual artists, both local and from across the nation. Running from August 30 to September 15, you'll find new and experimental theatre, dance, music, film and more. Once you've whet your appetite, it's time to move on to the main event- the Houston Fine Art Fair (HFAF) at Reliant Center.

Over 10,000 people visited last year's inaugural event, and the HFAH promises to be even bigger this year. According to Melissa Grobmyer, Founding Partner and President of MKG Art Management, the fair will have more Texas galleries, expanded Latin American offerings, art tours, 16 off-site events, and 17 panel discussions. There will be over 75 exhibitors from the US, Latin America, and Europe as well as on-site installations and special projects such as the VIP Lounge designed by Rottet Studio; the MFAH Core Factor exhibition highlighting the important artist graduates of The Core Program at The MFAH; and Buffalo Bayou Partnership's Invasive Plant Eradication Unit. Also not to be missed will be the Big Ass Breakfast, hosted by Judy Nyquist and Lee Ellis.

Looking at the list of speakers, two stand out in particular—Trenton Doyle Hancock, who will receive the HFAF Artist of the Year Award, and Cheech Marin. Marin is known as much for his acting, directing, and performing as he is for his avid support of Chicano art. I had the opportunity to talk with Marin who shared, "I have always been interested in art all my life. From a very young age, like ten, eleven, or twelve, I started going to the library and checking out the art books there. So when I had enough time to collect art– I'd say it coincided with when I discovered Chicano artists– and I said wow, these guys are really good. Of course I knew what good painting was by that time."

Having the finest collection of Chicano art in the country, Marin filled me in on its roots, telling me how, "Chicano art started off as a political art, and was about injustice, and went along with the civil rights movement in the late '60s and it kept on going. What it did was it identified inequality." It isn't just the political aspects that set Chicano artists apart from other American and international artists, but, as Marin told me, "There is an essence of being Chicano, pulled from a specific experience, that makes the Chicano art. Chicano art specifically is about identity—[the artists] come from myriad viewpoints, whether it's social or political, or religious or gender-based, or abstract or humorous...the experience of being Chicano comes from all those different viewpoints."

When I asked about some of the up-and-coming Chicano artists Marin was excited about, he told me, "A lot of the new ones, and best ones, are coming out of Texas. There's a young guy named Werc, who's out of El Paso, and another one named Carlos Donjuan, who's out of Dallas, and a man named Ricardo Ruiz from Corpus Christi- they are doing some really spectacular work." Marin will be speaking at 3pm, Saturday, September 15 in the HFAH Theater. So before you brush off your Lederhosen, soak up the great Houston art festivities that aren't likely to leave you wondering why there's Edelweiss in your underwear. FPH

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HOUSTON FINE ART FAIR
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MORE NEWS. LESS OFTEN.

The Sound of Silence

BY MEGHAN HENDLEY

"Silence is very important. The silence between the notes are as important as the notes themselves."
–*Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart*

INSPIRED BY THE CELEBRATION of the birthday of John Cage, who made history with a piece of music that contains no notes or tones, the Menil is featuring a series of programs and events this fall centered around the essence of silence. Take a nod from Cage's 1952 composition, 4'33", a piece for solo piano, where the performer expresses the music between the tones and melodies. The origins of the piece come, not in music, but in painting. Cage used Robert Rauschenberg's White Paintings, whose lights, shadows, and starkness seeped into the notion of silence as a moveable force in aural landscapes.

Silence, the Menil Collection exhibition (ongoing through October, 21, 2012) conceived by Toby Camps (curator of modern and contemporary art at the Menil) and co-organized with the UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, explores the many ways that artists– including painters, sculptors, filmmakers, musicians and performance artists– invoke silence to shape space and consciousness. Four free public programs accompany the main exhibition.

At the Montrose museum haven, Silence includes a bevy of artists whose ideas and concepts flourished in the 1950s and '60s, including Giorgio de Chirico, Rene Magritte, Robert Rauschenberg, Ad Reinhardt, Joseph Beuys and Yves Klein. These artists embraced the notion of silence and how it shapes a vision of space and perception. Displayed in the stark, hallow spaces of the Menil, the pieces intertwine, yet cause static between each other with a sense of reverence and stillness. Some experimental, some elusive, some seeping with undertones– each piece acts as its own narrative in the thought of silence. Rauschenberg's White Painting (Two Panel), which connects back to Cage's homage to silence, is also on display. FPH



JACOB KIRKEGAARD
AION, 2006
COURTESY OF THE ARTIST
PHOTO: JACOB KIRKEGAARD

Additional events in the Silence series:

THE SOUNDS OF SILENCE: THREE EVENINGS OF FILM
The Sounds of Silence is a three part series that tracks media artists and the various ways they engage sound, and its counterpart– silence. The three-week series explores the artists' use of sound in film through scores of silence to clamors to samples. Each Monday evening in the three week series features six or more films that relate to a specific treatment of film and sound. These films are organized by Steve Seid, Video Curator for the University of California, Berkeley Art Museum, and the Pacific Film Archive.

A KIND OF HUSH
Monday September 10, 2012, 7:00 pm
Rice Media Center
A Kind of Hush explores silent films and how those with some sound were considered oddities and unusual for their time. Films featured include Meshes of the Afternoon, The Riddle of the Lumen, Zen for Film, Threnody, four words for four hands (apples.mountains.over.frozen), and Soundtrack.

SONIC SLIPPAGE
Monday, September 17, 2012, 7:00 pm
Rice Media Center
The second of three films in this series, Sonic Slippage, documents film and tapes that all make use of sound but display the ways in which the picture track is drastically changed by the addition of sound.

SOURCING SOUND & IMAGE
Monday, September 24, 2012, 7:00 pm
Rice Media Center
Sourcing Sound & Image is a film that combines the source of sound and picture in an intimate and engaging way. During parts of the film, the pulse and date are split, which creates a new expression on the same impulse.

CONCERT
Music for Silence
October 9, 2012, 7:00 pm
Menil Foyer
Originally premiered at Woodstock in 1952, John Cage's 4'33" will be the center point of this concert featuring an artistic icon of classical music in Houston, pianist Sarah Rothenberg. Known for her intelligent flair and beautiful interpretations, Rothenberg will perform a piece in which she will never touch the piano nor ring out notes from the mammoth instrument. Instead of the listeners' engagement with the actual music, Cage calls for those to be affected by the sounds of the environment around them. Every creak of a chair, each sigh, all the fidgets from the audience create a soundscape living in the notion of silence. As a composer, Cage stripped himself and the performer from the actual presentation of the piece, for neither can dictate what ambient sounds will be heard by the audience. Other pieces on the program include Erik Satie and Arnold Schoenberg, both favorites of the late composer.

DANCE
Deborah Hay: Richmond Hall
Saturday, October 13, 2012, noon and 3:00 pm
1500 Richmond Ave.
The Silence series closes with a site-specific work at the museum's Dan Flavin permanent exhibition. One of the founding daughters of postmodern dance, Hay reaches back from inspiration during the same time period as many of the artists in the exhibition. Currently residing in Austin, Hay studied with such modern dance juggernauts as Merce Cunningham and Mia Slavenska. Heavily influenced by the work of Cunningham and John Cage, Hay crafted her work based on the dialogue of dance with other art forms lending itself to various levels of engagement and consciousness. This performance brings together the combined forces of the exhibition and event's arsenal with this final engagement of silence.

For more information, please visit menil.org

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Stranger than Fiction

BY MICHAEL BERGERON

SEARCHING FOR SUGAR MAN (SFSM) takes its subject seriously. An elusive folk singer from the past is revealed in this documentary that pits one's knowledge of rock history against the truth.

Sugar Man would have you believe that Rodriguez was a rock icon from the 1970s who either just disappeared or maybe even offed himself on stage. One thing is clear as the film progresses– the viewer is in possession of a film that flows with beautiful images, many of which have nothing to do with anything: shots of waves breaking on the beach, shots from vintage television newscasts of various crowd scenes, shots of dilapidated buildings that suggest the ravages of time.

The search for Rodriguez, a wonderful songwriter whose songs rival the best of his generation, eventually takes us to South Africa where Rod had his biggest following. The filmmakers know their subject, even referencing another less obscure singer-songwriter, Shawn Phillips, who happens to live in South Africa. The images and songs pour forth with such conviction that viewers schooled in rock history will scratch their heads trying to remember Rodriguez.

The thing is, Rodriguez may be a figment of our collective imagination. The whole film might be a mockumentary, but the story compels us to believe. Searching For Sugar Man unfolds in a realistic way, unlike an arch movie like This Is Spinal Tap. And Sugar Man has an angle that stays with its audience, unlike the letdown mockumentary that was Catfish.

SFSM acts as a litmus test of your familiarity of music. If you were born after the '70s you probably don't know whom Shawn Phillips or Emitt Rhodes are, much less that Rodriguez may have existed. The movie has one shot of a press photo of Rodriguez that's so well done, you want to accept this film as fact. Even if Rodriguez never existed, he damn well should have.

But here's the twist: Sixto Diaz Rodriguez did really record in the 1970s, and is a real, albeit obscure rocker. Rodriguez did become a cult figure in South Africa when his records were finally released there in the 1990s. Searching for Sugar Man walks a fine line that balances reality and fiction.

Maybe your humble scribe has seen too many docs that have tried to pull the wool over my eyes, films like The Life and Hard Times of Guy Terrifico or the aforementioned Catfish. But Sugar Man definitely pulled the hoodie of coolness over my eyes, so I am now more determined than ever to not be fooled again.

After all, who didn't get fooled in The Dark Knight Rises, when it was revealed at the end that Marion Cotillard was the actual main villain, and not Bane (Tom Hardy)? Yet it was while watching The Imposter that I was once again tricked by a movie due to the fact that the story was so unbelievable it couldn't possibly be true. The Imposter tells the story of a serial impersonator from Europe who convinced a family from San Antonio that he was their runaway son. Furthermore, The Imposter uses the actual people involved (as well as a few re-creation scenes that use actors to portray those same people).

Frederic Bourdin, the imposter, eventually spent six years in prison (1998 – 2003) and was deported back to Europe, but the story of The Imposter pours forth in an investigative manner as we follow Bourdin's journey from the US embassy in Spain, to San Antonio and his five-month stay with his adopted family and his eventual discovery (mainly through a private investigator, as well as a psychological examination that took place in Houston). But here's the bizarre part of The Imposter: the actual boy who is missing may have been killed by members of his family and buried in the backyard. The Imposter has us questioning the motives of the perpetrator as well as the victims, which is one of the reasons why it is such a brilliant film.

There's actually a fictionalized version of The Imposter called The Chameleon (2010). And so, once again, the truth is stranger than fiction. On a side note, another fiction film opening soon, Compliance, takes actual events that are so out of the ordinary you cannot believe they actually happened (in this case, more than once). A phone caller to a fast food restaurant convinces the manager that he's a police detective and has the manager and other employees strip search a teen female cashier. In reality, this phone scam was committed multiple times in North America over a period of a decade.

Killer Joe earns its NC-17 rating with copious amounts of full frontal action (think merkins) and a simulated sex act involving a fried chicken leg. No matter how good you thought Matthew McConaughey was in Bernie and Magic Mike (and he certainly deserves the plaudits he got for those films), he completely changes the landscape of movie villains with his portrayal of a contract killer who also works as a detective. Director William Friedkin, working with a script from playwright Tracy Letts (the two also collaborated on Bug), rips into Texas trailer trash with noir vengeance.

It's not strange to see one of the most unique directors of the '70s show that he can still bring on the good stuff and create powerful cinema. Killer Joe is sharp and brilliantly detailed (cinematographer Caleb Deschanel also brings the stuff), while each member of the desperate cast offers a provocative physical manifestation of their psychological self. Juno Temple is a demure jailbait teen, while Gina Gershon exudes carnality and temptation. Likewise, Emile Hirsch and Thomas Haden Church repeat their loser spiral until they create a whirlwind that sucks everybody down. McConaughey, initially hired to kill the group's collective mother for insurance, backs out until he spies Temple dancing with a waif in the wind.

Killer Joe occasionally reveals glimpses of its stage origin, while much of the action takes place in a trailer home living room. Only at such times the intensity gets bumped up so high you won't notice. Killer Joe revels in low-level existence, even while delighting viewers with its verve.

Blu-ray slight return

While watching the blu-ray of Les Vampires (Kino, 7/14) it's impossible not to see the influence this 1915 serial had on every film and director that came afterwards, not the least of which was Fritz Lang (starting with his 1919 The Spiders). Louis Feuillade had an eye for conspiratorial intrigue and international crime rings. All ten episodes (over 400 minutes) unwind in silent black-and-white splendor, with a score performed by The Mont Alto Motion Picture Orchestra.

Les Vampires (LV) follows the exploits of a hotshot reporter who tracks down a sinister syndicate that specializes in high-dollar robberies. Just the thought that at the turn of the previous century a charismatic hero would be a newspaper employee, as opposed to later incarnations of courage like the private detective, the cool anti-hero, or the man-on-the-run, brings a smile to a wizened face. LV also introduced the world to the ultimate femme fatale, Irma Vep, an anagram of the word vampire. By the way, there are no actual vampires involved in the story, although the baddies like to don costumes and wear masks.

Here's some of the action that occurs: in Episode 1, the plot involves a head in a box; in Episode 2, a woman named Marfa dresses like a bat (Hello, a generation before Detective Comics #27, and a few years before the Broadway play, The Bat, which itself was filmed notably as The Bat Whispers in 1930) and dances what could be kindly called a "batdance," before being dispatched by Irma Vep; subsequent betrayals and coups by rival gangs for the head of the Vampires; the introduction of a comical side-kick; incredible stunts and subterfuge; and crime plotting.

I remember sitting in a writing seminar years ago where screenwriter Andrew Kevin Walker told how the producer of a film told him that in no way would he make a film that ends with a head in a box. The name of that film was Se7en.

Make no mistake, Les Vampires pleases fans of classic cinema easily enough, but also provides a spellbinding crime thriller that contemporary audiences onto which audiences can latch. **FPH**




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BY WILL GUESS

music

AH, SEPTEMBER. The month when people begin talking about the start of the NFL season and the 9/11 anniversary - both things I couldn't care less to talk about (unless we're talking about how boring professional sports are or conspiracy theories). Luckily for you and me, Houston has some killer shows coming up thanks to all the great music booked around town, not to mention the rejuvenation we are seeing with tons of kick-ass local acts. Keep it up, Houston– we've got plenty going on to make the locals proud.

SWANS/XIUXIU ON SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 15 AT FITZGERALD'S
Post-punk legends Swans are hard at work on a new album, the follow-up to 2010's My Father Will Guide Me Up a Rope to the Sky. If the 10-minute edit of the song "The Apostate" that's been circulating the internet, is any indication of what the album will be like, I think we're all in for a treat. Keep your hands off the stage or be prepared for them to be stomped on– a regular tradition at Swans shows. Frontman Michael Gira has also been known to request that the A/C be turned off before they take the stage to create the vibe of a Native American sweat lodge. Whatever happens, just remember–no headbanging– Gira is staunchly against it.

BEACH HOUSE ON WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19 AT HOUSE OF BLUES IN HOUSTON - SHOW AT 9PM
Releasing two critically acclaimed albums in two years isn't an easy task, but Baltimore, MD, duo, Beach House, has done just that. This year's album release from the band, Bloom, is nothing short of amazing– and for me personally, one of my favorite albums this year. From the opening track, "Myth," to the closer, "Irene," the band takes you on a psychedelic journey. Beach House has garnered much-deserved attention for their spacey, dream-rock sound that it is hard to believe that the band is comprised of only two people. This is a show you won't want to miss, and I'm excited to see what they do next.

OFF!/NEGATIVE APPROACH ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 20 AT WAREHOUSE LIVE (STUDIO) - SHOW AT 8:30PM
In 1976, Keith Morris started what is probably the most well-known hardcore band of all time– Black Flag. After that, he started the Circle Jerks, also known as one of the most important bands in that genre. I wasn't even born yet when the guys in these bands started out. I learned about them much later, after hearing and falling in love with American Nightmare in 2000, but I became a fan instantly. Now, after almost 40 years in the hardcore-punk scene, Keith Morris is still raging with his new band, OFF!, having released two full-length albums that clock in at just under 33 minutes combined, the band blasts through songs with an attitude like that of Morris' preceding bands. Even better, hardcore legends Negative Approach are opening the show– one of the few tours they've been on since reuniting in 2006 and playing mostly festivals. Even though it isn't the original lineup, it will still be a treat for any hardcore fan to see them perform the songs that were part of the beginning of a movement. **FPH**

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Walter's
Doors at 7pm

Fishbone
Sunday, September 23
Fitzgerald's
Doors at 8pm

Guided by Voices
Monday, September 24
Warehouse Live
Doors at 8pm

Saul Williams Spoken Word Show
Wednesday, September 26
Fitzgerald's
Doors at 8pm

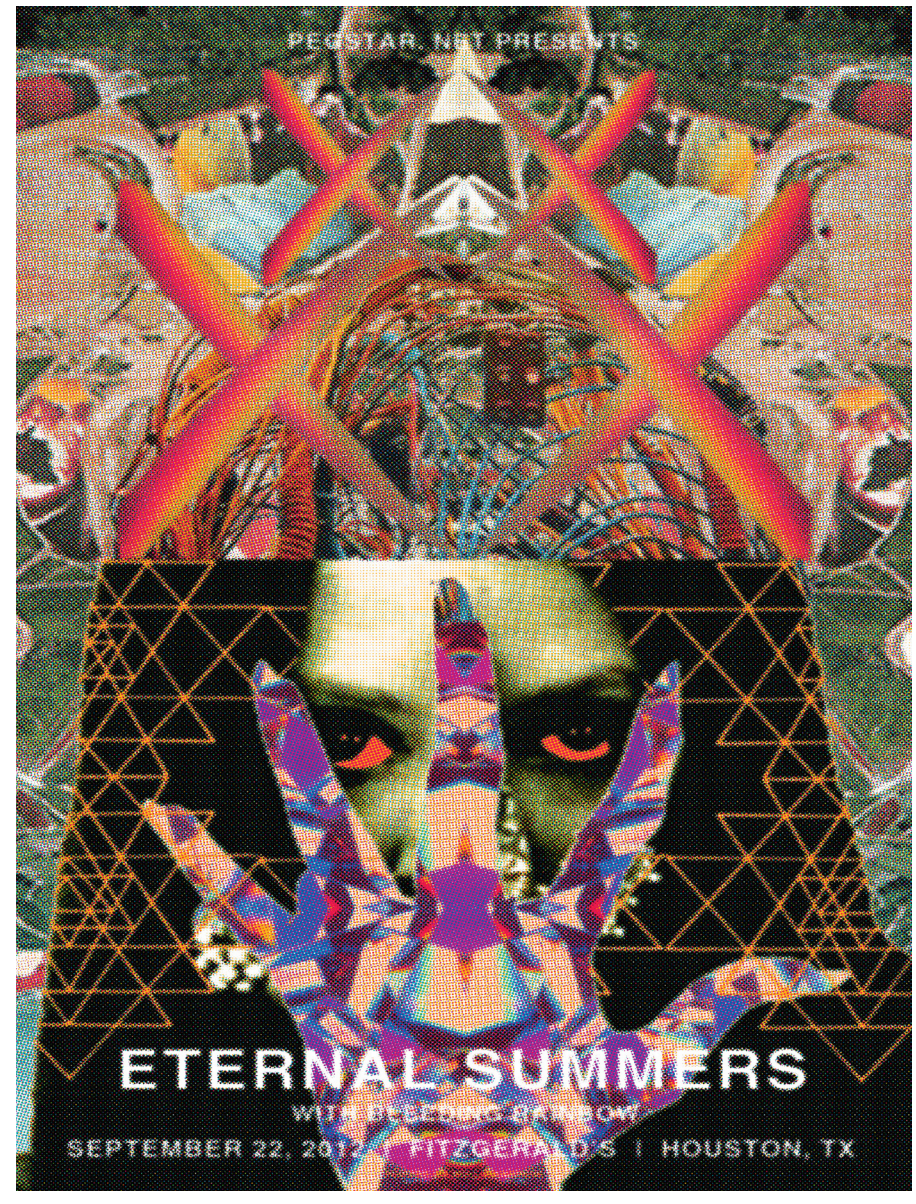
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Perhaps the time has come to see other Snake People

BY JACK DANIEL BETZ



OF HOUSTON'S CURRENT CROP of noise bands, Balaclavas have always stood out as one of the brightest (or darkest) beacons of goth. With two albums under their belt and an ambitious nationwide tour, the next logical steps were big ones.

However, despite the eerily suspended animation of their not-so-recently-updated Facebook feed, the band is no more - at least for now. Free Press Houston recently sat down with Tyler Morris to discuss what the future holds and if there were any lurid details to report about the band's status as defunct.

SO, BALACLAVAS, WHAT HAPPENED WITH THAT? I NEVER HEARD ANYTHING ABOUT IT OFFICIALLY ENDING.
Well, we didn't officially break up or anything because we're all still good buddies and all but Brian the bassist passed the bar in Texas and wants to be a defense attorney now. That's awesome. So we were like ok, man but at the same time me and Charlie were like, well, if you're not in the band, the band's not going to be doing anything. But we're such good friends that who's to say that in a year or two we won't do a show. We didn't want to just call it quits.

[Decidedly un-lurid but at least it leaves room for something better: a potential reunion]

SO IT'S MORE OF A HIATUS THAN ANYTHING?
It's an opportunity for me and Charlie to start other projects with other people. You know, you do something for so long and you're good at doing that one sound but walls start building around you and it shuts down the creative process a little bit.

THE PROJECTS YOU'VE BEEN WORKING ON SO FAR - AND I GOT A LITTLE CONFUSED ONLY BECAUSE OF THE NAME CHANGES - BUT RIGHT NOW YOU'VE GOT EAT GRAPES?
That's the old thing. I've been doing that since '99 and it's acoustic collage and noise tapes and stuff like that. Then that RIP-ed. I don't want to do that anymore, so I started a project with my buddy Bobby from //TENSE// called Bed Moves and it's kind of like Chromed-out rock and roll. We're working on recordings and stuff but it's mainly for when he and I want to have a couple beers and just make some rock and roll that's real beat-driven.

WHAT'S THE SETUP FOR BED MOVES? WHAT IS THE TYPICAL INSTRUMENTATION FOR WHEN YOU GUYS ARE COLLABORATING?
I just pretty much play through whatever thrash sound amp I have. I'm really into fuzz pedals right now - lots of sustain and weird chorus. You know, just real simple for me. But Bobby plays a Korg synth and he's got a sequential circuits drum sequencer that's kind of like a LinnDrum but simpler to use - pretty much the beat machine.

We've only practiced a couple times but I got asked to do that show as Eat Grapes and I was like I'm not doing that anymore, and then I was like fuck it, I've always wanted to do like a Damon Edge rip-off thing so I got at Bobby and he was like, "Yeah, let's do it!" It's just kind of a fun, random, whenever-we-can-do-it kind of thing.

THAT'S GOOD. THAT'S PROBABLY EXACTLY WHAT YOU NEEDED AFTER WORKING ON SNAKE PEOPLE.
And touring, man. Touring was a blast but it's just either I want to do it all the fucking time or if I'm not doing it, I get really restless and I have to have a project. But hopefully what we're working on is recordings and maybe a little EP, if I can convince Dull Knife to do it, and play some random live shows here and there but no touring or anything.

Whereas the other project he's also in is with Charlie from Balaclavas and Domokos on bass from Future Blondes. We're batting around names. When we first started writing we were like, "this sounds like a cosmic slag!," like trash and great noise and rock and we were like, that name's kind of cheeseball and we wanted to call it Bast after the goddess Bastet but there's some weird metal-hardcore band with that name and some tag artist from New York. So right now we have five songs down and we're continuously working hard but when you have something you really care about the name is important.

We're booked to play the Indian Jewelry release on November 2nd at Walter's. Other than that I've just been kind of jamming with my roommate Brett from Sings and he's an awesome guitar player and he's well-rounded and it's kind of like just fun to sit around and play. FPH

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STELLA ARTOIS

For the Record

SEPTEMBER ALBUM REVIEWS

BY KM ANDERSON



2 CHAINZ-BASED ON A T.R.U. STORY (DEF JAM)
2 Chainz (or Titty Two Necklace) is all the rage of the trap world. His music is simple if one were to compare it to the wordier fare of some rappers, but it is complex in simile and metaphor, humorous in its seeming crass nature. 2 Chainz made an album for the people who are going to buy it—this album is not for the novice—2 Chainz does what he does and, for the most part, does it well. Songs like "Dope Peddler," "I'm Different" and "No Lie (w/Drake)" are the instant repeaters. What makes Chainz go so hard, though, are his punchlines— mainly about money, "They say money talk, that's why you're always silent," "You the realest nigga breathin, if I hold my breath," that demonstrate his subtle genius. One might say doesn't the money, hoes, and clothes talk get redundant? But no, trap rap when done well is impeccable—this is some of the finest.



ANIMAL COLLECTIVE- CENTIPEDE HZ (DOMINO)
Records are always deemed as something—it creates essence, expresses assumed themes: "Remember when they used to _____, now all they do is _____..." Well, this Animal Collective album is the one where they return to being a band in the traditional terms (guitar and drum based). The album's first single, Honeycomb, was classic Animal Collective— that jumpy groove beat and the "aaaah" art. Fans can think of Sung Tong era AC, which was more live instrument oriented, but may see more similarity in Here Comes The Indian (at least in regards to Honeycomb). Animal Collective have been pretty consistent, so I expect big things.



TREY SONGZ- CHAPTER V (ATLANTIC)
R&B music is centered around the idea of the gentleman and tact and the pursuit of the carnal suit through poetic prose and melody. Trey Songz has melody, but when you call as a "panty wetter" who will "beat it up," tact and grace have left the place. However, it is entertaining played loudly in a car. That he exclaims at one point is only there for the "bitches and the drinks" and produces a conflicted baller jam called "Playin' Hard." I have become a fan while wondering: Is this how dudes talk to girls nowadays?"Dad! I love him, he can really beat it up!" FPH

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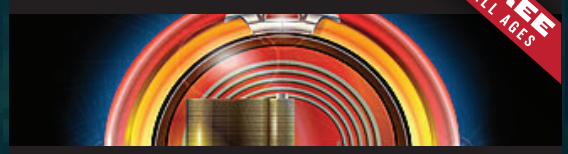


SEP 13
MISSION OF BURMA
WITH THE GARY + THE YOUNG



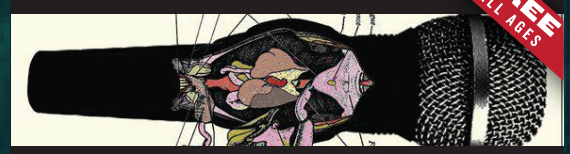
SEP 15
SWANS
WITH XIU XIU

EVERY TUESDAY — FREE ALL AGES

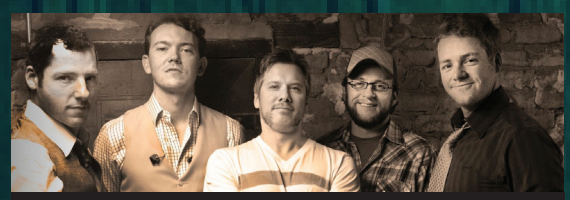


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EVERY WEDNESDAY — FREE ALL AGES



OPEN MIC NIGHT



SEP 08
THE INFAMOUS STRINGDUSTERS
DOWN: TYCHO W/ THE ALBUM LEAF



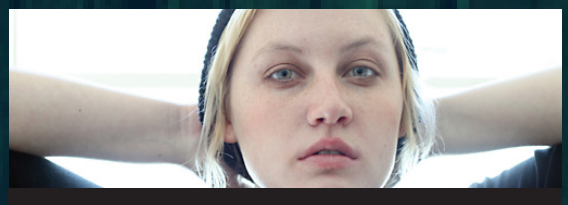
SEP 09
TWO GALLANTS
WITH PAPA



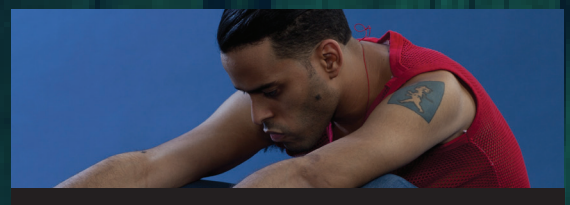
SEP 14
THE HEAVY
WITH THE SILENT COMEDY



SEP 14
DELTA RAE
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SEP 15
SARAH JAFFE
WITH ORMONDE



SEP 16
TWIN SHADOW
WITH NIKI AND THE DOVE



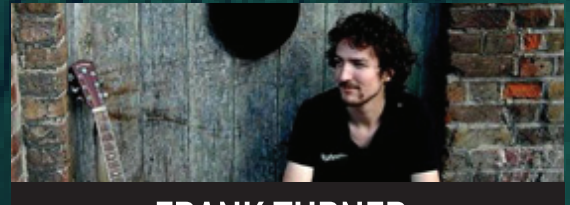
SEP 18
AMANDA PALMER
AND THE GRAND THEFT ORCHESTRA



SEP 21
THE WALKMEN
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SEP 23
FISHBONE
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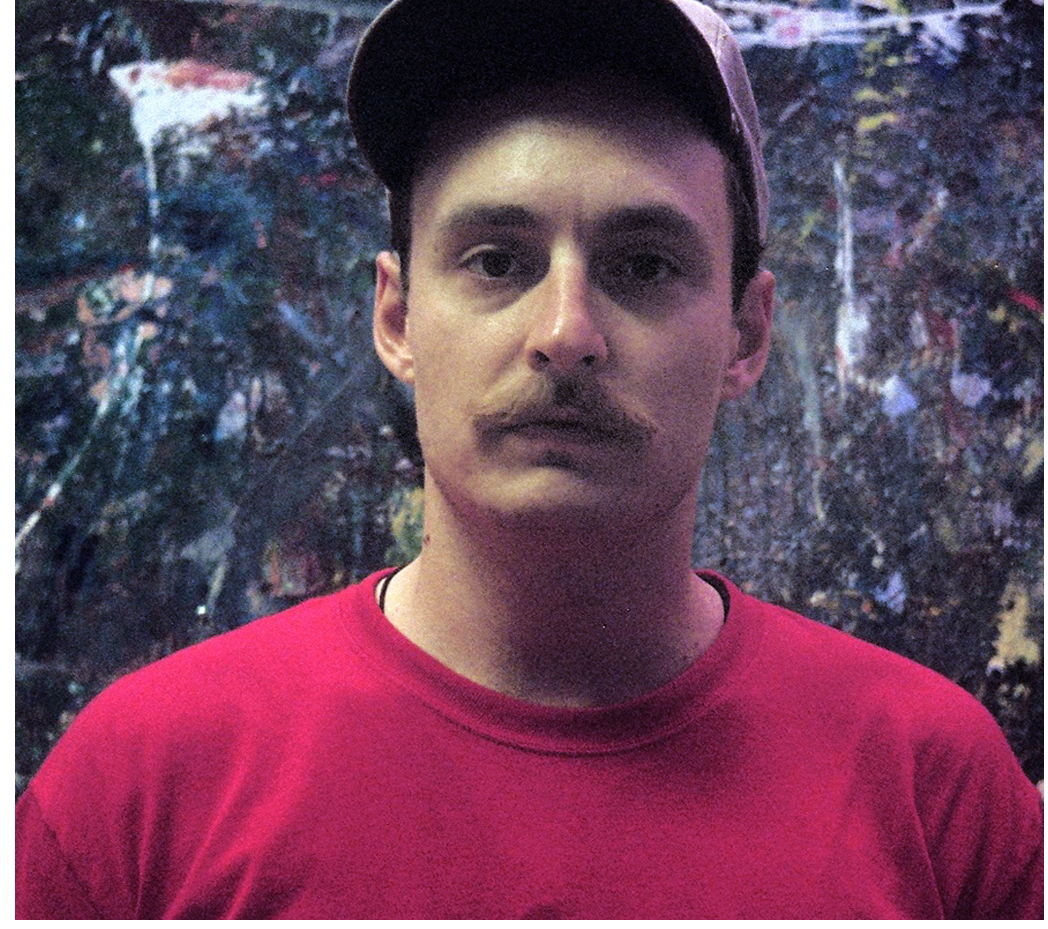


SEP 23
FRANK TURNER
AND THE SLEEPING SOULS

ALSO COMING **SAUL WILLIAMS** SEP. 26 | **THE SOFT PACK + HEAVY HAWAII** SEP. 26
SUPERSUCKERS SEP. 27 | **CHARLES BRADLEY & HIS EXTRAORDINAIRES** SEP. 27
DINOSAUR JR. OCT. 05 | **WASHED OUT** OCT. 07 | **DAN DEACON** OCT. 10

B.E. Godfrey

INTERVIEW BY RAMON LP4
PHOTO COURTESY OF B.E. GODFREY



LISTENLISTEN IS, without a doubt, one of Houston's best bands. Their dark, gothic albums paint a rich, layered world, inhabited by as much decay and sadness as beauty and hope. Their last album, dog, was a tour de force of atmosphere, songwriting and musicianship – a work that spoke to the unique manner in which an album, even in an age of singles, can speak to listeners. It's been over a year now since the album release, and the band has been somewhat quiet as they work on new material. Though recently, singer Ben Godfrey has been performing small shows under the name B. E. Godfrey, and even released two songs online. The tracks, "The Wild" and "What Used to Be," walk similar paths as listenlisten, but whereas listenlisten feels big and expansive; Godfrey's solo work feels smaller, more intimate, and it has a sweet fragility about it that distinguishes it – a short poem to listenlisten's grand epic. We spoke with Ben over a cup of coffee at Black Hole recently about his solo work and listenlisten.

SO, WHAT'S BEEN UP WITH LISTENLISTEN?
Just not doing live shows.

WHY? YOU GUYS ARE PHENOMENAL LIVE!
Shane [Patrick] is the other big force in listenlisten, and he just wasn't happy doing live shows. He just really enjoys writing and recording more, so he wants to focus on that.

THE LAST ALBUM, DOG, WAS AMAZING. IT'S THIS GORGEOUS AND HAUNTING RECORD THAT WAS SO MASTERFULLY EXECUTED, YET I NEVER GOT THE IMPRESSION THAT IT GOT THE RECEPTION IT DESERVED. WAS THAT RECEPTION JUST MY PERCEPTION OR…
That's sort of how we felt, but it was also that we had a lot of problems getting it pressed. We had a lot of different things lined up to happen for promotion, but there were all these delays and it just wasn't ready in time. The pressing plant kept saying, "Oh, it'll be ready next week." Then it was next week, and then it was the week after that, and so on. It took two months for something they said would be done in two weeks. That was frustrating, because we booked a tour and didn't have them with us so that made it pretty tough.

WHY THE SOLO STUFF?
I write a lot of songs, at least I feel it's a lot, and listenlisten aren't always interested in the different things I'm doing. A band dynamic is different—everyone has to contribute and it's their ideas too. I can't just say, "I like this so we're going to work on it." But if it's my own thing, I can do whatever I want. I have these songs I'm happy with, but I don't want to just throw them away– I want to do something with them. Also, I like playing live so it's a way for me to keep doing that.

WHO'S PLAYING WITH YOU ON THE SOLO MATERIAL?
I've been working with Mike Regino who plays violin, guitar and piano. He used to be the guitarist for Mechanical Boy. He moved to Austin, so it's a lot harder now, but he still plays when he can.

WHERE ARE YOU RECORDING?
Listenlisten records are all Shane's engineering—he has a home recording studio. For my solo stuff, Reggie O'Farrell, of Western Civilization, has a studio in Austin. They were fun and easy to work with, the guys I was playing with had moved out there, and it was nice to be secluded for a couple of days. I'm not sure where I'll record next.

WHAT DIFFERENTIATES YOUR SOLO WORK?
It comes back to making more decisions, because with a band it's really whatever anyone wants to do as long as everyone else agrees that it sounds good. This is more me just figuring it all out for myself.

BUT FROM A MUSICAL STANDPOINT, IS IT DIFFERENT OR IS IT JUST AN EXTENSION OF LISTENLISTEN?
I don't think it's an extension of it. Listenlisten is a group effort which can't exist without the various members' contributions. This is just me, on my own, writing and arranging songs without much outside input, besides what others contribute on a song—by—song basis.

This is more personal, so the way I wrote it is really important to me. I don't feel as comfortable about other people making decisions about it, which is what happens in a group dynamic. I love everything the guys in the band—specifically Shane—have done, but if it's a topic like relationships, family or something like that where I feel close to it, then I want it to happen in a certain way.

It's easier to define it the other way around– there are songs in listenlisten that I would never think of as solo material. A lot of the songs on Hymns From Rhodesia are songs I'd never do as personal music. It's more of a concept album and something you do as a group effort.

I'D DESCRIBE YOUR STAGE PRESENCE AS STOIC, DETACHED, AND ALMOST CREEPY. YOU STARE FORWARD AND LOOK POSSESSED…
Oh, I can tell you, it's not intentional. I've never been nervous playing live. I guess that's just what happens to my body when I'm focused on a song and where it's coming from. That's the physical response; I don't know why.

SO WHAT DO YOU SEE FOR THE SOLO STUFF AND LISTENLISTEN?
Right now my solo stuff is just a thing I have out there, but I'm working on trying to have a couple of people involved to try and improve the songs I have. If I can get those together as much as I want, then it will probably be an official release– 7" or EP– and listenlisten is grinding away at some new material. I could see my material and the band's all being released online or in just very small runs for both. **FPH**

B.E. Godfrey performs September 28th at St. Ballroom (Austin) with Emily Scott and September 29th @ La Carafe with Emily Scott, Adam Bricks and Warbler Pl.
On the web: http://begodfrey.com/ and http://www.listenlisten.org/

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PRESENTS



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DIAMOND RINGS
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INTERVIEW:

Neil deGrasse Tyson

Look Out, We've Got A Genius Over Here

BY WILL GUESS, ILLUSTRATION BY TYLER BARBER

SCIENCE IN AMERICA has taken a backseat to many other things in recent years, but there is one person who is trying to reinvigorate people's interest and illustrate how important it is to humanity's survival– Neil deGrasse Tyson. Dr. Tyson has a laundry list of accomplishments including: writing 10 published books, serving under President Bush on the Moon, Mars and Beyond Commission and working as the current director of the Hayden Planetarium in New York City. Free Press Houston had 30 minutes with a guy who is, at this moment, probably the most prolific and famous scientist in the world. He has been named People Magazine's "Sexiest Astrophysicist Alive" and one of Time Magazine's "100 Most Influential People." He also happens to be a master of Latin ballroom dancing.

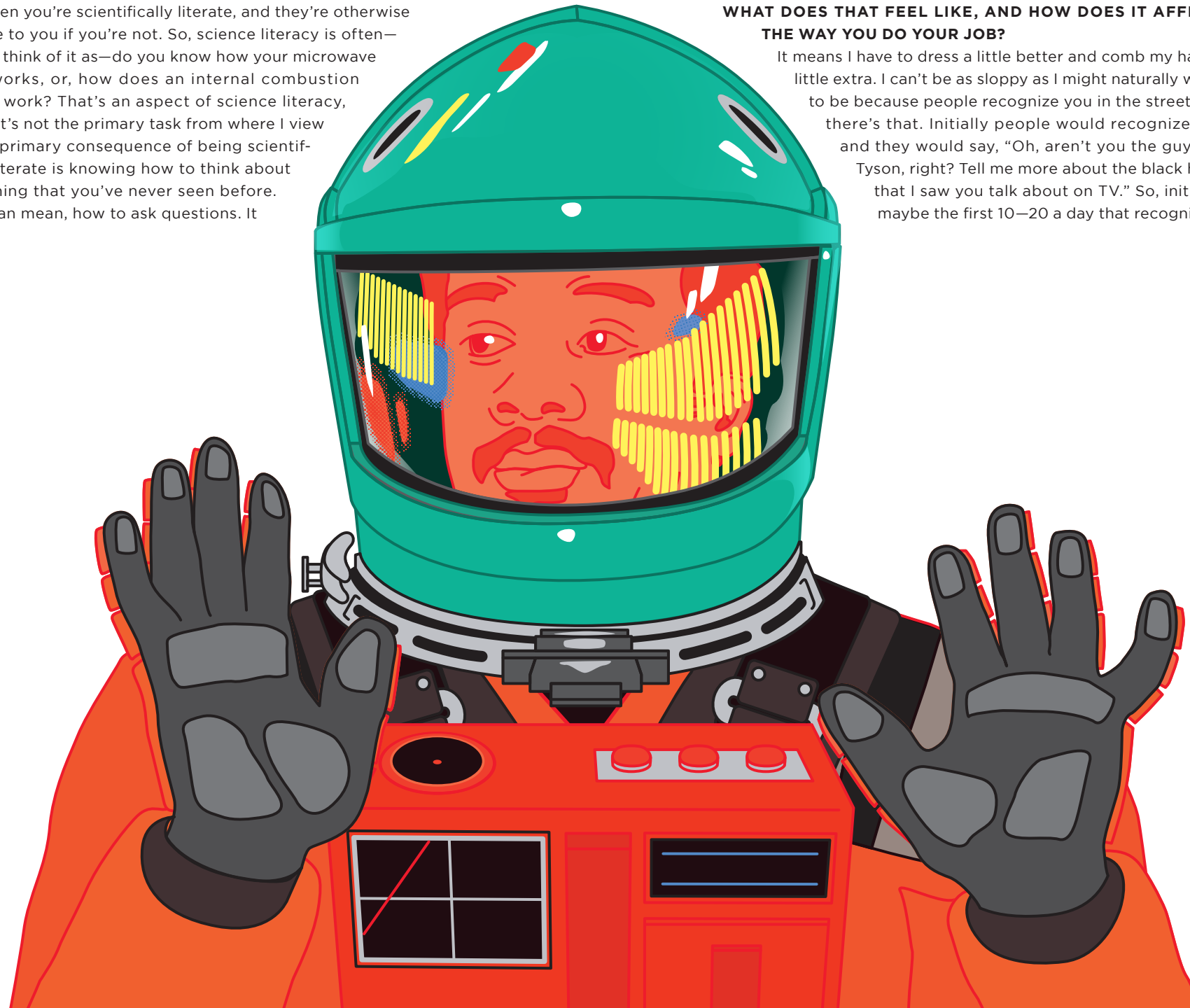
I mean, the guy has a comet named after him.

IN ONE OF YOUR STATEMENTS ONLINE YOU SAID, "WHEN YOU'RE SCIENTIFICALLY LITERATE, THE WORLD LOOKS VERY DIFFERENT TO YOU. IT'S A PARTICULAR WAY OF QUESTIONING WHAT YOU SEE AND HEAR." CAN YOU EXPAND ON THAT AND TELL ME HOW IT AFFECTS YOUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEOPLE?

First off, thanks for bringing that up. I think it's a very important concept and idea. Many people think of science as just a topic that they either learned or didn't in school. Like, oh did you learn about the War of 1812? I think for many people it's compartmentalized as just something that they either know or don't know. Without reflecting on the value to how you think for being scientifically literate because as you walk around through life, things will happen in front of you, someone will try to sell you a product that has a claim that's scientifically testable. Someone will make a statement about the gas mileage of your car or the octane level or the health benefits of one food or another or the fat content or the calorie content. Or they'll tell you about the chemistry of some corporate plant—the chemicals coming out of a corporate plant, or the molecules that are in the air. There are so many things around us that become transparent to you when you're scientifically literate, and they're otherwise opaque to you if you're not. So, science literacy is often—people think of it as—do you know how your microwave oven works, or, how does an internal combustion engine work? That's an aspect of science literacy, but that's not the primary task from where I view it. The primary consequence of being scientifically literate is knowing how to think about something that you've never seen before. So, it can mean, how to ask questions. It doesn't require that you have an answer to something, but it would empower you to know how to ask. Someone says, "I want to sell you these crystals, if you rub them together they'll heal you." Well, ok, but what are these crystals made of, where did you get them, how are they grown, what is the evidence that they've healed people before, what kind of ailments are they supposed to heal, how long does it take to heal, what do they cost, can you demonstrate it? By the time you ask these questions, the person runs away in tears. Those questions are the consequence of being scientifically literate. If you're not scientifically literate, someone says, "I have these crystals, they can heal your ailments", and the person says "Great, I'll buy them! How many do you have?" That's not being scientifically literate. And notice—in each case—you don't have to know about them in advance, but one case carries a level of skepticism and the other carries a level of gullibility. Science literacy is a kind of vaccine that inoculates you against charlatans who would otherwise exploit your ignorance of the natural world for their own gain.

YOU'RE ONE OF THE FEW SCIENTISTS TO ATTAIN A LEVEL OF CELEBRITY THAT RESEMBLES THE FAME OF A MOVIE OR ROCK STAR. WHAT DOES THAT FEEL LIKE, AND HOW DOES IT AFFECT THE WAY YOU DO YOUR JOB?

It means I have to dress a little better and comb my hair a little extra. I can't be as sloppy as I might naturally want to be because people recognize you in the street. So there's that. Initially people would recognize me and they would say, "Oh, aren't you the guy, Dr. Tyson, right? Tell me more about the black hole that I saw you talk about on TV." So, initially maybe the first 10—20 a day that recognized



me, they would just want me to continue their dining on the universe. I'm just their servant—they're hungry and they want more. So, I said ok—that works—my role as an educator in this capacity is working. But when it hit 20, 30, 50 a day—and it's probably 70 a day now—most of the rest of them are people who just want to take a picture. In the old days, it was an autograph, now it's a picture. Initially, I was concerned about that because I asked myself "Am I becoming the object of people's interests?" Then I'm failing as an educator. If they're no longer hungry for the universe and they're just hungry for a picture of me, I must be failing in some fundamental way. Then a friend of mine, Bill Nye, who I've become latter day friends with, highlighted for me that there's a point where people just simply might not otherwise have cared about the universe at all. And now that I'm there, I've enabled them to care about the universe, but they're so enchanted by the fact that I'm the one doing it, it's the picture with me that they seek, but that I should still celebrate the fact that—I don't play in a rock band, I'm not any of these things that normally trigger fan reactions—I'm a scientist. I was told that I should celebrate the fact that, be it science or the scientist, if it's getting the same fan reaction that a rock star does, then there's still hope for the universe.

DO YOU EVER GET FRUSTRATED WITH THE LACK OF INTEREST IN SCIENCE IN AMERICA?

No, as an educator and as a scientist, I have some obligation to remind people of what it is to be excited about the universe. So, my disappointment is not if you don't know science—my disappointment is if you think you know science, but you don't, or you somehow fear science because you think it's bad. There's some failure going on in the educational system that needs to be rectified. If you think science is your enemy, if you think science is the root of all evil, then you've been brainwashed by somebody at some point, and that's gotta stop—otherwise America will just slide back into the cave.

DO YOU THINK THAT'S A PROBLEM BECAUSE OF RELIGION?

I think it's dogma. Dogma is a problem, wherever it has revealed itself in the history of culture. Here's what I believe: dogma is an "evidence does not matter" belief. That's dogma. You can have political dogma, religious dogma, and even scientific dogma. Scientific dogma is rarer because we have mechanisms in place to weed out such thinking and the people weeded out are other scientists. There's a reward system if you weed out that kind of thinking. Whereas, I don't see that happening in other systems, be they political, religious or economic. So you can have other kinds of dogma. Wherever there is dogma, a system stagnates. So, there can be religious dogma—and in some sectors of our culture there is—but there are also other kinds of dogma. There's the Luddite dogma: all technology is bad. Meanwhile, the person is alive because of some vaccine that was developed through the efforts of technology. So that's a kind of ignorance where people are critical of science without ever actually understanding the ways that it has made their lives better.

IN 1991, TEXAS BEGAN CONSTRUCTION ON A SUPERCOLLIDER PARTICLE ACCELERATOR LIKE THE LARGE HADRON COLLIDER CURRENTLY OPERATING IN SWITZERLAND. DUE TO BUDGET PROBLEMS, THE PROJECT WAS CANCELLED IN 1993. WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE FAILED PROJECT?

It's an absence of vision by Congress. It was the beginning of the end of our leadership in expensive frontier science projects in America that's been seeded to Europe and Asia. I don't think the case was made. Somebody has got to make the case, and it can't be just "I like discovering new particles." The intersection of science with funders of science needs a better argument than that, and that's an argument that I know I make. The question is whether it's made effectively. In my recent book, Space Chronicles, I talk about things like that—things that fund major projects.

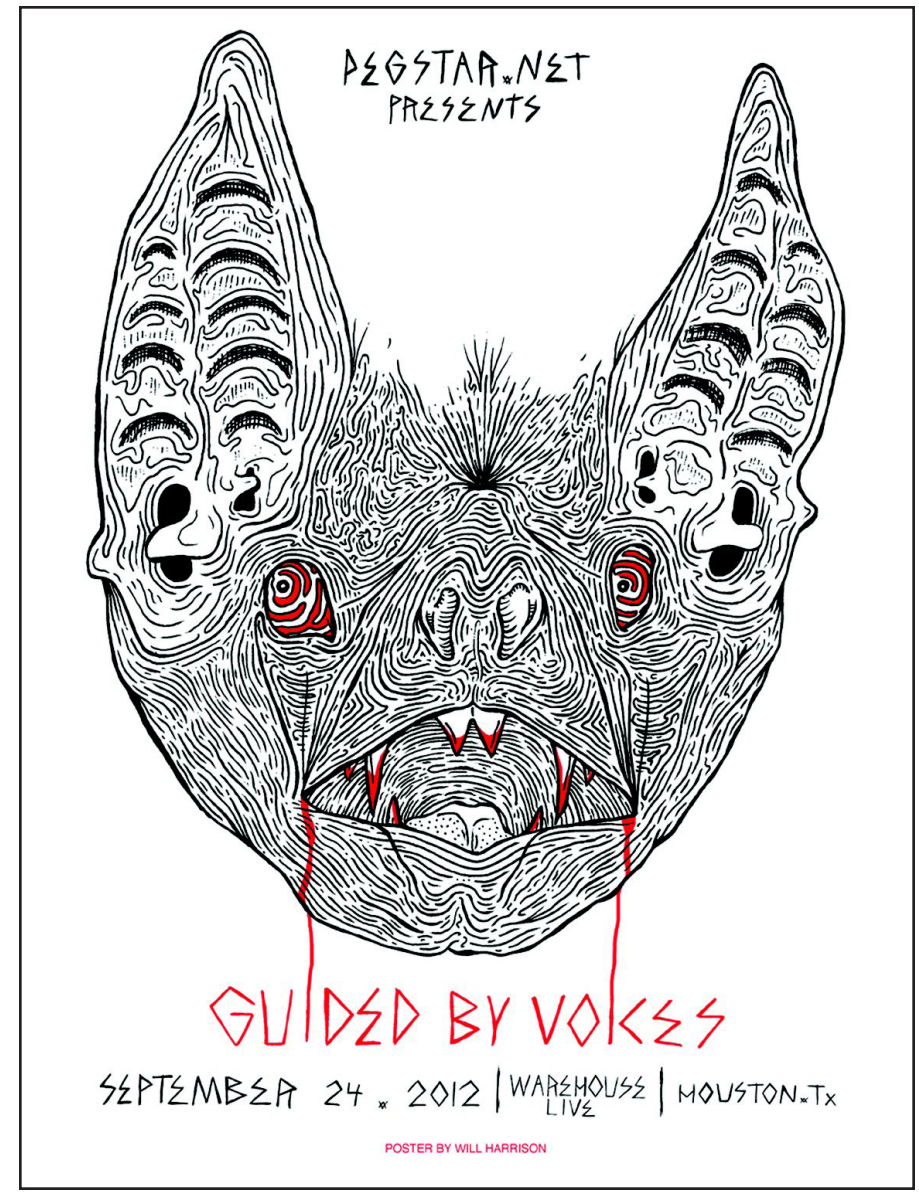
FOR YOU PERSONALLY, WHAT WOULD BE THE MOST EXCITING THING THAT THE MARS ROVER DISCOVERS?

I want an alien to crawl out and go joy riding on Curiosity. I want Curiosity to find life. The search for life—it would be fun if we found it—would transform biology.

WHAT'S THE BEST ADVICE YOU'VE EVER RECEIVED?

When I hear good advice, I amalgamate it into tapestry so it's not sitting out alone, away. Let me think. It's a quote from Horace Mann that I want to use as my epitaph. It's "Be ashamed to die until you have scored some victory for humanity." That's my credo, I would say, and I take it as advice—even though I never met the guy—but I live by that. **FPH**

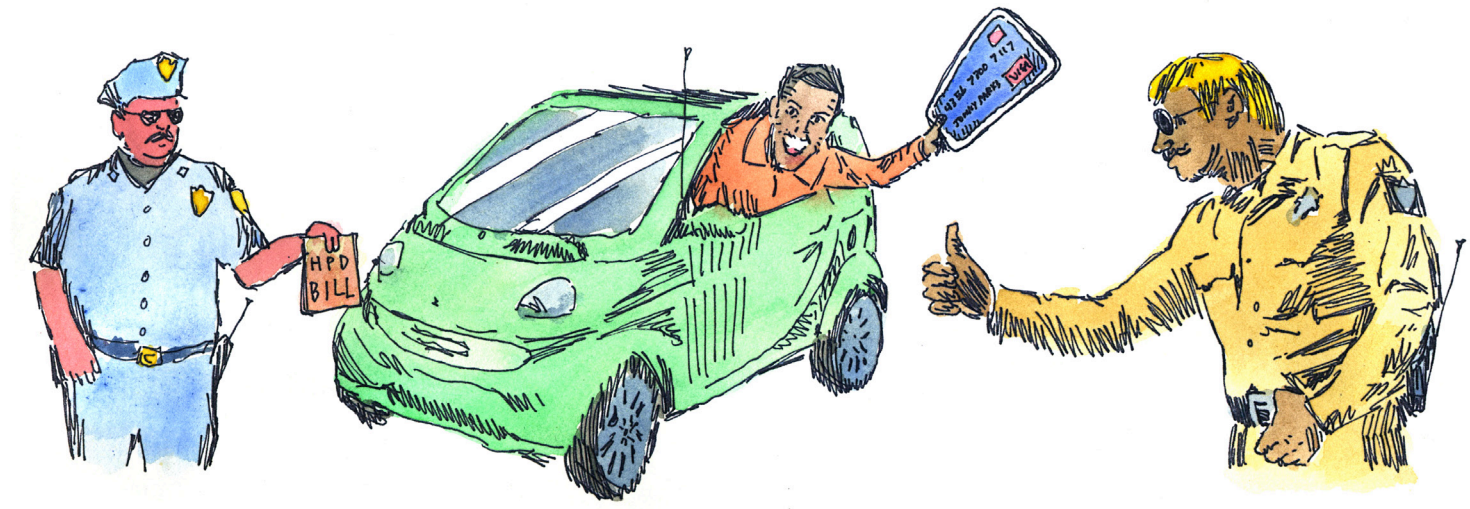
You can read the full interview with Dr. Tyson online at freepresshouston.com





Paid in Full

A few practical ways for the City of Houston to increase revenue, decrease the budget shortfall and make everyone's lives a whole lot easier by adapting to 15-year-old technology.



BY OMAR AFRA
ILLUSTRATION BY TIM DORSEY

DESPITE HOUSTON'S RELATIVE RESILIENCE to the recession and actual job growth, our municipal government is pretty much up shit's creek when it comes to fiscal responsibility. With an accumulated deficit of $2.5 billion and an annual budget deficit of $130 million, it is critical that the city both finds efficiencies and raises revenue.

Mayor Parker has launched a 'Choose Your Own Adventure'-type website, www.houstonbudgetbalancer.com, that allows users to give and take from different city expenditures and come up with their own models in order to balance the budget. It is a cutesy site yet only offers one field to increase revenue: raise the property tax rate. Obviously, this is not a popular option. Aren't there creative solutions that rely on technology and efficiency, which get more loot into the city budget? Me thinks so. It is high time that Houston follows the example of other cities and adapts to available technologies, which could increase revenue, decrease administrative costs and make Houstonians lives a little bit easier.

Buck the police

Let's face it: A primary function of the Houston Police Department is to raise money for city government. Despite the burdensome tasks of keeping our city safe form criminals, enforcing our laws and tazing members of Two Gallants, the lion's share of HPD's workload consists of writing tickets and citations. In 2011, more than $18 million were collected in moving violations alone. But a lot more revenue is missing because of the monumental pain in the ass it is to go to court and pay your fine. Imagine the thousands of people who do not pay their traffic tickets because they refuse to stand in line for two hours for a 30-second transaction. Now imagine this: You get pulled over and get a speeding violation. Instead of taking the day off of work, losing the money you would make at your job, standing in line after line, sitting through hours in a courtroom where reading is against the rules and having a generally shit day as a result of inefficiencies in city government, you have the option to pay the officer directly. Surely it takes less time for an officer to swipe your card than to issue the ticket and schedule a court date. Also, every year thousands of people who are pulled over go to jail for unpaid fines for as little as 80 bux. Rather than have people miss work, be away from their families and overload our city jails, why not give them the option to pay these fines right then and there? This could be as simple as a dongle on a smart phone or a mobile credit card processor. Let's own up to fact that much of the job of local law enforcement is to raise money on behalf of the city and actually give them the tools to do so.

First of the month

The largest source of revenue for the city by far is property tax. The city's share of property tax paid by home and landowners makes up a whopping 43.64 percent of our entire budget. Problem is that this tax is collected yearly. What do they say; a bird in the hand is worth its weight in birds of the same feather? Whatever it is, cash flow is critical when you have the huge and rapidly expanding public safety needs of our municipal government. Now, most folks pay their property taxes every month to their mortgage company who then puts them in escrow and makes money off of the interest. Why not let the city make that loot and invest it in our infrastructure? Why not create an online payment center where taxpayers can automate these payments directly to the city as opposed to some bank in Delaware? The city would get more cash flow and would make money on the interest. Though the amount made per account is nominal, the cumulative total of such a high volume of accounts would be well worth it. Added bonus: you would have less people defaulting when there are periodic, smaller payments due rather then this massive payment in January. Why shouldn't our city get the dividends on the money we pay to improve our city? Seems like a no-brainer. Sure, it will take some homework on the part of accounting, IT, etc., but will be totally fucking worth it.

Paid in full

Back to the absurdly long and frustrating lines at the city courthouse. Why can't this be as easy as an electronic check-in at the airport? Why do all payments need to be made in cash? Often times, cash is the biggest pain in the butt; not to mention the fact that you can only get a few hundred bucks out of an ATM after bank hours yet fines might well exceed $1,000. The city needs a legion of kiosks where you can pay via credit card, debit or even PayPal. Fuck it; put these kiosks in corner store parking lots like Red Box! If you increase the availability to make payments, then more people will pay.

Park it like it's hot

According to Christopher Newport of Houston's Administration & Regulatory Affairs Department, adding an online payment option has dramatically shortened the pay cycle for parking violations. That news is a good thing because there is no doubt that Houston needed the added convenience since parking violations are handed out in this city like nothing. Problem is we live in a city with no zoning yet high parking standards for businesses when determining occupancy. So a boiler plate problem has arisen throughout the city: Popular restaurant, bar or retail store which is incidentally placed in residential areas as a result of no zoning is bringing a large influx of customers to its area who in turn park on public streets once the respective business's parking lot is full. This happens on a regular basis, neighbors complain about traffic and trash and the utterly predictable tug of war ensues. Oftentimes the neighbors seek permit-only street parking if they can galvanize the support. More often than not, the conflict persists and detente is ever found. Neighbors say, "Control how your customers park, drive and handle their trash," whereas businesses say, "I can't control these people and you can't prove that they are my customers." This is a standard-issue problem throughout the city. How about this: install those new-fangled solar-powered parking meters on these problem streets for evening businesses, split the revenue between the city and the neighborhood and have the latter's share go towards cleaning and beautification. As far as I can see it, people don't mind paying to park when it is reasonable when they commute to go to eat dinner, see a show or have drinks. The city has tussled with this issue for some time and no creative solutions have been offered.

Bring the noise

We have beat this issue to death, but the city's new sound ordinance is not based on objective, verifiable criteria but rather an officer's arbitrary notion of what is too loud. Their argument is that bass, which is the root of many complaints, cannot be measured with a decibel meter. This is correct but you can measure it with a low frequency meter. But these meters are cost-prohibitive so says the city, so they have thrown the notion of scientific standard for one that is completely ambiguous. Why not download the free iPhone app? Heck, while you are at it, use said iPhone to process credit card payments for traffic violations the same as every damn touring band does with their merch. Having a set, verifiable threshold will allow bands and venues to follow a firm guideline and allow neighbors to know when either an actual violation has occurred or when to properly insulate their home to help mitigate the sound inside. Yes, there is some responsibility on their part, too. FPH

Capped at 1800 Tickets

Silent Disco

Will Sell Out

SEPT 28 – 30

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4TH ANNUAL

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Disc Golf

Yoga

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UTOPIAFEST

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Dr. Dog



Ben Kweller



Victor Wooten



Jimmy Herring
of Widespread Panic



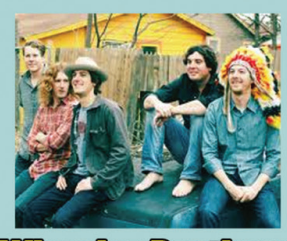
Charles Bradley
and His Extraordinaires



Bomba Estéreo



Toubab Krewe



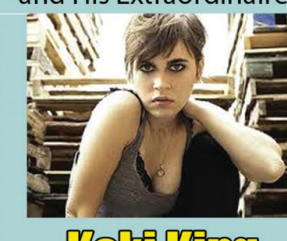
Wheeler Brothers



The Werks



White Denim



Kaki King



Ray Wylie Hubbard



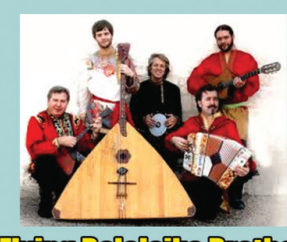
Dana Falconberry



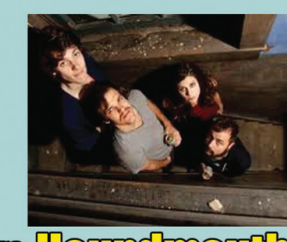
Jitterbug Vipers



Plastics Revolution



Flying Balalaika Brothers



Houndmouth



Sorne



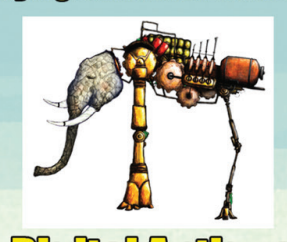
The Dalles



Hard Proof



Sid Fly



Digital Antique



A Live One



Sour Bridges



Editorial: End Apathy

BY HARBEER SANDHU
ILLUSTRATION BY BLAKE JONES

By framing the Oak Creek massacre as an isolated incident, we delude ourselves into thinking of it as a randomized event carried out by a troubled individual. However, if we place the gurdwara shooting within its broader context, we can clearly see that it fits a troubling pattern of hate and bigotry within this country.
- Simran Jeet Singh, as quoted in the Huffington Post on 8/17/12

We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children.
- "The 14 Words" credo favored by white supremacists

FPH
08.12
24



I DON'T MEAN TO BE ALARMIST or anything, but is this country falling apart at the seams? It seems that in the wake of the economic downturn and the election of President Barack Obama, some white people are freaking the fuck out! (Please note I said *some* white folks, not *all* white folks. I know—you're one of the cool ones. Relax—we're on the same side.)

Just this summer, we've had Koran burnings and mosque burnings, graffiti and guns fired at Muslim and Sikh houses of worship. Trayvon Martin was gunned down in front of his dad's house for walking while black and Shaima Alawadi, a mother of five, was beaten to death with a tire iron in her own home in what may (or may not) have been a hate crime.

In June, a Christian group walked through an Arab-American festival in Dearborn, MI carrying a pig's head on a pike with signs insulting the Prophet Mohammed. Last week in Ontario, CA, people hurled a bag of three pig feet at my friend's family mosque. (Totally begs the question "What happened to the fourth foot? Did the white supremacists get hungry?) In Rhode Island a mosque sign was smashed and in Oklahoma paintballs were fired at mosque doors. In Missouri, a mosque was set ablaze for the second time—and this time it burned down to the ground.

A 2009 report from the Department of Homeland Security warned of exactly this thing— the rise of right-wing militias and terror groups in the wake of Obama's election and the economic nosedive. See, with more people competing for fewer resources, things are bound to get tense. Republicans and other right-wing politicians didn't like the conclusions of that report, so its author, Darryl Johnson, was forced out of his job and the report was quashed.

Then came the Koran burnings and talk of the Ground Zero Mosque and opportunistic politicians fanning the flames of racial tension for short-term political gain. Sarah Palin had the audacity to insinuate that the "real America" is in small towns—with the implication that cities (i.e. pockets of diversity) are not the "real America." Jan Brewer and her cadre of racist Arizona legislators passed their infamous SB 1070 that makes it illegal to drive while brown and another law banning ethnic studies so that brown kids never question the white supremacist version of history that teaches them they're worthless wetbacks suited only for minimum-wage jobs or prison. New York congressman Peter King has held very public hearings on radical Islam where he has questioned the patriotism of Keith Ellison, our first Muslim congressman (from Minnesota). Michelle Bachmann, another congresswoman from Minnesota, has called for the investigation of Hillary Clinton's aid in the State Department, Huma Abedin, for alleged ties to Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood—despite the fact that Abedin has passed a ton of background checks to get her job in the State Department, that Clinton trusts her completely and that SHE'S MARRIED TO A JEWISH FORMER CONGRESSMAN, Anthony Weiner.

Why are these folks taken seriously? Why are they given a megaphone in the media? Why are they not laughed out of the halls of civilized, rational discourse??? I will grant you that Palin and King and Bachmann and their ilk are not directly calling for violence against minorities, but I cannot and will not take you seriously if you try to tell me that they are not fanning the flames of hatred. They are egging on the lunatics and extremists and they are indirectly responsible for the climate of hatred in our country.

We are undergoing a demographic shift in this country. In the coming decades, we will no longer be a majority "white" nation. As I said before, some white people are freaking out about this, but they can rest easy. This change in numbers and percentages does not necessarily mean anything—look to South Africa—a *tiny* white minority was able to dominate and oppress a much more sizable black majority for a *long* time there.

Relax, white people, you still have all the guns and money.

I have noticed a few people of color gloating about this fact, that "non-whites" will soon be the majority. That's an exceedingly simple analysis. They're presuming that all "non-whites" will be unified, but need I remind you of a 1991 song by Ice Cube called "Black Korea?" I know Indian people who hate Pakistanis more than they hate white people—that old colonial "divide and conquer" tactic has not run its full course, yet. Y'all can rest easy for a good while, still.

So chill, my white friends, your culture and your country and your babies are not under attack. We, the formerly colonized, are only coming to Europe and the US because y'all looted our countries for hundreds of years and it's just not fair. We need to feed our kids and you're hoarding it all. (And please stop calling us savages for having ethnic rivalries—your colonial powers exploited and entrenched those rivalries—they are at least partially of your making.)

Last week I reposted a tirade on Facebook that compared the US public and media response to the gurdwara shooting to the response to the Colorado movie theater shooting. I think we can all agree that much more was said, much more loudly, about Colorado than Wisconsin and I think it's pretty obvious that the reason for the relative silence surrounding Wisconsin is that Sikhs are considered less than full Americans.

I can dispute that on many levels, but I hesitate. I could tell you that I was born and raised in the US, that I said the Pledge of Allegiance every day in school, that I have a Cracker Jack tattooed on my chest but not a single Indian/Punjabi/Sikh symbol anywhere on my person. I could tell you that my rugged individualism and complete disregard for history makes me a stereotypical American beyond the shadow of any doubt, but what's the point? I AIN'T GOT NOTHIN TO PROVE TO YOU.

But I do want to mention this: Below that post, a "white" friend left a comment saying that she had wanted to make a statement about the gurdwara shooting but felt like it was not her place to comment. This is what my Israeli immigrant friend wrote in response, "I'm pretty sure it's never NOT been okay for white people to assert an opinion about white supremacists. In fact, it's kind of a moral imperative. You don't need a pass."

So please, white allies, I know you outnumber the lunatics. I know we're all in this together and I know that we can't depend on politicians and "leaders" to take the lead on this. Hell, our own "ethnic" president's campaign, in Detroit in 2008, barred Muslim women from appearing in a photograph with him because it'd play into white supremacist hands. Our own "ethnic" president refused to visit the Sikh temple Harmandir Sahib when he visited India because he did not want to be photographed consorting with people who look like Muslims. What a coward!

You've got to be more courageous than him. When your asshole cousin or idiotic classmate goes off on a tirade about "those people," YOU need to challenge them. You can't wait for someone else to do it—this is your responsibility.

America—our diversity is our strength. Even at the basic level of ecology, a more diverse ecosystem is more resilient in the face of pestilence and drought and other adversities. Monocultures are weak; there is no one, correct way to be an American.

I'll leave you with two quotes—one from screaming Howard Dean and another from Mark Twain.

[T]here are a lot of people who are my age and my color who can't get their arms around the idea that this country is going to look like California in 40 years in that there's not going to be a [white] majority. … That is a very hard pill to swallow if you are an American who is my age. That is a swirling issue that nobody wants to talk about."
-Howard Dean, former Democratic National Committee chairman and Vermont governor, September 16, 2010

The widow rung a bell for supper and you had to come to time. When you got to the table you couldn't go right to eating, but you had to wait for the widow to tuck down her head and grumble a little over the victuals, though there warn't really anything the matter with them—that is, nothing only everything was cooked by itself. In a barrel of odds and ends it is different; things get mixed up and the juice kind of swaps around and the things go better.
-Mark Twain, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, 1885

Postscript: "End Apathy" was the name of the Wisconsin killer's band. Let us reclaim these words. Let us challenge the systems of oppression and despair that led him over the edge. **FPH**

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FOOSBALL TOURNAMENT

SATURDAY
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LIVE DJ ON PATIO

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W/AMERICAN SPINDLE AND NECKPIECE

SEP. 20TH
BIKE NIGHT
ENTERTAINMENT BY KAT JAMES & TROUBLEMAKER

SEP. 28TH
THE VELCO PYGMIES

OCT. 4th
OZ KNOZZ

• SEPTEMBER EVENTS •

FRIDAYS
SEP 7TH- BAND TBA
SEP 14TH- VALLEJO (CD RELEASE)
AMERICAN SPINDLE, NECKPIECE
SEP 21ST- BAND TBA
SEP 28TH- VELCO PYGMIES
OCT 5TH- WATTZIT2YA

SATURDAYS
SEP 1ST- STACEY STEELE & JUKEBOX HEROES
SEP 8- BAND TBA
AUGUST 18TH- PAT BENASTAR & FAUX DOUBT
SEP 22ND- SOUND OF MADNESS FOO FAKERS & MTA
SEP 29TH- BAND TBA
OCT 6TH- BAND TBA

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THURSDAY
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"DJ'S"

FRIDAY
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LIVE DJ ON PATIO

SATURDAY
LIVE BANDS INSIDE
LIVE DJ ON PATIO

SEP. 14TH
SUBDIVIDED (RUSH TRIBUTE)
WITH
ROCKAROLLA

SEP. 15TH
LOVE N WAR
PERFORMING SONGS FROM THEIR NEW CD "UP THE ANNIE"

YOUR TEXANS FOOTBALL HEAD QUARTERS

• SEPTEMBER EVENTS •

FRIDAYS
SEP. 7TH - ALTER EGO BAND
SEP. 14TH - SUBDIVIDED W/ ROCKAROLLA
SEP. 21ST - 13 PASSES
SEP. 28TH - FLIPSIDE
OCT. 5TH - JDs

SATURDAYS
SEP. 1ST - BAND TBA
SEP. 8TH - NIGHTBIRD (STEVIE NICKS TRIBUTE)
SEPT. 15TH - LOVE N WAR
SEP. 22ND - XES WHISKEY (VAN HALEN TRIBUTE)
SEP. 29TH - BAND TBA

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INTERVIEW WITH

Erica Raggett, Creator of A 2nd Cup

BY AMANDA HART
PHOTOS BY ERICA RAGGETT

A NEW COFFEE SHOP recently opened in the Heights and it's serving up a lot more than just your daily dose of caffine. A 2nd Cup and its creator, Erica Raggett, are taking on human trafficking one cup of coffee at a time. They are located at 1035 E. 11th St. and their current hours of operation are Sundays from 8am-2pm and Tuesdays from 4pm-10pm. Free Press Houston sat down with Erica to talk about how A 2nd Cup came to be and what they hope to accomplish here in Houston.

WHO IS ERICA RAGGETT? TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOUR HISTORY.

I was born and raised in Bakersfield, CA. In high school I was involved in a lot of service clubs through school and spent my spring breaks in Mexico with my church, building houses. I've always really loved service. I've never been able to envision myself in an occupation that didn't involve serving people or helping the community in some way. I attended Cal Poly (California Polytechnic State University) in San Luis Obispo, CA. In my last quarter in school I came across a program called Teach For America. For the first time, I learned that a discrepancy existed in the quality of education between students from affluent families and those from low-income homes. In 2005, I moved to Houston with Teach For America and began teaching science to 6th graders at Fonville Middle School. After two years at Fonville, I moved to Philadelphia to work on staff as a Program Director at Teach For America. Missing the students and the more direct impact I felt I had in the classroom, I moved back to Houston and began working at YES College Prep as a middle school science teacher in 2008. At YES, I worked as the Science Content Specialist and became one of the Deans of Instruction last year. As of June, I am no longer working at YES, but committing myself fully to the mission of A 2nd Cup.





WHEN DID YOU FIRST BECOME AWARE OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING, SPECIFICALLY HERE IN HOUSTON?

In December 2010 I was introduced to human-trafficking through a video from Love146, an anti-trafficking group working out of Connecticut. I was completely taken aback. I had never heard of human trafficking and could not even begin to fathom that slavery still existed in the world, let alone our country and our city. I was shocked and outraged and angry that this could be happening, that human beings could do something so cruel to other human beings. I knew that I could not walk away from this knowledge. I was forever changed and moved from learning what I had learned and I knew that I had to do something. I began researching what human trafficking looked like in our city and who the major players were in the fight against it. I became involved with a few organizations, but primarily volunteered my time with an organization called Redeemed Ministries, where I was exposed to the realities of brothels throughout Houston and worked with survivors.

WHERE DID THE INSPIRATION TO OPEN A NONPROFIT COFFEE SHOP COME FROM?

I have always loved coffee shops. One of my favorite things to do is to explore and frequent local coffee shops. I love how casual and laid back they are and how they can promote a sense of community just by offering a delicious drink and a comfortable place to meet with friends, family and colleagues.

As I began learning more about human trafficking in Houston and the local groups fighting against it, I came up with the idea of A 2nd Cup. Why couldn't I connect my dream of a coffee shop with the fight against human trafficking? I realized that everyone in our city needed to be exposed to the reality of human trafficking. And knowing the kind, generous, passionate citizens of Houston, I knew they would want to help.

WHAT SORT OF COMMUNITY OUTREACH WILL A 2ND CUP OFFER TO HELP EDUCATE OUR COMMUNITY ABOUT THE SEX TRAFFICKING INDUSTRY HERE IN HOUSTON?

We have already begun to educate the community about human trafficking. We plan to have at least one educational event per month. September holds several awareness events at A 2nd Cup:

9/6 – CAMSA (Coalition to Abolish Modern-day Slavery in Asia) will hold an event to highlight the work they are doing in Vietnam and other Asian countries.

9/14 - Children at Risk will reveal some research they have done to identify over 350 brothels in Houston.

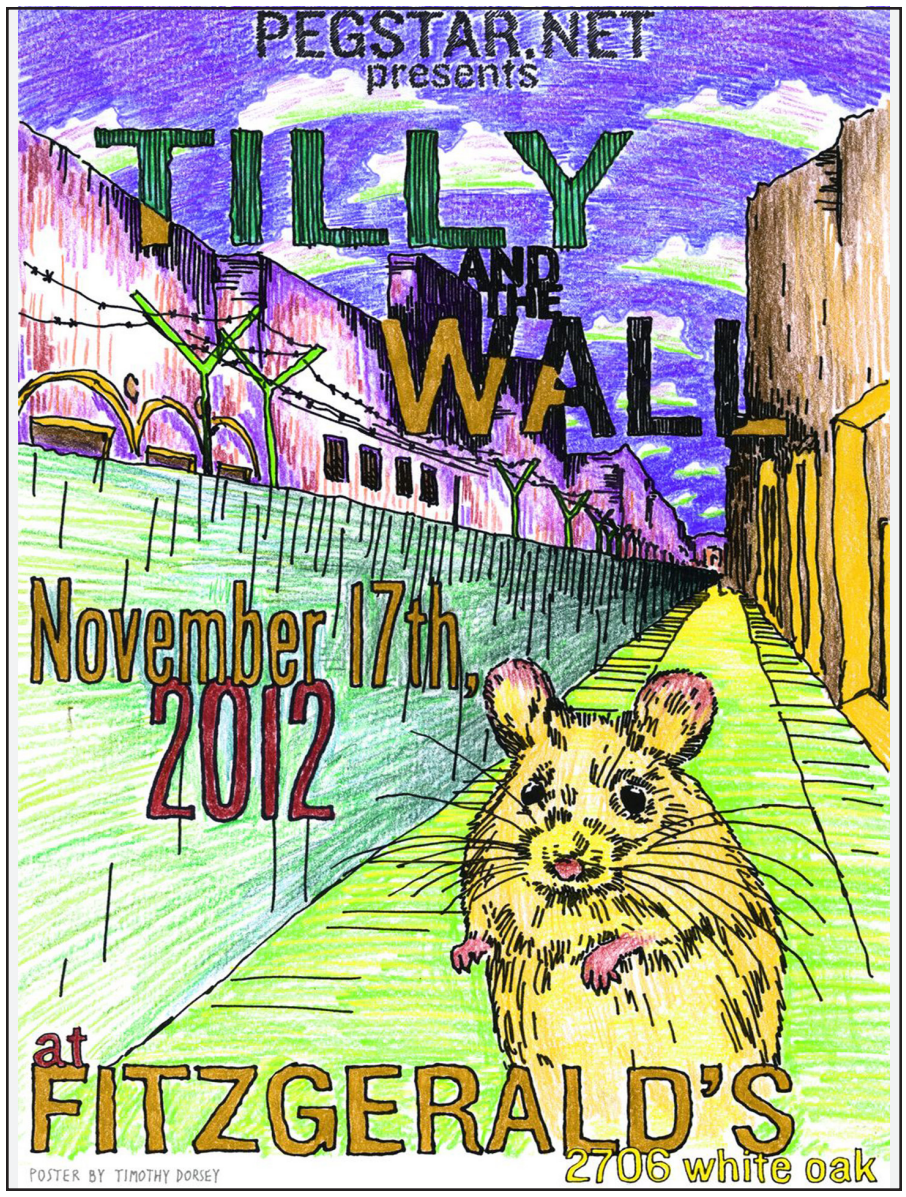
9/18 - "Black Gold" will be screened at A 2nd Cup as a joint event with Houston Rescue and Restore.

We are also educating the community about different anti-trafficking organizations in Houston that they can get involved with. We have information about several Houston-based organizations, including the organization's mission statement, the work done by the organization, how volunteers can be involved and contact information available to our customers.

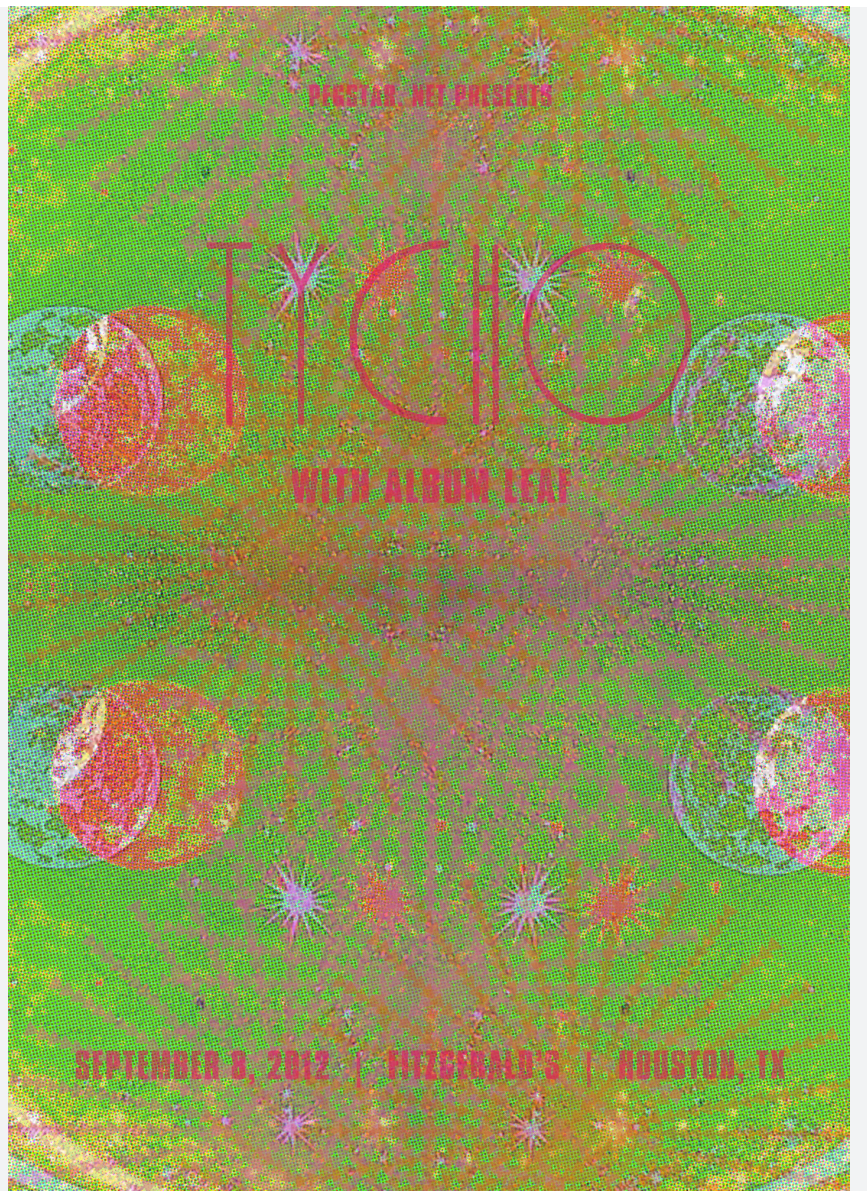
WHAT ELSE CAN OUR COMMUNITY DO TO HELP YOU WITH THIS ENDEAVOR, OTHER THAN COME IN FOR A CUP OF JOE?

We are in fundraising mode to open a permanent location with full business hours and offer more services. So, donations are definitely a huge help right now. Whether people are interested in giving monthly or in one lump sum, they can go to our website: www.a2ndcup.com and give through Paypal, or contact me directly via erica@a2ndcup.com. We also love our volunteers and depend so much on their compassion and generosity. To sign up as a volunteer, you can go to this link: http://eepurl.com/jrz0v or email me at erica@a2ndcup.com. FPH

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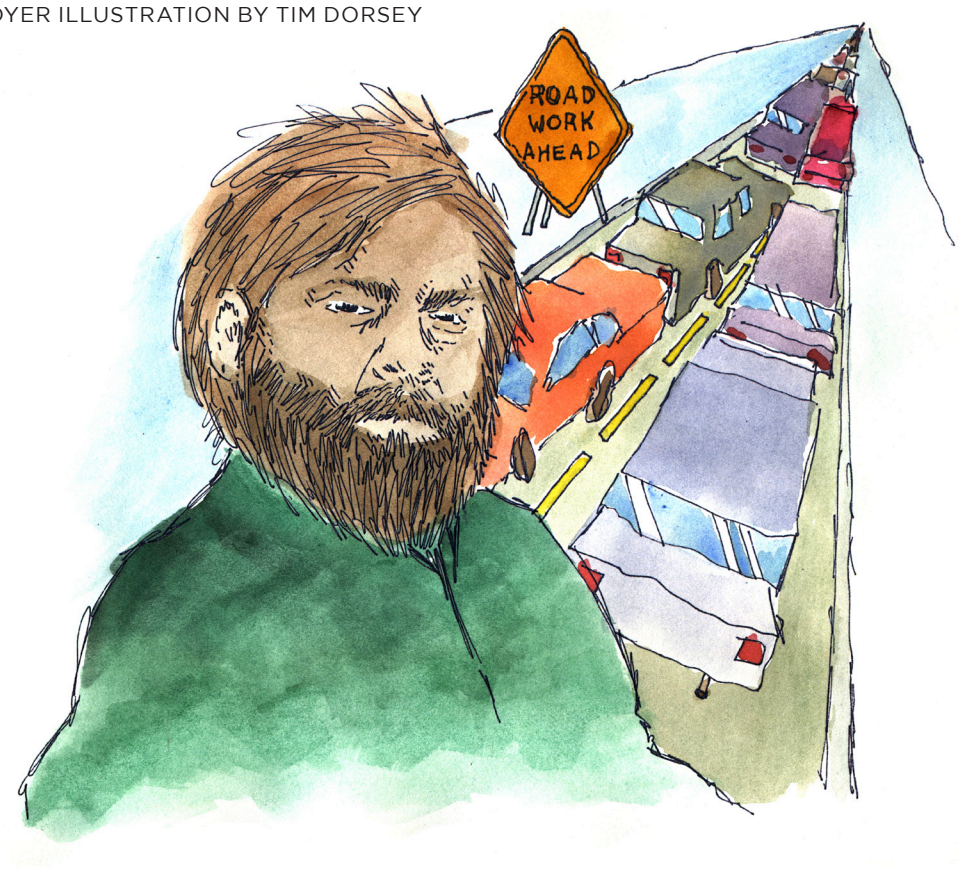

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INTERVIEW:

Houston Tomorrow's Jay Crossley on Transit Taxes

BY ERIN DYER ILLUSTRATION BY TIM DORSEY



PRO-TRANSIT ACTIVIST, environmentalist, sustainability leader and Houston Tomorrow employee, Jay Crossley is highly involved in efforts all over Houston, including the creation of safe streets for all users and all types of transportation, promoting the growth of a sustainable local food system and founding Houston's first nonprofit co-op. There has been a recent bustle in Houston concerning the distribution and use of our transit taxes, as some of our transit taxes are being diverted from transit efforts and being used by the city for other projects instead—a complex legislative issue in which Crossley is extremely involved. We had the opportunity to talk to Crossley about his involvement with Houston Tomorrow, as well as the current transit tax issue. He broke down the matter so that we can better understand what it's about, why it's important and how we can get involved in the policy vote in November.

So, you work for Houston Tomorrow- an institute for research, education and discussion focused on efforts for bettering our city. What projects have you worked on, or are currently working on?
I am very involved with the Houston Coalition for Complete Streets, working to make all streets safe in Houston for all users —pedestrians, bicyclists, the disabled, automobile drivers, freight operators, transit and local businesses along the street. We are hoping to see action this year from the City of Houston to lead the region in rethinking how we build our City, block by block. People can sign the petition and get involved at: http://houstoncompletestreets.org/

We have been hosting the Houston Food Policy Workgroup for several years. The mission is to nurture the growth of a sustainable local food system, accessible to all, through education, collaboration, communication and creation of a food policy council for the Houston region. Like us on Facebook to find out about meetings and get involved in building a tighter, healthier food shed for Houston: https://www.facebook.com/HoustonFoodPolicyWorkgroup

I spend a lot of time doing research, examining transportation funding and trying to figure out how we might be able to better spend money in the region to align transportation to the people's priorities. Sometimes I work on maps on our GIS (Geographic Information Systems) computer, but we're always looking for a smart intern ready to speak maps to power; I just don't have time and there is so much hardcore activism to do in GIS in Houston.

The mission of Houston Tomorrow is to improve the quality of life for all people of the Houston region. We do a lot of different things, but mostly try to empower citizens with better information and provide forums for civic discussion that actually lead to positive change. Get involved, come to events, sign up for our email newsletter and find out what real progress looks like in Houston at: http://www.houstontomorrow.org

One of the main issues you have recently been involved with is the current transit tax issue. The program that is now in effect was approved by voters back in 2003. What are the details of that program?
The Houston region has a 1% transit sales tax that is only used in a portion of the region that agreed to do this over 30 years ago—including most of Harris County, all of the City of Houston and 14 other cities. The State of Texas allows a 1% transit sales tax. Dallas uses its full 1 percent for transit. San Antonio only has a .5 percent transit sales tax and Austin has a system that is weird, like ours, with some of the money being diverted from transit. When the system was set up and there were actively anti-transit politicians in our region, the agreement was made to divert a fourth of our 1 percent transit sales tax to roads.

Over time, this program has cost the Houston region at least $2.7 billion in transit funding. You could already be riding the light rail between the Galleria, Astrodome, UH, UHD, St. Thomas, Rice, TSU, Warehouse Live, Notsuoh, all the downtown stadiums and various neighborhoods, including many with affordable housing options. You could already take a HOV bus from Park & Rides across the region to various job centers—not just downtown—and perhaps in between those centers and to places like the airports. Also, you'd have a lot more high quality local bus routes, like the 81/82 Westheimer, where you don't even need to look at the time chart—you just walk to the stop and a bus should be there within seven minutes.

This diversion of our transit taxes means you do not have this high quality transit service today. The continued diversion of it means that Houston cannot begin working on any new services—beyond the three light rail lines and the HOV Park & Rides currently under construction—until 2025.

That is ridiculously stupid.

If our transit money isn't currently going directly to transit, where else is the money going?
This diversion has been used for some transit related things, like repaving roads heavily used by buses. However, it also has been used to fund studies on The Great Boondoggle, the Grand "Porkway," and to repave tiny cul-de-sacs in well-to-do neighborhoods. At this point, all of the government entities in the area where we the people are paying our sales taxes for transit have gotten very used to this slush fund.

A representative from West University came to the public hearings that were held to decide what to do with these taxes and stated that they would be in a very difficult position if the General Mobility Program (GMP)—as the diversion is called—ended in 2014, as it will by law if the voters do not continue it. You see, many of these entities have actually gone heavily into debt repaving their roads, counting on this diversion to continue. West U isn't the only entity assuming we won't spend this funding on transit. The Renew Houston program was designed to include the entire allocation of the City of Houston's GMP, somewhere around $100 million a year.

Any updates on the current vote for a new policy?
The Metro Board of Directors –under a barrage of pro-transit emails, letters and organizations, as well as threats from super-rich sprawl developers and those opposed to transit funding—decided to send an up or down vote to the people in November.

Voting YES would mean the GMP would continue diverting 25 percent of your transit sales taxes—but it would fix the problem that the taxes have not been evenly distributed, with some wealthy small cities having received way more than 25 percent of the sales taxes collected in their jurisdiction.

Voting NO would mean that once passed, 100 percent of your transit sales taxes would be used for transit.

Apart from his involvement in Houston Tomorrow and other efforts to propel Houston into a positive direction, Crossley lives on a farm and plays in two different bands—he is a pretty cool dude. To read more in-depth information about Jay Crossley and his other activities and community involvements, visit the FPH website for the full interview. FPH

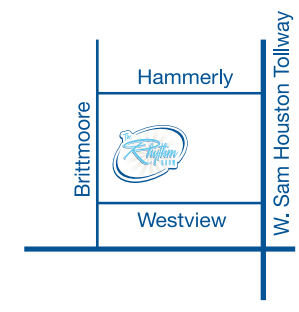




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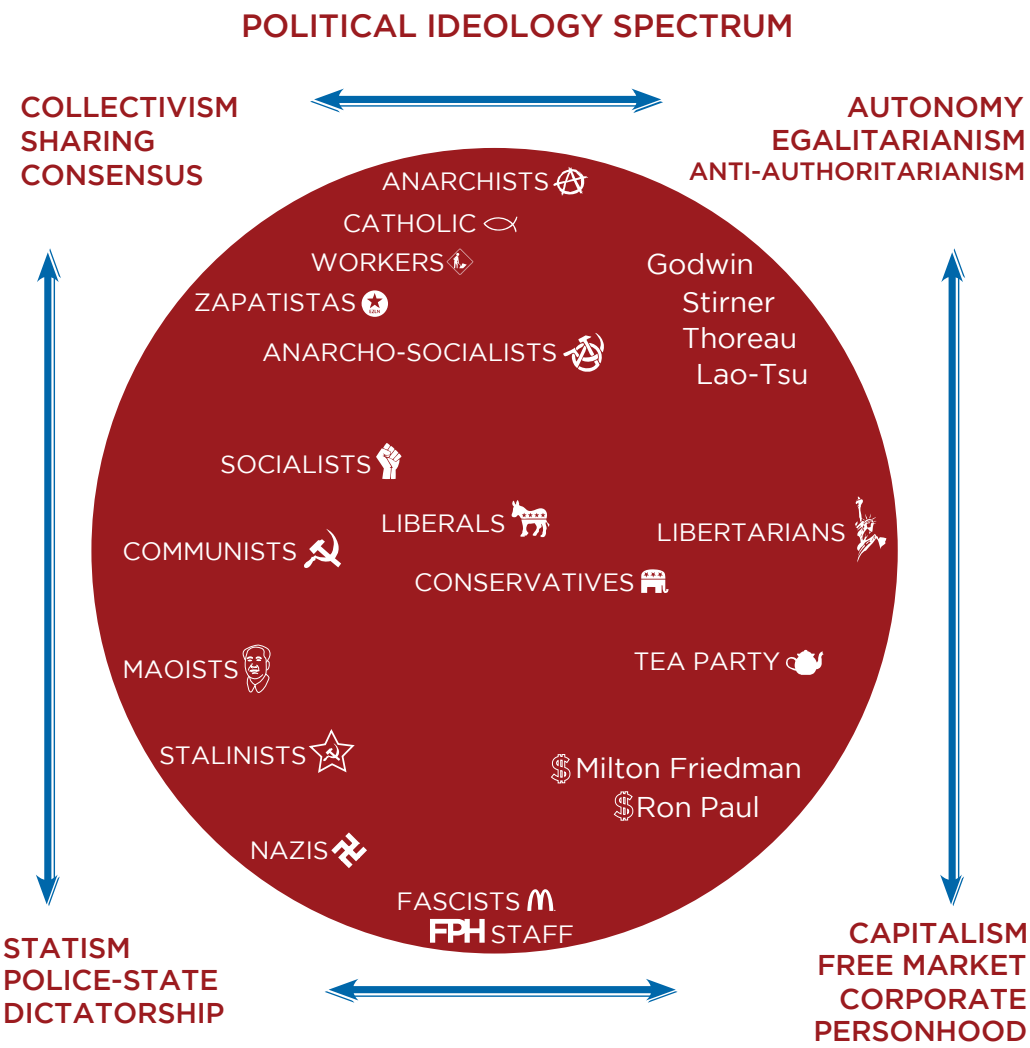


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Collaborations Across Ideological Lines

BY NICK COOPER
ILLUSTRATION BY BLAKE JONES

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SINCE OCCUPY SWEPT THROUGH HOUSTON, there have been new forms of collaboration between socialists, anarchists, liberals and libertarians. Members of these different ideological groups attended Occupy Houston's initial general assemblies and often found broad agreement when identifying problems– and even some first steps towards solutions. With the exception of a few people who seemed more interested in recruiting Occupiers for their own groups, almost everyone was there to discuss ways to reduce the influence of money in politics, bring home the troops, end the drug war and end the corporate corruption of democracy. People from different backgrounds attempted to put aside differences to coordinate actions to bring attention to their shared concerns.

Socialists and communists in the U.S. find themselves in a long-term holding pattern, because their preferred strategies don't have broad enough support. They need control– or at least significant influence on the government– in order to start making the changes they want. They write articles, hold forums, publish newspapers and support progressive candidates, but even their most popular issues– such as single payer health care– haven't moved people into the street to demand change. Occupy was an opportunity to attempt to build up their numbers and work in broader coalitions. Collaborations, however, come with challenges. For Evan Carroll, a socialist who is involved with Occupy, "anarchists and libertarians principally see government as something to be avoided, while socialists see government (albeit a different kind of government) as a tool."

Many of Occupy's organizing methods such as "general assemblies," "occupation," and "consensus" came straight from anarchist traditions around the world but in Houston, many of the younger anarchists avoided Occupy. To them perhaps, Occupy seemed reformist, attempting to "change," instead of "smash" the state. Many at Occupy belonged to a continuum between anarchism and socialism, simultaneously calling for socializing some services, while denouncing many of the more "statist" elements of socialism. For Paige McNamara, a Food Not Bombs volunteer, "as long as we're going to have a government, we may as well have it do nice things and not shitty things."

There was a libertarian presence at Occupy Houston and socialists and anarchists attempted to find common ground with them. Harbeer Sandhu, an anarcho-scocialist who participated in Occupy found agreement with libertarians in promoting the right to be free of oppression, but in addition, he also believes in a right to education, roads and health-care. "In real strict libertarianism," he says, "all that stuff is gonna be private."

There is agreement among libertarians, anarchists and socialists that our current system is based on theft, though they disagree on the nature of the theft. For Marxists, workers are robbed by a system in which their productive capacity is transformed into a commodity. For libertarians, taxes are theft. Anarchists see all property as theft and modern capitalism as a kleptocracy in which indigenous farmers in the global south are kicked off the land so that corporations can extract things like coal, uranium, lithium, oil and cheap exploited labor for consumers in the global north.

At Occupy, these types of comparisons arose in discussions and debates. Some individuals were influenced to change their ideologies or at least to see their ideology as part of a spectrum. Several who came in as socialists moved towards anarchism and others moved in the opposite direction. Some became less concerned about labels. Original Houston Occupier Lief Heumann eventually decided he wanted to leave behind labels like anarchist and socialist because "the only thing that really matters is the environment. You won't have good jobs, you won't have a good economy, you won't have anything if there's no environment."

Others found discoveries about how different groups could work together. For Benjamin Franklin, there has been a unifying thread in identifying and calling out the 1 percent. "There is a common understanding," he said, "that you have different elites that are using power to change rules for themselves to evade responsibility. We all agree that these folks want special laws for themselves and the new feeding ordinance is a perfect example of that."

Indeed, the struggle against the Mayor's penalizing those sharing food with the needy without a permit has found an even broader coalition than Occupy—with Republicans, Democrats, the Green Party, the Tea Party, evangelicals, Baptists, Lutherans, Muslims, Jews, Hare Krishnas, priests, nuns, rabbis and ministers all joining together to speak out.

The corporations and government have developed an almost impenetrable partnership. Challenging that seems to mean increasingly strange bedfellows for the rest of us. FPH

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We Shall Not Be Moved

Part 1 of the FPH Investigative Series into Freedmen's Town

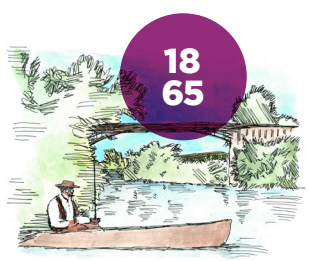
WORDS AND PHOTOS BY AMANDA HART
ILLUSTRATIONS BY TIM DORSEY

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08.12
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JUST WEST OF DOWNTOWN HOUSTON, hidden by towering townhomes and midtown eateries, lies what once was affectionately referred to as "The Mother Ward." The section of town that we now call "Midtown" is actually a mecca of cultural history that the city, for decades, has been trying to erase. The community that developed and nurtured it into being rightfully named it Freedmen's Town. To understand the struggle that is going on in Freedmen's Town today, one must first know and appreciate the rich history that developed within this section of Houston over the last century.

In the late 1800s, after the Civil War had come to an end and the Emancipation Proclamation had been signed, recently freed slaves found their way to Houston. They began to settle a stretch of land west of the city's center, on the banks of Buffalo Bayou. As the city's first independent black neighborhood formed, "Freedmen's Town" became its given name. One of its founders, a Baptist minister named Jack Yates, understood and stressed to the developing community the importance of education and owning land. Yates and his congregation began the process of purchasing land for homes and schools and in 1885 founded a school for the children of Freedmen's Town called Houston Academy. In 1869 the Harris County Republican Club was formed in the pews of Antioch Baptist Church and subsequently began a community campaign for a permanent park for Houston's black community. By 1872, the congregation purchased land at the corner of Dowling and Elgin and created Emancipation Park, where Houston still holds its annual Juneteenth celebration.













Freedmen's Town Timeline

1863 – Emancipation Proclamation.

1865 – Newly freed slaves migrate to Houston from the plantations along the Brazos River and settle a 37 acre area of land west of the city center.

1868 – Reverend Jack Yates becomes the first pastor of Antioch Baptist Church.

1869 – Harris County Republican Club, first black Houston political organization, was formed and began a campaign for a black permanent park.

1872 – Gregory Institute opens, was the first school for freed slaves in Houston, possibly the first school for African Americans in the state.

1872 – Harris County Republican Club purchased land and created Emancipation Park.

1885 – Reverend Jack Yates opens Houston Academy.

1893 – Booker T. Washington high-school is opened (originally from 1893- 1928 the school was named "Colored High" until the name was changed in 1928 to Booker T. Washington High School).

1908 – Jazz and blues clubs in Freedmen's Town take off... "The Reservation" is the section of town were all the clubs are located and in 1944 the clubs were demolished to build an all-white housing project, San Felipe courts (later became Allen Parkway Village).



Freedmen's Town became a source of opportunity and advancement for the African American community. Besides the first black prominent religious and political organizations, the town also established educational institutions such as the Gregory Institute, Carnegie Library and Booker T. Washington High School. By 1915, over 400 African American-owned businesses were booming in Freedmen's Town. The area located along West Dallas was known for blues and jazz clubs, restaurants and other businesses. Legendary artists such as B.B. King, Arnett Cobb, Jelly Roll Morton and Sam "Lightnin'" Hopkins frequented the clubs in Freedmen's Town over the years. It was through this growth and expansion that Freedmen's Town earned the title "Little Harlem."

The demise of Freedmen's Town is a long sordid affair full of racist public policy, seemingly unavoidable gentrification and shady city business deals. In 1986, when Freedmen's Town was added to the National Register of Historic Places, 530 historical structures were still standing. A mere 26 years later, less than 60 of those structures have managed to survive the invasive gentrification occurring in 4th Ward. Over the years, the city and private contractors have leveled nearly all of Freedmen's Town. Handmade brick-laid streets that once stretched from Smith Street all the way to Taft can still be seen in small doses when wandering through Freedmen's Town. Many of the bricks were removed over the years and relocated to make "antique" style sidewalks and driveways in Montrose. The sidewalk in front of the apartment complex, Richmont Square, is paved with bricks that were handmade and originally laid by the community in Freedmen's Town, after the city refused to pave the roads. And just like these bricks that were ripped from the ground and relocated elsewhere in the city, city officials are attempting to do the same with the remaining few structures and community members still residing in Freedmen's Town.

At one point Freedmen's Town extended deep into downtown, but in the late '50s the city used eminent domain to displace roughly 40,000 community members from their homes and businesses. Once the city began construction of I-45, a large portion of Freedmen's Town was erased from Houston. The ground beneath where the Allen Center and the hotel district stand today is saturated with the remains of what once was a cultural hub for the black community. A thriving culture was pushed out to make way for skyscrapers and hotel chains. The only remaining structure east of I-45 that made it through the demolition is the church where Jack Yates first began his cultivation over a century ago. Antioch Baptist Church is the lone survivor still standing in downtown Houston and is one of the only buildings in the area that has any sort of character or sincere beauty attached to it. The building remains a testament to what Houston could have been if we valued where we came from instead of where we are headed.

This history is not just important to Houston or the African American community. It's more than that. It is American history. Freedmen's Town is the last remaining intact freed slave town in the entire country. When you consider how much of it has already been demolished, the importance of preserving what is left becomes undeniable.

Over the last several years, a battle between the city and the residents of Freedmen's Town has been waged over the last full block of row houses located on Victor Street. The homes reflect the time in which they were built. The long narrow structure of the homes is due to the tax system that was in place a century ago in which owners were responsible for paying for the amount of sidewalk and street that the homes took up. Lenwood Johnson, a local Houston treasure and Freedmen's Town activist, has been advocating the preservation of the shotgun-style homes since the tenants were evicted by the city in 2007. Johnson says that all attempts to regain occupancy permits by the owner, Thuong Thi Tran, have been denied by the city. Even though many of the homes have been completely remodeled and restored on the inside, the city appears to be banking on forcing Tran to sell to contractors by denying the proper city permits. Tran stands strong in



1909 – Colored Carnegie Library is opened.

1910 – Union Hospital, first black hospital is opened.

1914 – Row Houses on Victor St were constructed.

1915 – Over 400 black-owned businesses were operating in Freedmen's Town.

1937 – Eminent domain laws go into effect.

1938 – According to local businessman and amateur historian Jesse A. Ziegler in his book, Wave of the Gulf, Ziegler refers to the formulation of Freedmen's Town as the beginning of "Houston's Negro Problem."

1939 – Eight black families, who still owned Freedmen's Town, take their case to the Supreme Court and lose their land.

1939-1942 – HUD officials build a public housing project, San Felipe Courts (later became the Allen Parkway Village), for all-white WWII vets in Freedmen's Town.

1948 – Construction of I-45, the Gulf Freeway, began, effectively causing 40,000 Freedmen's town community members to lose their home or business due to their land being taken through eminent domain by the city.

1968 – First African American allowed to move into the all-white San Felipe courts (by then renamed Allen Parkway Village) housing project. From 1944 – 1968 only whites were allowed to live in the housing development.

1985 – Freedmen's Town included in National Historic Register (this includes Allen Parkway Village).

1991 – Queen of England visited Antioch Baptist Church.

May 1991–August 1991 – Nine different buildings/homes mysteriously caught

her commitment to preserve the last remaining block of row houses. She is so committed that she and her family spend approximately $15,000 dollars a year in taxes on the homes, even though not a single drop of revenue has eased that burden since the last resident was forcefully removed from the home. The final tenant was 83-year-old Pearl Franklin, who, according to Johnson, was taken to an insane asylum by the city after she refused to move. The more one digs into the history of how Freedmen's Town was slowly dismantled, the more one finds themselves in a land littered with blatant human rights violations.

But the city and private developers were not prepared for the fighting spirit within Freedmen's Town. This might explain how a part of the community has managed to remain intact while other cities such as San Francisco, Atlanta and even New Orleans, stood and watched as developers and city officials completely erased their oldest black neighborhoods. Community leaders were unique and creative in the ways they went about taking on Houston's rich and powerful. According to Johnson, one such pivotal victory was their ability to save Allen Parkway Village, a public housing project that originally consisted of 1,000 units and sat on 37 acres of land. In the end, the entire property was saved and a little over half of the units remained intact. The commitment and perseverance of the community is what has kept Freedmen's Town alive and well, an unprecedented success in saving such land so close to a city's center.

Tran, Johnson and others like them would like to see the homes on Victor Street rented to, or purchased by, a community-based nonprofit committed to preserving the homes. Some have attempted to secure funds to turn the homes into community housing for returning Iraq war veterans. Others would like to see the homes modeled after Project Row House, an artist collective in 3rd Ward that saved two blocks of row houses from demolition and turned them into affordable housing for local artists. Johnson and others feel that the actual use of the homes, while important, is not the pressing issue at hand. Before any decisions can be made about what use should be made of the homes that would best benefit the community, the homes have to be pulled from the city's death grip.

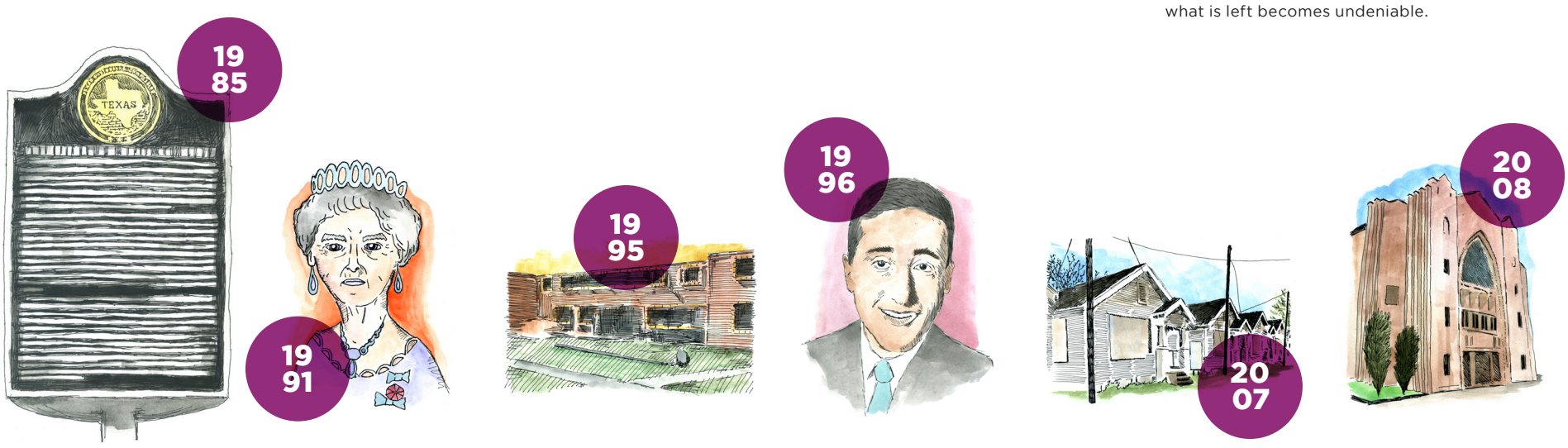
The property that the historic homes reside on is valued at approximately half-a-million dollars, while the homes themselves, according to Harris County Appraisal District, are worth less than $750 all together. But as Johnson has pointed out, "This is American history and a testament to the contribution of men and women who went from living in bondage slavery, to creating a fully functioning civilized and free society, without any help from the city or state. People need to be able to visit these historic homes and structures to fully understand the contributions of this community." Johnson has been advocating for the preservation of Freedmen's Town since the early '80s and even though he has watched with disbelief as brick by brick the community has been dismantled and the history and culture seemingly forgotten, he and many others refuse to give up. Even after fighting for more than 30 years, Johnson does not seem shaken in his determination to save his community. Just like the century-old homes on Victor Street represent the history and longevity of Freedmen's Town, Lenwood Johnson is a testament to the character and unshakable soul that resides there as well. **FPH**

Anyone interested in becoming involved in the fight to save Houston's history can contact Lenwood Johnson at 281-709-3001, or email him at apv123@gmail.com





Freedmen's Town is the last remaining intact freed slave town in the entire country. When you consider how much of it has already been demolished, the importance of preserving what is left becomes undeniable.



fire in what logically was a string of arsons. The city never investigated the fires because the homes or structures were considered a "nuisance" by the city.

1995 – HUD gives city officials authorization to demolish Allen Parkway Village.

1996 – Allen Parkway Village residents signed an agreement with then-HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros which provided $36 million from HUD's Office of Distressed and Troubled Housing Recovery for the renovation of APV.The final result was that 300 of the 1,000 units named to the National Register of Historic Places were saved and renovated. Another 200 units were built, for a total of 500 units on the site. One hundred more units were constructed in Freedmen's Town.

2007 – Last tenant, Pearl Johnson, was kicked out of the final row house on Victor St.

2007 – Many of the handmade and laid brick roads from the late 1800s were ripped from the ground and used to make "antique" style sidewalks and driveways in the Montrose.

2008 – Bethel Baptist Church, second church opened by Jack Yates, mysteriously caught on fire. Freedmen's Town residents are still fighting with city to rebuild what remains of the structure.

2009 – City bought the land and burned structure of Bethel Baptist Church and are now in the process of turning it into a FUCKING dog park. Not just any dog park, but one that you would need a key to gain access to. Basically they are trying to tear down the church and put in a fucking doggie retreat for the rich fuckers who have built townhomes in the area. But the dog park would not be available to the Freedmen's town community.

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