

# UHD DATELINE

Student Run Since  
Volume One

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## UHD selects next president

By Sheryl Sellers

Following an exhaustive search and pressing interviews of highly qualified candidates, the Presidential Search Committee selected UHD’s next president. The Committee, chaired by UH-Victoria President Robert K. Glenn, Ph.D., selected Loren J. Blanchard, Ph.D., as the seventh president of the university. Dr. Blanchard was confirmed by the UHS Board of Regents on Jan. 20.

Dr. Blanchard comes to UHD with extensive prior experience in leading academic achievement and student success.

As the lead of California State University’s Graduation Initiative 2025, graduation completion rates recognized all-time highs. The program was designed to ensure student success and produce graduates to lead the state’s future prosperity.

Prior to his current

position as Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs at CSU, Dr. Blanchard held various academic leadership positions which included 17 years in leadership at his alma mater, Xavier University. Among those positions, he served as Xavier’s provost and senior vice president of Academic Affairs from 2008-2015. During his time serving at Xavier, the university received

*Continued on Gator Life, Page 2*

international acclaim for student success.



*Loren J. Blanchard, Ph.D., was selected as UHD’s seventh president. He will take office on March 15.*

## Solar panels installed on campus

By Indira Zaldivar

On Jan. 14, the College of Sciences and Technology announced the finished installation of 75 solar panels outside of the Sciences and Technology Building.

The STB, which is the first and only gold-certified LEED building in the University of Houston System has just gotten greener. The solar array will power two labs on the first floor of the STB. However, Vassilios Tzouanas, Ph.D., professor of computer science and engineering technology, has said the array offers potential to provide electricity to other facilities.

The solar array also advances research opportunities for faculty and students. The data collected on energy capture, its conversion from light to electricity, and its usage is available to students and faculty in real time.

On Nov. 17, UHD

spotlighted Green Mountain Energy Sun Club for donating the \$250,000 sustainability grant that made the installation possible. The grant also covered the purchase of photosynthesis equipment which faculty and students use for research. Dean Akif Uzman, Ph.D., of the College of Sciences and Technology, described the legacy this grant fulfills during the celebration.

“This iconic piece of renewable energy along with several other engineering features of the STB prominently display and model sustainable energy and materials used, to our local community,” Uzman said.

“It demonstrates UHD’s commitment to pursue sustainability in urban spaces.”

UHD Center for Urban Agriculture and Sustainability Director Lisa Morano, Ph.D.,

who’s “always believed we needed solar panels on campus” said this project was a “large joint effort.” Kedrienne Day, associate director corporate and foundation relations, helped write and submit the proposal, Tzouanas assisted in needed calculations, and facilities and upper administration were “instrumental in making it happen.”

“There will be

virtually no future career that will not be required to engage in sustainability principles,” Morano said. “The panels will inspire UHD students and the Houston community that we are moving in a more sustainable direction – that modern buildings can be beautiful, functional and good for the environment. Also, such technology saves money in the long run.”



*Sciences and Technology Building displays 75 solar panels which power two labs on the first floor of the STB on Jan. 27, 2020. Photo credit: Indira Zaldivar.*



# THE DATELINE

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### Submission Policy

The Dateline staff consists of students from the University of Houston-Downtown who complete all tasks required to produce the newspaper, which serves all UHD campuses. The opinions and commentaries expressed within reflect the views of the contributing writers. No opinions expressed in The Dateline reflect the viewpoints of the University of Houston-Downtown, its administration, or students.

The Dateline reserves the right to edit or modify submissions for the sake of clarity, content, grammar, or space limitations. All submissions become property of The Dateline and may not be returned.

All paid writers must be currently enrolled students at the University of Houston-Downtown.

Press releases, story ideas, news tips and suggestions are always welcomed. We encourage all students to contribute.

Any student interested in joining The Dateline staff may request more detailed information sending an email to the editors at editordateline@downtown@gmail.com.

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## UHD president (continued)

Dr. Blanchard is a recognized speaker and has published a vast assortment of scholarly articles on teacher education and education strategies to provide success for students of color.

A first-generation college student, Dr. Blanchard received his bachelor's in speech pathology education and a minor in psychology from

Xavier University. His master's degree in Education Administration and Supervision was earned at McNeese State University, followed by his doctorate in educational psychology from the University of Georgia.

Dr. Blanchard served as associate vice chancellor for Academic and Multicultural Affairs and professor at Louisiana

State University Health Sciences Center. He held positions at the University of Louisiana System of Colleges and Universities, including provost and vice president of Academic Affairs for three years.

The Dateline welcomes Dr. Blanchard as he begins his position as UHD's seventh president on March 15.



## Texas Rising stirs civic participation

By Aansa Usmani

sustainability, and other pertinent progressive issues.

The first half of the meeting was dedicated to educating the club's newer members on state legislation, ranging from explanations of the bicameral chambers to the Texas Legislature's overall makeup.

On Jan. 28, UHD's civic participation club, Texas Rising, held its first meeting of 2021. Per UHD's guidelines, the meeting was entirely virtual, with members "Zooming" in across various parts of Houston.

Throughout the meeting, members discussed the importance of government - particularly the Texas State Chamber's importance. Members also discussed how citizens can participate in government while quarantined. Unlike other civic participation groups, Texas Rising focuses on state-based legislation and enacted laws, promoting local and Texan civic efficacy.

After introductory ice breakers, the team dove into its agenda, discussing previous and upcoming Texas legislation. Although Texas Rising is nonpartisan, its topical discussions lean towards the liberal side, advocating for Black Lives Matter, LGBTQ+ equality, climate

olent drug marijuana offenses (N/A).

For this legislative cycle, bills regarding LGBTQ+ issues, racial discrimination, and the pandemic are being introduced. Although official votes do not occur until March or April, these bills can significantly impact many Texans.

HB 73 hopes to eradicate the "panic defense," a bigoted legal tactic used when prosecuting cases regarding LGBTQ+ individuals, believing that a person's sexual orientation or gender identity influences the crimes they may have committed.

Another bill, HB 38, would add protections for people of color, specifically Black people, in the workplace. This bill aims to prohibit job-based discrimination on the texture or color of one's natural hair.

These bills gained widespread traction, and Texas Rising hopes to further educate students on the active legislation through meetings and social media posts.

Texas Rising meetings are hosted via Zoom every two weeks. Follow @texrisinguhd on social media for more updates.

An interesting fact about the Texas Legislature is how often it reconvenes every two years after an elective cycle. Despite the ongoing pandemic, the legislation continues with additional social distancing measures.

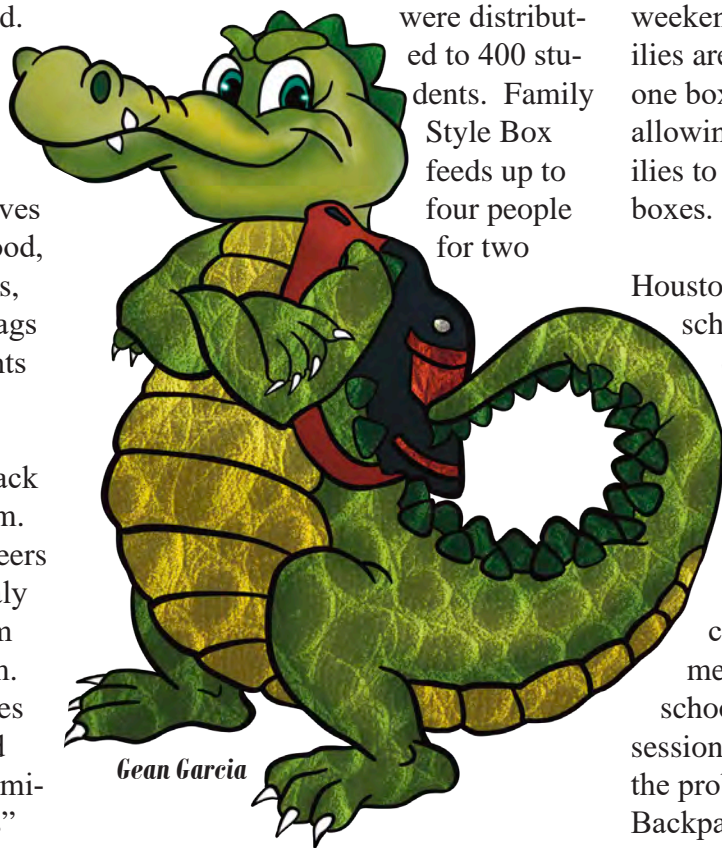
Not surprising, both chambers are majority GOP-led and have more conservative leanings aligned with Governor Gregg Abbott and Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick. Despite these challenges, progressive reform legislation has been passed by both chambers, however, its fate ends up sealed and vetoed at the Governor's desk.

In particular, two bills would have helped disenfranchised people of color, with one re-evaluating the bail system in Texas prisons (HB 2020) and the other being reduced sentences for nonvi-

# UHD Gators volunteer with Backpack Buddy By Natalie Beauchemin

On Wed. Jan. 27, the Gator community came prepared with masks and gloves to distribute food, school supplies, and hygiene bags to K-12 students enrolled in the Houston Food Bank's Backpack Buddy program.

Volunteers were in the Daly Street Lot from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. loading supplies into trucks and backseats. "Family Style Boxes"



Gean Garcia

were distributed to 400 students. Family Style Box feeds up to four people for two

weekends. Families are given one box per child, allowing 137 families to receive the boxes.

For some Houston children, school is their only source of breakfast and lunch. But where do these children find meals when school is not in session? That is the problem the Backpack Buddy

program aims to solve.

As businesses struggle and joblessness persists throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, struggling families are in greater need for financial assistance. In the era of COVID-19, programs like Backpack Buddy are more important than ever.

The program distributed 124,835 bags of food between March and June,

and they distributed 2.5 million meals in the 2020 fiscal year. Kathy Lipman, corporate engagement senior manager with Houston Food Bank highlighted the need of the program amid the pandemic.

"Due to COVID-19, some school districts do not allow Backpack Buddy to deliver to their district warehouse or the schools directly," Lipman said. "There are

still children who need to be served and depend on this program, so Child Hunger Partners help the Backpack Buddy program in important ways."

For \$2.99, the program can fill a bag with six meals for a child.

If you are interested in donating or volunteering for the Backpack Buddy Program, visit [houstonfoodbank.org](http://houstonfoodbank.org).

# Faculty Senate meeting By Sheryl Sellers

The first Faculty Senate meeting of the spring semester took place virtually on Jan. 19. Faculty Senate President Ron Beebe, Ph.D., Professor of Educational Research, introduced Daniel Villanueva, M.A., Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management who presented a detailed PowerPoint overview of spring enrollment.

Spring 2021 UHD admittance applications were up 1.9% from 2020. Most of the increase was accounted for by applications from former students.

Enrollment headcount at the start of the semester identified first time in college students enrollment up by 47.1%. The second largest demographic increase came from new transfer students, which was up 5.9% from 2020.

Among UHS universities, UHD came second in enrollment numbers following UH-Victoria with increases of 1.9% and 4.5% respectively. UH followed with a 1.8% increase and UH-Clear Lake enrollment numbers

diminished by 1.6% from year 2020 to 2021. UHD recognized the largest growth in semester credit hours for that time frame with a 1.96% increase from the previous year.

Next, Dr. Beebe requested follow up from the teams formed at the end of the fall semester.

Candace TenBrink, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Management, stated that she and Alexander Bielakowski, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of History, met with David Bradley, MBA, Vice President Administration and Finance and Isaac Elking, Ph.D., Visiting Assistant Professor, on the ongoing parking availability, or the lack thereof. TenBrink and Bielakowski questioned what parking availability would look like post COVID-19. The hope for a new garage was shattered, as it was determined to be too expensive without a high increase in parking rates. That solution, therefore, is not viable. Continued construction will be an issue with parking, as some space will be lost. The quest for

By Sheryl Sellers  
a solution continues.

Nell Sullivan, Ph.D., Professor of English, announced that she has drafted a letter to Interim President Antonio D. Tillis, Ph.D., regarding his response to the Student Government Association. Dr. Tillis replied negatively to the SGA's request for a "non-instructional day" on Nov. 11 of every other year so students could involve themselves in the voting process throughout the community. She will "tweak" the letter to include incoming President Loren J. Blanchard, Ph.D., with a copy to Provost Eric Carl Link, Ph.D.

Speaking for the "work from home" task force, Dr. Elking will communicate with the staff council and deliver a survey for completion to the faculty the following week. Task force reports will be on the agenda for the Feb. 2 meeting.

*Continued on Gator Life, Page 5*

F A C U L T Y

## Senate Updates

**Dr. Sullivan to approach Dr. Tillis regarding his denial of a no-class day during elections**

**Dr. Blanchard to begin as UHD President on March 15**

**SGA asks students: Do you want more reading days? Or more coordinated final exam schedules?**

**S/U option: Helping struggling students though a challenging time? Or a means to manipulate GPA?**

*Whitney Barrett*

# UHD engineering alumni revive school garden By Angela Ybarra

Despite the pandemic and weather challenges of spring 2020, an all-female team of structural engineer graduates of UHD, designed and led a grant-funded, community project entitled “Hard Hat & Heels” that enhanced the Neff Early Learning Center of Houston Independent School District.

The leaders include Julie Flores, past UHD Structural Engineering Organization president and vice president, Sahira Palomo, past UHD American Concrete Institute president and vice president, and Angela Ybarra, former UHD ACI treasurer, and past UHD SEO president and vice president. In addition to their former leadership positions, they each hold ACI certifications: Concrete Strength Testing Technician and Concrete Field-Testing Technician - Grade I. In Decem-

ber 2019, the UHD Department of Computer Science and Engineering Technology approved their community engagement proposal for the spring 2020 semester. The project, supported by faculty advisor, Arash Rahmatian, Ph.D., contributed small but impactful civic projects, such as reviving their butterfly garden.

The first project consisted of creating concrete stepping-stones for the Neff ELC Butterfly Garden. The stepping-stones were poured and smoothed by Flores and Ybarra. Then, they monitored the letter etching done by Neff ELC alumni and colleagues.

The butterfly garden also entailed a concrete pathway, including determining the path placement, excavating the area, and forming the pathway by pouring, leveling, smoothing the edges, placing grout and leveling the area. All tasks were completed

by Flores, Palomo, and Ybarra, as well as ACI student organization volunteers Rosa Gomez, Tomas Gonzalez, Marvin Mendez, Kevin Villa.

The final project involved the construction of a concrete access walkway essential to connect the ramp to the blacktop surface for wheelchair accessibility. The tasks to determine the path placement and excavate the area were initiated by peer leaders Flores, Palomo, and Ybarra with the assistance of ACI student volunteers Tomas Gonzalez, Mauricio Herrera, Marvin Mendez, Nathalie Sapon, and Brittany Zavala.

Completion of the project included building the formwork, pouring, leveling, smoothing, and finishing the concrete; this was accomplished by Flores and Ybarra. Inevitably, challenges were encountered because of the pandemic: inaccessible school site due to

school closures, unavailability of tools and equipment due to university closure, time restraints that limited workdays to Sundays only, and unpredictable flooding that resulted in excavated area and overly saturated soil. Further, there was a substantial decrease in volunteers because of a consistency of unworkable conditions.

Despite the often difficult circumstances, the overall experience provided self-growth with heightened team building, problem solving, maintaining grit through project completion and the satisfaction of one’s capabilities under unforeseen circumstances. The outcome concluded with sincere words of appreciation and work ethic acknowledgment from Neff ELC principal, Santrice Jones.

“This project turned out amazing and because of your time, materials, ded-

ication, and service, over 650 members of the community, students, faculty and staff, will have an outdoor learning space to utilize easier access to the playground and blacktop from classrooms.”

Jones continued, “Before your project, students had to trudge through muddy terrain on days after rainy weather to access the playground. Students with wheelchairs had an even more difficult time accessing these

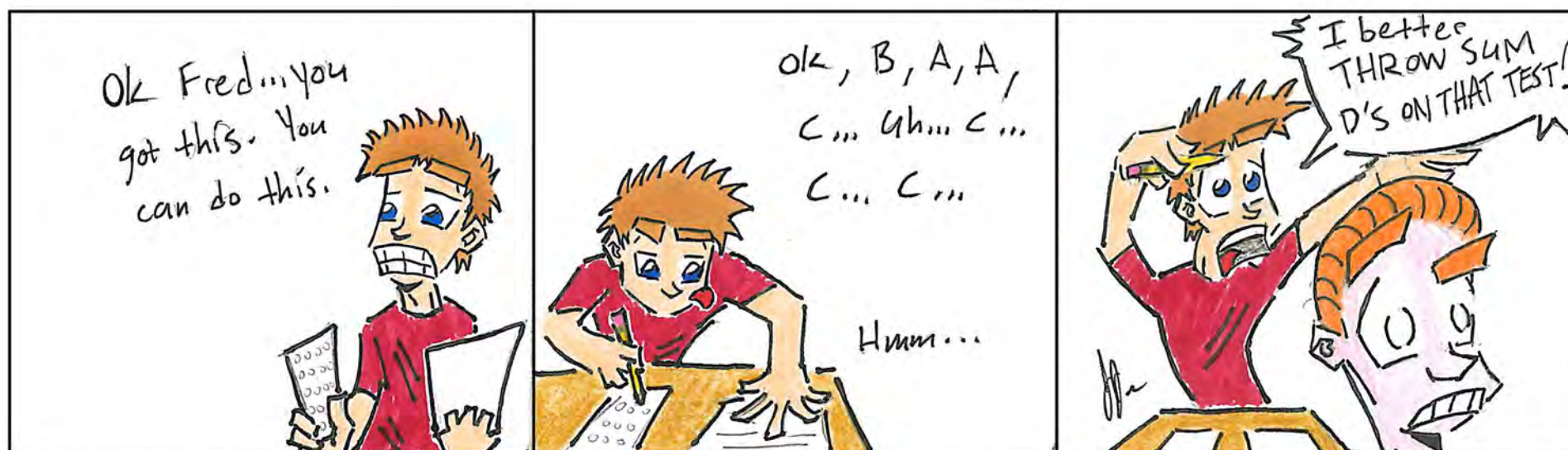
areas because of the mud that would build. Additionally, outdoor learning spaces allow students the opportunity to explore nature and science in real life. Your completed project provides our scholars with a space to observe plant and insect life cycles, along with many other topics. Thank you for braving the heat, wind, rain, cold, and darkness to bring this project to life! Your service is greatly appreciated.”



UHD alumni and peer leaders of community service project, Hard Hat & Heels. Julie Flores, Sahira Palomo, and Angela Ybarra. Photo courtesy of Angela Ybarra.

## A BOWLFUL OF COLLEGE

By Jeremy Jones



# Faculty Senate (continued)

Edmund Cueva, Ph.D., Professor of Humanities, reported on the Jan. 20 confirmation of Dr. Blanchard's appointment as UHD's next president. The announcement will appear in the Feb. 5 issue of UHD Magazine. Dr. Blanchard will officially begin this role on March 15, the first day of spring break. It was suggested that the Faculty Senate formally welcome Dr. Blanchard and set a date as soon as possible. Additionally, updating the faculty handbook is in progress.

The Conversation continued with the talk of an investiture for Dr. Blanchard.

Considering the tenure of past presidents, Dr. Sullivan conjectured, "How long will he be

here?"

A response was, "He promised to be here for a very long time."

SGA president, Alan Mudrow, a part of the transition team, commented that this "will be his baby."

Cueva chimed in, "It will be a glorious day for the university."

Dr. Beebe suggested inviting Dr. Blanchard to the first Faculty Senate meeting following his arrival. Dr. Cueva will ask if there can be a formal welcome from the Faculty Senate.

Conversation moved to the final exam schedule with comments from the senate that the time is not adequate. Dr. Beebe reminded the senate that the decision was made last year to reduce the schedule for final

exams rather than reduce the reading days.

Dr. Sullivan stated that the times do not coincide with class times so those students who work are hurt, noting that the schedule is not the best for working or parenting students. Tahereh Jafari, M.S., lecturer, mentioned that she has also become aware of similar issues. Nathan Neale, Ph.D., Assistant Professor in the College of Business, also noted the constraints on students even with a two-hour exam schedule.

Mudrow will take the topic to the SGA and poll students to determine their thoughts on reading days.

The next discussion revolved around the student option of S/U (satisfactory/unsatisfactory) or a letter grade,

suggesting that the option be revisited for the spring semester. Some students petitioned for the option for the fall semester.

Rachael Hudspeth, M.S., Lecturer of Biology, commented that there is much disagreement in her office on the subject, noting that "students are still dealing with the pandemic." She continued that not offering the S/U option sounds like, "We support you, but...."

Amy Baird, Ph.D., Assistant Chair and Associate Professor, offered that some students have options through their degree plans to use P/F (pass/fail), but the ongoing conversation pointed out the difficulty in pursuing that option in PeopleSoft. Other senate members suggested that the decision be made on a department level.

There was concern about award-

ing Latin honors and that students may game the system by choosing S/U to keep their GPA in place. There was agreement that some students will manipulate the system to keep their GPA in check.

Jerry Johnson, Jr., Ph.D., Associate Vice President for Faculty, Research and Sponsored Programs, mentioned that from a look at 30,000 universities, many are viewing COVID-19 to be worse now than when it first began.

He noted that it is hard to understand this impact on students.

"Let's not assume the worst of students and make sure we make the right choice," Johnson said.

Dr. Baird stated that things are different now than last year; students may have a family member that has become sick. Last spring there

were face to face classes, this year they are all online.

Many senators had strong feelings on the subject, and it was mentioned that offering an S/U option would change the timeline for final grades, and that putting the option into PeopleSoft could be a legal, logistic nightmare,

Mudrow responded that students "mostly are overwhelmed with what's on their plate."

He also asserted that offering the S/U option would say to students that UHD is really in it with you.

"Let students know you're in it with them," Mudrow said.

The decision to give students the S/U option for spring 2021 semester could be made by April. This item will be on the agenda for the Feb. 2 meeting.

## Local Business Spotlight

### Algoo Buenoo

By Indira Zaldivar

sweet, protein-packed treats.

Each beverage contains 15 grams of protein. While sig-

nature drinks such as Savage, "El Tóxico" and "La Tóxica" may seem intriguing, the ingredients appeal to those looking for a nutritious meal replacement that is dairy free, made with water or almond milk. Add ons such as toppings and extra scoops of protein are free of charge. Even whipped cream is fat free, with zero calories.

Through her business, Jove said she aspires to create

healthy food alternatives "to make an impact and help other people."

"It helped me, and I feel it could help other people," Jove said.

Her two kids, Bella and one on the way, are what drives her entrepreneurship.

"I want to be able to build something and leave it for her and my future generations because unfortunately you can't pass down a corporate job. As

much as they pay you good and give you a good retirement package, I believe we deserve more than that."

The 24-year-old said that at the right time, the opportunity just happened. As a strong believer in opportunities, she asked for and received a small-business loan to fulfill the business idea that had been stuck in her head for two years.

"If you have your heart set to do

something, where there's a will there is a way."

The pandemic has minimized the opportunities for direct-contact marketing, so Jove said her business accounts on Instagram and Facebook draw in most of her customers. She encouraged Gators to use social media as a business marketing tool. In the end, she said business is about a "personal connection" with customers. "If you have something in the back of your head that you've been trying to do, just do it, because you never know what could happen."

UHD accounting student, Ashley Marie Jove, opened a smoothie, juice and coffee bar at 16314 Stuebner Airline Rd. on Jan. 2. Jove's business, Algoo Buenoo, attracts health enthusiasts who seek to savor



Ashley Marie Jove, UHD student and business owner serves beverages on Jan. 14. Photo credit: Indira Zaldivar.

# UHD remembers Cameron Smith, Man of L.E.G.A.C.I.

By Jaida Doll

On Dec. 30, 2020, UHD student, Cameron Demarques Smith, and family tragically passed away. Smith perished in his home, along with mother, Vicki Pennington, and sister, Destini Smith.

Before his death, 21-year-old Cameron “Skateboard” Smith worked in UHD’s IT department, while attaining his degree. He briefly studied graphic design, before declaring his major in computer science.

Beth Secor, M.F.A., UHD Art Lecturer met Smith in her course, “Creating a Graphic Novel.”

She said of Smith, “Such a wonderful, talented spirit... I feel honored to have been his instructor.”

When he was

not studying or working with IT, Smith was longboarding, listening to music, creating art, playing video games, or watching anime.

“Cam always had... something brilliant going on. Whether it was a new project, a new recipe to perfect, or just a new game. He was always busy – always trying his hardest to accomplish the things many deemed impossible.” said Kayla Soto, friend of Smith.

In addition to Smith’s ambition and dynamism, he is often remembered for his friendly, caring spirit and light-hearted, positive demeanor.

“Cameron never saw a bad day. He was one of those kids who was always upbeat,” said Jerry

Wallace, Ph.D., Assis-

tant Dean at College of Public Service And co-founder of Men of L.E.G.A.C.I.

Described by many as a smart, talented, and diligent student, Smith spent much of his time on campus.

“School was a safe space for him. He really liked coming [to UHD],” Dr. Wallace commented.

Smith was especially active in Men of L.E.G.A.C.I., UHD’s Student Success program for marginalized men.

The program mentors Black and Latino men, providing them with the re-sources, opportunities and personal relationships that are necessary to navigate an educational arena systematically set against them.

Men of

L.E.G.A.C.I. also focuses on educating mentees on the apparatus of race, how that apparatus functions in society and the intersections of individual identity. These lessons resonated with Smith.

“He really was passionate about social justice... It was always important for him to stand up against the smaller ones and push back against unfair treatment,” stated Vida Robertson, Ph.D., UHD Associate Professor of English, Director of the Center for Critical Race Studies, and co-founder of Men of L.E.G.A.C.I.

As a member of one of the original cohorts of the program, Smith was always willing to lend his time or a helping hand to program mentors and fellow mentees.

“Always smiling, always ready to assist, a true gift to the UHD College of Public Service,” remarked Dana Smith, Ph.D., Assistant Professor and Director

of Field Education at UHD.

With only one semester remaining before his graduation, Smith would have been the first in his family to attain a college degree.

“He accepted that part of his life as a trailblazer at the forefront. He gave the best of himself to his family and his friends,” said Dr. Robertson.

Smith was an example of dynamic change forged through passionate and dedicated work.

“When you look at all of the situations that he’s come from and his family dynamics... if he finished his degree, he would have changed the entire dynamic of the family.... He was almost there,” stated Dr. Wallace.

Smith’s mother and sister, who also perished with him, were inspired by Smith’s diligence in his studies and commitment to improvement. They followed in his footsteps by pursuing their own higher education.

“[Smith] was the key to emancipating and liberating his entire family. He was really important to the future of his community and the future of his family,” said Dr. Robertson.

Funeral services for Cameron Smith, his mother, Vicki Pennington, and his sister, Destini Smith were hosted by Carter-Conley Funeral Home on Jan. 11.

Smith rests peacefully at Rosewood Memorial Park, where his urn was buried in his mother’s casket.

“Cameron was the hope of a community and of a family. He was the hope of our program [Men of L.E.G.A.C.I.]. He was the hope of his people and we were his hope. We continue to uphold his memory and the legacy he left for us,” concluded Dr. Robertson.

Students are encouraged to reach out to UHD Counseling Services to process grief relating to the passing of Cameron Smith.



UHD student, Cameron Demarques Smith. Photo courtesy of Carter-Conley Funeral Home. View Smith’s obituary and tribute wall at [www.carterfuneral-houston.com/obituaries](http://www.carterfuneral-houston.com/obituaries).

## FURTHER SUPPORT...

If you would like to **schedule a telehealth counseling appointment** with a UHD Counselor:

- Please call **713-500-3652**, or
- Complete the Contact Form at

[www.uhd.edu/counseling](http://www.uhd.edu/counseling)

As a reminder, current, actively enrolled students have access to 5 counseling sessions for your presenting issue, at no additional cost. We are here to help!



# CNN airs Kamala Harris special report

By Sara Garcia

CNN's Senior Political Correspondent Abby Phillips anchored an hour-long special report, *Kamala Harris: Making History*, that aired on Sunday, Jan. 17 at 10 p.m. ET. The special report takes viewers through the history-making life of Kamala Harris. Abby details the steps and missteps of Harris' journey to breaking barriers and making history as the first black woman of Asian descent to make her way to the highest office in our Nation and became the first Madam Vice President-Elect.

Interviews with her sister, Maya Harris, childhood friend, Carole Porter and her mother's friend, Lenore Pomerance, uncover the unique childhood experiences and moments that formed Harris' beliefs. Growing up in Berkeley, California, born right in the middle of the Civil Rights movement, Kamala embodied the movement that gave her the courage to be proud of who she was. At the age of seven, her mother Shymala Harris divorced her father and became a single mom of two. Harris expressed what it was like to grow up with a tight knit family made up her mother's friends and neighbors, rather than blood siblings.

As a grade-schooler, Harris was bussed to a prominent school an hour away. That education led her

to attend Howard University where she joined the oldest Black sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha Inc. Her sorority sister, Jill Louis, explained that the sorority's culture was full of possibilities and support. After graduating in 1986, Harris returned to San Francisco to attend Law School. She failed her first attempt at the bar, but she heeded the words of her mother, "Get up, dust yourself off and keep going." Harris went on to pass the exam the second time and became a Prosecutor.

As the Deputy for the City Attorney's Office, she headed the Family and Children Services Division and launched a Sex Traffic Task Force. Her determination to work within the system to make real change continued to grow. In 2004 she ran for District Attorney in San Francisco. With the help of her mother, she won the election, and became the first Black-Asian woman to hold that office. She quickly made headlines for not pursuing the death penalty for the shooter of a police officer, stating her office is there to "seek justice, not vengeance." She created the "Back on Track" initiative that helped young people re-enter society after being released from prison.

Seven years later, she ran for Attorney General of California and defeated Steve Cool-

ey, the incumbent. Making history again by becoming the first Black-Asian woman to hold that office. When her mother was diagnosed with cancer, Harris took time to be with her but continued her fight against mortgage companies that were foreclosing on homes during the mortgage crisis. While in negotiations, she teamed up with other State Attorneys General like Beau Biden, Delaware's Attorney General. She was victorious in her fight and brought a significant relief bill to Californian's homeowners. She reformed the schools' truancy problem which was intended to target social inequality however the law backfired, and, in some cases, parents were jailed and criminally prosecuted.

During this time, her best friend, Chrisette Hudlin sets her up on a blind date with Doug Emhoff, an attorney, and single father of two. They fall in love and marry just over a year later.

In 2016, Vice President Joe Biden swore in the newly elected Senator again the first Black-Asian woman representing California. She teamed up with Republicans to pass reform on the cash-bail system but failed to pass her Anti-Lynching Bill. In 2019 Kamala Harris announced her candidacy for President of the United States. Her campaign had several viral moments, but

nothing significant enough to sustain her run.

On Dec. 3, 2019 she announced the suspension of her campaign. Her relationship with Beau Biden made it easy for Joe Biden to choose her as his running mate. Together, they went on to defeat Donald Trump in the 2020 presidential election making her the first Black-Asian woman to hold the office of Vice President making her husband, the first Second Gentleman. On Nov. 7, 2020 Kamala Harris delivered her acceptance speech in which she makes a promise that although she is the first woman to hold the office, she would not be the last.

"The first in so many ways and so many times, and now Kamala Harris, once again has made

history," remarked Phillips.

Phillips' CNN report highlights the intricacies and experiences of Harris' childhood throughout the Civil Rights movement. The interviews paint a picture of a young adult, and later as a prosecutor with a passion for social equality and justice. Her sister makes it very clear that their confidence is rooted in their late mother. The interviews are story after story, firsthand accounts that paint the picture of a woman born with a calling to serve her country and represent those who often remain unheard. Story after story of her advocacy and years of hard work to reform the criminal system paint the picture of a woman determined to break all the glass ceilings.

The report also gives us a chance to get to know her husband, Doug Emhoff, the nation's first Second Gentleman. A clip of Doug rushing the stage to save his wife from a protestor who got too close exposes his instinct to protect her. They laughed it about during the interview with Phillips but admitted it was a scary time for them.

The CNN special report gives viewers a good sense of who Madam Vice President Kamala Harris is and always has been. Phillips' report instilled confidence in Harris, her advocacy, and her consistent record. Her beliefs are cemented in the love of her mother. And her promise to speak up on behalf of those who are not always heard or seen is exactly what the country needs.



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# Amanda Gorman presents as youngest inaugural poet in US history

By Ann Margaret Lummus

On Jan. 20, former Youth Poet Laureate and Harvard graduate Amanda Gorman, 22, took to the podium as the youngest inaugural poet in U.S. history. Her poetry performance of “The Hill We Climb” has ignited her platform.

A resonating new voice for, civil rights activist, Black women, and Gen-Z. According to the Associated Press, “Gorman says the inaugural officials told her she had been recommended by the incoming first lady, Jill Biden.” Biden, Ph.D., made a contrasting decision to pick Gorman since President Biden’s plan of unity for the U.S. resonates in Gorman’s poem.

“The hill we climb / If only we dare / It’s because being American is more than a pride we

inherit, / it’s the past we step into / and how we repair it.”

Gorman appeared with a bright smile and often for interviews and the inauguration she wore signature colors red and yellow. During an interview with PBS Houston Public Media, she shared her preparation for the inauguration, “I was around halfway through, we had the insurrection at the Capitol. And I don’t want to say that my poem took a drastic left turn, because it was already going towards a location, but those events just solidified for me how important it was to have a poem about unity and the new chapter of America in this inauguration.”

In response, Madam Vice President Kamala Harris tweeted #Black-

GirlMagic, trending across social media platforms, and figures such as Oprah and former President Barack Obama noted “a young woman to rise” and “a moment for the history books”. In the following days, Gorman has star struck the nation, people are eager to know who Gorman is.

Gorman is on the same platform of current women in activism like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. Specifically, a leading example in the rising waves of Generation Z and its ambition to make change. Gorman has stated “I love as we call it Gen Z because they’re relentless and they’re highly critical”. Gorman’s statement does not heed astray in her own ambition to be president of the United States of

America in 2036. Even hinted at this within her inaugural speech.

“We the successors of a country and a time where a skinny Black girl descended from slaves and raised by a single mother can dream of becoming president.”

A confidence which seems to threaten people, she shared that some classmate during a workshop suggested her work was too confident. Gorman responded, “Too confident is code for I’m not comfortable for a Black woman who is using her voice with a pen to be existing in the same classroom”.

Gorman is humble towards her experience, encouraging that there are many other activist voices in her generation. But, for African American youth, Gorman is one to keep an eye on. Her influence

in literature and on the stage carries the tone of the late Maya Angelou, whom Gorman idols wearing a ring of a caged bird honoring Angelou at the inauguration.

Gorman follows the frontlines of history through social media accounts on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Publishing with Penguin Random House Gorman’s poetry collection “The Hill We Climb and Other Poems” includes her

recited poem at the president’s 46 inauguration. Her book can be found on theamandagorman.com and other participating retailers. Copies may be pre-ordered now until available Sept. 21. In recent news, Gorman announced the next time we will see her perform “The Hill We Climb” will be during Super Bowl LVI preshow Feb. 7 as the first poet to perform at the Super Bowl.



Amanda Gorman recites her original poem entitled “The Hill We Climb” as President Biden watches from the behind. Photo courtesy of Getty Images.

## D.C. encourages vaccination with “Jabs for Joints”

By Salvador Hernandez

The pandemic has affected individuals through a number of ways be it mentally, physically or work-wise. However, a light at the end of the tunnel can be seen as vaccines roll out to various parts of the country. Many have been skeptical of the vaccine, however, marijuana activists in D.C. have made it their

goal to bring an incentive to skeptics in the form of a complementary bag of marijuana with their vaccine shot.

Marijuana activist, Adam Eiding, and his organization DC Marijuana Justice, have spearheaded the initiative to bring attention and encourage individuals weary of the vaccine

to take it. The initiative has been coined “Joints for Jabs,” and it will

begin in March, as that is when vaccine

centers will open throughout D.C.

In an interview with Forbes, Nikolas Schiller, co-founder of DC Marijuana Justice, commented on the groups goal to stop the spread of the pandemic and elaborated on the groups advocacy to change local and nationwide marijuana policy.

“DCMJ believes that

cannabis should be consumed safely and responsibly, and the pandemic has made this incredibly difficult for many adults to share their homegrown cannabis. When enough adults are inoculated with the coronavirus vaccine, it will be time to celebrate – not just the end of the pandemic, but the beginning of the end of cannabis prohibition in the

United States.”

This initiative has been replicated in Michigan with the cannabis dispensary Greenhouse of Walled Lake in collaboration with UBaked Cannabis Company offering pre-rolled joints to those who get vaccinated.



Whitney Barrett



# FBI investigates HPD officer involved in Capitol riot

By Brittney Dizzine

On Jan. 13, Houston Police Chief, Art Acevedo, stated that Houston Police officer Tam Dinh Pham attended infamous Trump rally in Washington, D.C. on his personal time. After further investigation, law enforcement found that Pham, an 18-year service veteran with the department, traveled alone to the nation's Capitol and participated in the Jan. 6 insurrection on the Capitol Building.

"As investigations continue, I am highly confident that the officer will be facing federal criminal charges," Acevedo said.

According to the documents, Pham admitted to being in Washington for "business reasons" but denied going to the Capitol. FBI agents received Pham's consent to review photos on his cellphone and noticed no photos from his Washington trip. According to the affidavit, agents checked the folder of deleted photos, and found photos and

videos of Pham inside the Capitol.

The agents explained to Pham that making false and fraudulent statements to a representative of the federal government is a crime, leading the disgraced officer to admit to following the rioters to the Capitol Rotunda. Pham briefly spoke to the media when he arrived home Thursday afternoon.

"Please, just give my family privacy," Pham said. "It's a challenging time."

As of Jan. 14, Pham has resigned from the HPD.

Acevedo said after the resignation, "There is no excuse for criminal activity, especially from a police officer.

"I can't tell you the anger I feel at the thought of a police officer and other[s]... thinking they get to storm the Capitol...our commitment here in the Houston area is always to the rule of law...It saddens me to report that we have that one officer...[sent

to me by]... a member of this community...showing the officer...with a Trump flag, face covered and the first thing I did, I went to that person's Facebook confirmed it was one of our offi-

cers that was there... everyone has a First Amendment right.... But I still wanted to make sure that they didn't pass beyond...I can tell you that there's a high probability that this indi-

vidual will be charged with federal charges, and rightfully so."

Washington D.C. will release potential criminal charges involving Pham and other individuals engaged in

the siege as they lead the massive investigation. Local federal agencies are providing support in the investigative process.



Whitney Barrett

# NAACP calls for city council member to resign

By Priscila Batres

The City of Houston City Council and Council Ethics Chair called for a meeting to review free speech policies after Republican Council Member Greg Travis shared a controversial Facebook post and subsequent comments in December 2020.

he post compared the two former first ladies, Michelle Obama and Melania

Trump. Travis commented on the post by questioning Michelle Obama's intellect and insinuating that she attended Harvard University through affirmative action. Travis also commented that former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton attained her political position because of her husband, former President Bill Clinton, rather than with

her qualifications. Travis continued, bringing Vice President Kamala Harris into the conversation, implying she attained her position through inappropriate romantic affairs. The post gained so much negative attention that the Houston chapter of NAACP and Black Lives Matter Houston called for Travis' resignation.

The council  
The University of Houston-Downtown

meeting will educate the council members and members of the public about the type of free speech policies that apply to city council members. An additional team and ethics commission will review Travis's comments and determine if he violated any of these policies. If the team determines a violation, the council will ask the ethics committee for

suggestions on what type of disciplinary actions to take against Travis.

Travis responded to the actions taken against him and stands by his comments. "I don't mind Democrats. I just don't like extreme liberalism. The comments made had nothing to do with gender or race, just extreme liberalism."

Letitia Plumer,

Ph.D., who is leading this meeting and a member of the city council expressed the importance of this meeting.

"We've seen at our nation's Capitol what words can do to incite fear and destruction and what responsibility means."

# Biden and Harris attend national COVID-19 memorial

By Lauren Anderson

On Jan. 19, cities all over the United States took part in a memorial service to remember the over 400,000 people that lost their lives to COVID-19 in the U.S. Before his inauguration, then-President-elect Joe Biden, along with Vice President-elect Kamala Harris, also took part in the memorial at the Reflecting Pool near Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Hundreds of luminaries lined the edge of the Reflecting Pool. An art display created by the Presidential Inaugural Committee shone 56 pillars of blue light from the National Mall to represent America's states and territories. A bell at National Cathedral also rang 400 times, each ring signifying 1,000 victims of COVID-19.

"We gather tonight, a nation in mourning, to pay tribute to the lives we have lost, a grand-

mother or grandfather who was our whole world, a parent, partner, sibling, or friend who we still cannot accept is no longer here. And for many months, we have grieved by ourselves," Harris said during her speech at the memorial service.

She continued, "Tonight, we grieve and begin healing together. Though we may be physically separated, we, the American people, are united in spirit, and my abiding hope, my abiding prayer, is that we emerge from this ordeal with a new wisdom, to cherish simple moments, to

imagine new possibilities, and to open our hearts just a little bit more to one another."

Other cities take part in the memorial in their own ways. The mayor of New York City and his wife spoke at the Statue of Liberty, and the Empire State Building lit up in red to remember those lost.

Buildings in San Francisco, such as City Hall and Coit Tower, and buildings in San Diego, such as California Tower and Spreckels Organ Pavilion, were illuminated by an amber light for the memorial.

Boston also had many sites light up in amber. The Grant AME Church also put up ribbons outside the church to represent the thousands who had died during a brief memorial service.

In Chicago, other than illuminating buildings in amber, city officials asked residents and small business owners to shut off their lights and set out a candle in their driveway or balcony, also with a moment of silence.

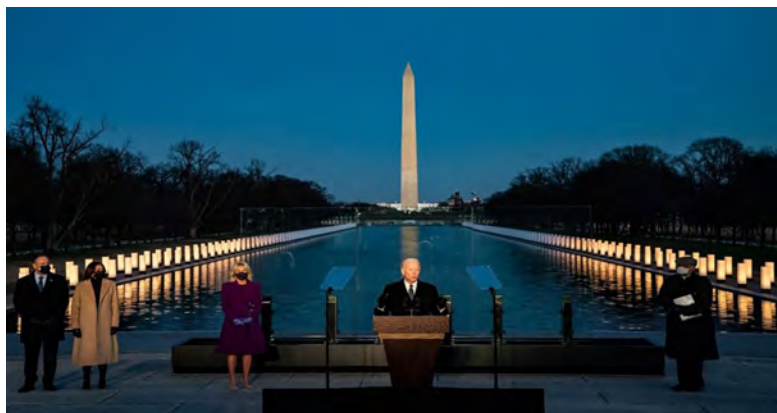
In Jersey City, family members held photos of their loved ones as they mourned in front of City Hall.

"My father spent the last week of his life in a hospital three blocks away from us, and we couldn't be with him," Jersey City resident Sabila Khan told CBS2. "Remember the faces behind the numbers to remember that they had names. They had lives. They loved. They had families that they've now left behind, and they died horrible, lonely deaths. That's what I want the country to remember."

President Biden stated that honoring the misfortune of the past year would be the center of his administration.

He also said that he understands the grief of losing loved ones since he has lost his first wife, daughter, and son in the past.

Biden stated at the memorial service in Washington D.C. that, "To heal, we must remember. It's hard sometimes to remember, but that's how we heal. It's important to do that as a nation. That's why we're here today. Between sundown and dusk, let us shine the lights in the darkness, along the sacred pool of reflection, and remember all whom we lost."



President Biden speaks during the COVID-19 memorial on Jan. 19. Photo courtesy of Salwan Georges/The Washington Post.



Representative Katherine M. Clark of Massachusetts, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, and House Majority Leader Steny H. Hoyer. Photo courtesy of Erik S. Lesser/EPA-EFE/Shutterstock.

## Biden signs executive orders

By Priscila Batres

President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris recently assumed office, and many campaign policies are going to be followed in the first 100 days. Some of the plans the Biden administration hopes to achieve range from climate awareness to immigration reform policies, but what exactly are those plans?

Biden's first order was for the United States to re-join the Paris Climate

Accord, which he did hours after his inauguration. The Biden Administration's plans in fighting climate change include pressuring Congress to pass legislation that will invest in clean energy, climate research, and innovation. Further incentives include the rapid deployment of clean energy innovations across the economy focusing on communities which have been affected by climate change.

It is also important to highlight that his administration has committed not to accept contributions from big oil and gas corporations.

Regarding education, the Biden Administration wants to help educators—alongside first lady, Dr. Jill Biden, who has been a teacher for over thirty years. The Biden Administration plans to raise teacher wages, and funding of Title I, which focuses on school funding and

helps teachers pay off their student loans.

For immigration, Biden plans to roll back all Trump Administration's policies. Biden's executive orders signed on his first day of presidency include implementing comprehensive immigration reform for the 11 million undocumented people, giving a pathway to citizenship for DACA recipients and TPS holders, and monitoring Immigration

Customs Enforcement and Border Patrol, and stopping construction of the U.S. Southern border wall.

The Biden administration has many plans for his term, and they range from supporting essential workers, ending the opioid crisis, to investing in infrastructure. For more details of these followings plans or any other, it can be found on his website joebiden.com.

Biden's top priorities for his first 100 days are: curbing

the pandemic, sending another round of stimulus checks, rebuilding the economy, safely re-opening schools, and vaccinating at least 100 million people by summer. Controlling the pandemic is the top priority, and as president, Biden has already signed multiple executive orders that have gained positive press. Time will tell how the rest of these goals will be met.

# Kamala Harris makes ‘herstory’

By Savannah Mims

Former California Senator Kamala Harris made history as the first ever Black, Asian American, and woman to take the office of vice president on Jan. 20. Harris began her eagerly awaited term as vice president alongside the newly elected President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.

Her journey to vice presidency began when she attended Howard University in 1981 as a political science and economics major. While at Howard, Harris interned in the mailroom to then California Senator Alan Cranston. Additionally, she led the debate team and joined the Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority. After graduating from Howard in

1986, she attended the University of California, Hastings College of the Law in 1989.

After her admittance to the California Bar, she worked in the District Attorney’s Office in Alameda County, California. She was later appointed to the Unemployment Insurance Medical Board and the California Medical Assistance Commission before becoming Assistant district attorney in San Francisco. Afterwards, she began working for the San Francisco City Attorney and began running the Family and Children’s Services Division.

In 2002, Harris was elected as the district attorney of San Francisco, the

first person of color to ever hold the position. In another first, Harris was the first woman, Black, and South Asian American to be elected to the position of attorney general of California in 2011. While working as attorney general, Harris worked focused on LGBTQ+ rights, criminal justice reform, and public safety.

Kamala Harris met her future husband, Douglas Emhoff, an entertainment lawyer, through a blind date, though she did admit, “to Googling him first.” The couple married in 2014 resulting in her becoming a stepmother to Emhoff’s two children from a previous marriage. Upon Harris’s inauguration

as vice president, her husband became the first second gentleman in American history.

In 2016, Harris was elected to the United States Senate as the junior senator from California. In January 2019, Kamala Harris announced her candidacy for the president of the United States. In December 2019, she withdrew her candidacy due to lack of fundraising. In March 2020, she endorsed Joe Biden for president.

In August 2020, Biden announced Harris as his running mate, making her the third woman nominated for the position of vice president. On Nov. 3, 2020, Biden and Har-

ris were elected the next president and vice president of the United States, though the official counting of the popular vote did not end until a week and a half later.

This kicked off a flurry of lawsuits by then incumbent President Donald J. Trump, who believed there were voting irregularities resulting in the election being “rigged” and “stolen.” The courts determined his lawsuits

failed to show evidence of this claim.

On Dec. 14, 2020, the Electoral College confirmed the Biden-Harris ticket did win the November 2020 election. Despite a protest turned riot at the United States Capitol on Jan. 6, lawmakers counted the state certified electors, clearing a final hurdle for President Joe Biden and Madame Vice President Kamala Harris to be sworn in on Jan. 20.



Kamala Harris was sworn in as the 49th vice president of the U.S. at the inauguration on Jan. 20. Photo courtesy of Saul Loeb/Pool via AP.

## Biden reverses Trump’s trans military ban

By Sergio Presa Jr.

On Jan. 25, President Biden rolled back the previous administration’s ban on transgendered individuals serving in the United States military.

Biden’s reversal of the ban put into place by the Trump Administration allows any American who is fit to serve, the opportunity to do so, regardless of their gender identity. This move comes as a reminder

of the promise Biden made during the campaign trail, along with many other reversals of Trump policies.

The order stated that both the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security need to re-examine the service members’ records who were unable to re-enlist or who were discharged. Aaron Belkin, the executive director of the Palm Center, which

researches and advocates for LGBTQ causes said, “This is the triumph of evidence-based policy over discrimination.”

After signing the order, the president stated, “What I’m doing is enabling all qualified Americans to serve their country in uniform.”

Human rights organizations have applauded the ban’s reversal. The White House said, “President Biden believes that gender identity should not be a bar to military service, and that America’s strength is found in its diversity.”



Image courtesy of Media Matters for America.

## Georgia elects Democrat senators

By Madiha Hussain

The 2020 presidential election results were remarkable, especially for those in Georgia. The 2020 elective cycle was the first time in 28 years that Georgia voted for a Democratic presidential candidate. In addition, it was the first time in 15 years that the state held a Democrat Senator.

The run-off elections that occurred in Georgia on Jan. 5, 2021, were significant for several reasons. Under normal circumstances, only one run-off election would have taken place. Instead, there were two

elections due to Sen. Johnny Isakson’s (R) retirement in 2019, leaving both senator seats available. The regular run-off election was between David Perdue (R) and Jon Ossoff (D). The special run-off election was between Kelly Loeffler (R) and Rev. Raphael Warnock (D).

Ossoff and Warnock both won their respective positions, meaning that the Democrats now have control over the Senate. The Democrats and Republicans both share half the seats in the Senate, but Vice President Kamala

Harris (D) will serve as a tie-breaker. As a result, it will be easier to bring Democratic-led legislation to the Senate floor.

With Vice President Harris’ inauguration, the topic of representation in politics has become commonplace. Ossoff and Warnock will become the first Jewish and Black senators from Georgia, respectively.

The results of the Georgia elections will drastically change the Senate’s productivity in the years to come.

# City of Houston envisions 1,800 miles of bike lanes

By Jeremy Barrientos

On Jan. 27, the City of Houston Bicycle Advisory Committee held their first meeting of the year to discuss and update the ambitious bike plan to make Houston a safer, more accessible, bike-friendly city.

The vision of Houston Bikeways is to improve safety, increase access, increase ridership, and develop and maintain facilities by the end of 2027. The City of Houston Planning & Development, the Department of Public Works & Engineering, and the Houston Parks and Recreation Department were updated with the commitment to create 1,800 miles of high comfort bike-ways planned for the city. In 2018, Bike Houston launched the “Build 50 Challenge” campaign with the goal of constructing 50 miles of high

comfort bike lanes in one year. However, with the recent pandemic, Houston Bikeways completed only four new miles of on-street bike lanes in 2020.

The City of Houston covers over 637 square miles with only 340 miles dedicated to high comfort bike lanes and 22 miles are on-street protected bike only lanes. Without the use of high comfort bike lanes, the risk of injury or death increases. High comfort bike lanes are generally wider and safe for riders of all ages and skill levels. On-street bike lanes only have a buffer line between sidewalks and vehicle traffic.

Data compiled by Texas Department of Transportation reported 34 bike related deaths in 2020 which exceeded the record high total of 27 in 2019. Joe Cutrufo,

executive director of Bike Houston, was quoted saying, “Our streets were intentionally designed to accommodate one mode and only one mode,” referring to motor vehicles. The urgency of expanding and creating safe routes for all bike commuters and enthusiasts is evident.

Alejandro “Lex” Perez, vice chair of the Bicycle Advisory Committee with the City of Houston and one of the founders of the UHD Bike Club, stated that, “Houston is a very big place, so some areas become more bike friendly based on how frequently people ride. I started riding almost 10 years ago and compared to then, YES Houston has definitely become more bike friendly.” When asked if the goal of creating 1,800 miles of high comfort bike lanes and

50 miles this year is realistic, he replied “Totally possible. With the help of people that want/do ride their bike, these miles can be increased even further! Local government has lately taken a proactive approach to bicycling in Houston and this is great!”

He continues by offering three tips that riders need to get started while riding

in the city, “1. Riders should always check on the condition of their bike before every ride (Google ‘ABC quick check’), 2. When you are out riding be on the lookout for distracted drivers. There is data that shows people have struck cyclists whilst they’re not paying attention. 3. Consider wearing bright colors and lights any chance you

can. Wearing a helmet should go without saying. We want all of our members to enjoy riding and be safe doing so.”

For more information about the Houston Bike Plan, visit [houstonbikeplan.org](http://houstonbikeplan.org).

To join UHD’s Bike Club, which is open to all, connect on Facebook or Instagram @uhdbikeclub.



Guadalupe Ramirez, Rebecca Robles and Marie Zaldivar ride bikes on Lamar St. bike lane in downtown Houston on May 30, 2019. Photo credit: Indira Zaldivar

# City of Houston remembers those lost to COVID-19

By Gean Garcia

On Jan. 19, the Houston Police Department’s Honor Guard and the Houston Fire Department joined forces to commemorate those lost to COVID-19. Also included were individuals from Houston Public Works and Houston’s Airport System.

Those remembered included HPD officer Earnest Leal and civilian employee Latanya Lewis, Houston Fire Department Captain Leroy

Lucio and fire paramedic Gerardo Pacheco, Houston Public Work’s Natavia Robertson and Houston Airport System’s Richard Stable.

To honor those passed, The

City of Houston lit up several of its landmarks with amber light, such as City Hall, George Bush Intercontinental Airport, Main Street Square, and Montrose Highway 59 bridges.

These tributes hope to pay an homage to these wonderful lives cut short.

These are times of loss. Houstonians have lost incomes, stability, and even their lives

during the COVID-19 pandemic. If you or someone you know is grieving or lost something or someone of great importance, reach out to the UHD counseling services at 713-500-3852.

Five free sessions per semester are available for students.

For more information on UHD counseling services, visit UHD’s official website.



City Hall lit in amber for COVID-19 memorial.

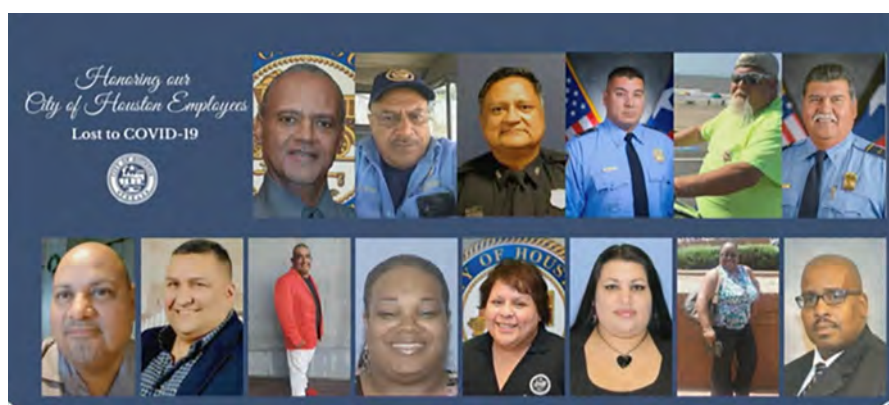


Photo courtesy of City of Houston COVID-19 Memorial commemoration.

# Museum of Fine Arts debuts Nancy and Rich Kinder Building

By Jeremy Barrientos

The grand opening of the Nancy and Rich Kinder Building was held on Saturday, Nov. 21, 2020 at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. MFAH's latest edition is located at 1001 Bissonnet St. The \$450 million expansion project opened to the public with great anticipation during the coronavirus pandemic.

The 164,000 square foot building itself is a work of art designed by world-renowned, New York architect, Steven Holl, who also designed the Glassell School of Art in May 2018. The exterior design of the building features white translucent rounded pillars that illuminate at night, while the inside houses 102,000

square feet of exhibition space reminiscent of Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim.

The three-story building contains works from the museum's international collections of modern and contemporary art. The majority of artists are from Latin America featuring Latino art, photography, prints and

drawings, as well as decorative arts, craft and designs.

Immersive installations are found near the entrance of the Nancy and Rich Building that showcase the talents and skills of Yayoi Kusama, Gyula Kosice, and James Turrell. The Light Inside by James Turrell has been a staple at the MFAH since 2000

and can be found in the underground tunnel that connects the museum's Caroline Wiess Law

Building with the Audrey Jones Beck Building. Additional works by Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, Jackson Pollock, and Georgia O'Keeffe can be found inside the permanent gallery of the Nancy and Rich Building.

The massive building and exhibition space has expanded the MFAH by an additional

75%; it was made possible by the generous \$150 million contribution from the Kinders along with Susan and Faye Sarofim. The Kinder Foundation has focused its grants on projects and programs that develop and enhance urban green space, education and quality of life in the Houston area since 1997. The MFAH is free for all ages every Thursday.

For more information visit the MFAH at [mfah.org](http://mfah.org) or #GetModernMFAH.

# Larry King passes at 87

By Aansa Usmani

On Jan. 23, the media world lost an iconic figure. Lawrence Harvey Zeiger—better known as Larry King—died at age 87 after succumbing to sepsis. Best known for his long-time CNN show, “Larry King Live,” King’s interviews showcased a humanistic side to his guests regardless of fame or notoriety.

After achieving success on “The Larry King Show,” a syndicated radio program aired in over 118 cities, King was given a television slot at the then-newly established CNN. His direct and effective questioning gave audience members a better insight into prominent figures’ minds, including

former presidents, foreign leaders, celebrities, and others.

According to the BBC, notable moments from his television career include the time he moderated a debate between three Middle Eastern leaders and when he secured final interviews with reclusive celebrities Marlon Brando and Frank Sinatra.

By the end of his show’s tenure in 2010, King made the Guinness World Record for having the longest-running show with the same host and same time slot. However, King was far from retiring. He stated, “I love working and don’t know what I’d do if I retired.”

After leaving CNN, King co-founded Ora TV, a digital

network that hosted his show, “Larry King Now,” as well as appearing on other media platforms such as Hulu and Russia Today (RT).

King married 7 times, had 5 children, 9 grandchildren, and 4 great-grandchildren. In 2020, King lost 2 of his older children merely weeks apart; his daughter, Chaia, 51, passed from lung cancer, and his son,

Andy, 65, passed from a heart attack.

Although King passed away at 87, his legacy will live on forever. His contributions to the world of journalism continue to inspire journalism majors and rising reporters. While the world mourns a prominent icon’s death, the stars have gained a brighter one among them.

# Attempted blackmail backfires as NikkieTutorials comes out as transgender

By Amber Williams

Nikkie de Jager, 26-year-old YouTuber who goes by NikkieTutorials, came out as transgender. From 2008 until now, she has earned more than 12 million subscribers by creating makeup tutorials with family, friends, and even celebrities like Lady Gaga.

On Jan. 13, 2020, Nikkie de Jager revealed the personal situation through a YouTube video.

“When I was born, I was born in the wrong body,” she said with emotion, “which means I am transgender.”

She stated how terrifying it is to confess her true self online, but at the same time, it is “liberating and freeing” that she can share her story.

“I am NikkieTutorials and I am Nikkie. I am me,” the Dutch makeup artist

said. “We don’t need labels... At the end of the day, I am me, and at the end of the day, you are you.”

Nikkie was born male; however, her mother – also known as MamaTutorials – supported her when she wanted to wear a dress, have long hair, and have her nails manicured. Nikkie stated that she had a strong support group when she was a child and through

her teenage years, and she understood when others did not support her choices. She began transitioning in middle school through high school and is now engaged to supportive fiancé, Dylan

She wanted to confess earlier but did not because she wanted to find the right time. On “The Ellen DeGeneres Show,” the makeup artist conducted her first in-

terview and expressed her sentiments about her transition journey. She described how blackmail forced her to confess much earlier than she planned.

“A couple of weeks ago, I got emails from a ‘certain person,’ and he was not okay with the fact that I was ‘lying’ and wanted to expose that,” de Jager revealed to the press in January 2020. “He had a very pressuring

tone of voice, and he was like, ‘If we don’t get an answer by tomorrow, it’s out.’ I feel like his entire goal was to destroy my life. But, plot twist, that didn’t happen.”

NikkieTutorials currently has a YouTube Red series entitled “The Layers of Me” that has 900,000 views, and details her transition, personal life, and career.

# Reviews

Whitney Barrett

## Netflix's 'Night Stalker: The Hunt for a Serial Killer'

By James Jurewicz

It's 1980's Los Angeles, the Summer Olympics have come to town. So has a ruthless serial killer. The Netflix documentary "Night Stalker: The Hunt for a Serial Killer" was released on Jan. 13. The documentary follows the detectives in charge of the investigation of the Night Stalker, 24-year-old Richard Ramirez from El Paso, Texas. The stars and focus of the documentary are detectives Gil Carillo and Frank Salerno.

The crimes perpetrated by the Night Stalker were horrific, his patterns unorthodox and unpredictable. Ramirez would quietly check houses for unlocked doors and windows and slip inside undetected, usually armed. Fourteen people

lost their lives to his murderous rampage, not to mention the continued suffering of the surviving victims. The Night Stalker's victims ranged in age from nine to 84 years old, neither men nor women were safe. Sometimes multiple weapons were used in the process including his own hands and teeth.

"We've never encountered anyone like that before in criminal history," Carillo states in the film. "This guy is bad, he's evil. He has done some things that you don't want to know about." At multiple crime scenes there were pentagrams found drawn on the walls. One of the consistent descriptions of the Night Stalker given by surviving victims was the smell

of his rotting teeth.

Detectives worked tirelessly to get Ramirez off the streets. Both Carillo and Salerno complemented the other perfectly, Salerno the intensely serious, while Carillo was usually seen expressing a genuine and relatable smile. Both partners worked together with their own approach and style.

"In effect you are hunting a man," Salerno states. "I've never been a hunter. I'm a city slicker, so I looked at it playing a game of clue you know. Col. Mustard did it with a gun in the kitchen," Carillo quipped. Early in the "Night Stalker," Carillo caught a large amount of opposition from others in the homicide division. They had believed he was

only trying to make a name for himself with a false label of serial killer attributed to the investigation.

"I went there openly and honestly; I didn't realize they were going to reject and scoff at my theory." Salerno was already established as an accomplished homicide detective after working the "Hillside Strangler" case that plagued Southern California in the early 80s. Once Salerno agreed to the serial

killer diagnosis, the police captain gave the green light for a full-blown homicide investigation. Carillo emphatically exclaimed, "Things started going fast and furious."

A size 11.5 shoe print left from Avia Aerobic sneakers was found at multiple crime scenes. These shoe prints connected the crimes. It was revealed through investigation of the shoe company that there was only

one pair of black Avia Aerobic sneakers shipped to Los Angeles that was a size 11.5 of that very type with matching soles. Cooperation between the heroes at the Los Angeles and San Francisco Police Departments are shown in the documentary as one of the catalysts to the Night Stalker's eventual identification as Richard Ramirez.

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Photo courtesy of Netflix

## Disney Pixar's 'Soul' By Brittney Dizzine

Pixar's latest Disney movie "Soul" has people asking big questions about the meaning and purpose of life. "Soul" has its twist and turns within the movie that will leave you smiling at some points while holding back tears during others. "Soul" spends a lot of time showing the life of its main character, Joe Gardner, played by Jamie Foxx. The

nearly note-perfect ending captures a soul's innocence and its influence on the on-going chapters of life.

The exciting thought-provoking film left everyone in the room thinking about their mortalities. Although death is a predictable part of the life cycle, much thought is not given to the afterlife. Pixar had a fasci-

nating and brilliant way of capturing all age groups with its entertaining yet predictable life scenarios. Seeing Joe struggle through his boring, mediocre life is something many people can relate to at some point.

Overall, Pixar has resorted to storytelling in a more relatable way by choosing more realistic stories that all

audiences can relate to and watch. The cinematography and graphic design Pixar created for this film is remarkable and impeccable, especially when it elaborates the colors and eccentric personalities covering the movie screen.

"Soul" is an excellent movie for the family. This animated jam is jazzy, punny, and has a great view of human mortality and hereafter. It is an enter-

taining and hilarious effort to show a more light-hearted side of life shenanigans, deep thoughts, and won-

drous imagination. "Soul" is streaming on Disney+.



Photo courtesy of Disney Pixar

# Reviews

## Taylor Swift's 'evermore' By Safa Abdallah

Taylor Swift's newest album "evermore" was released on Dec. 11, 2020. It is the sequel to her album "folklore." Many fans consider Swift's newest album the twin to "folklore," or as Swift likes to say, "evermore" is the "sister album" to "folklore." "evermore" was dropped only 5 months after "folklore" with 17 new songs. They were both released during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Along with "folklore", "evermore" shows Swift's

transition from pop music to alternative/indie music. She experiments with third-person storytelling like on the track, "no body, no crime." Swift's lyrics are heartfelt as always and mature like in, "champagne problems." Swift plays with recurring themes throughout the album including heartbreak, forgiveness, forbidden love, and grief, to name a few.

"willow" is the album's lead song. It describes the feelings of unrequited love. When Swift

says, "I come back stronger than a 90s trend," she alludes to her recovery from downfalls between friends, the media, and other celebrities after the release of "folklore." This song is the perfect introduction to "evermore."

"it's time to go" is one of the more controversial songs and appears in the deluxe version of Swift's album. She talks candidly about her struggle with Scooter Braun and her record label drama. She also talks

about former best friend, Karlie Kloss, when she sings, "when the words of a sister come back in whispers / That prove she was not, in fact, what she seemed / Not a twin from your dreams / She's a crook who was caught".

"cowboy like me" brings us back to Swift's country roots. It is about two con artists who are always messing around and looking for wealthy people to be romantically involved with. However, two gold dig-

gers end up falling in love with each other. Swift mentions that her songs tell stories about other people, however, her intimacy to these written feelings shows she may be talking about her current relationship as well.

*Continued on A&E, Page 16*



*Photo courtesy of USA Today*

## Netflix's 'ariana grande: excuse me, i love you' By Brittney Dizzine

Netflix debuted Ariana Grande's concert documentary, "excuse me, i love you" on Dec. 21, 2020. This video biography of Grande's Sweetener World Tour allows viewers to peek into Grande's life and witness some intimate behind-the-scenes moments. Still, the film is mostly of Ariana's performances for the Sweetener World Tour. At its heart, "excuse me, i love you" is a tour documentary for the fans who could not be there.

It is no surprise that Grande has not been through the best of times over the

past four years. In May 2017, Grande found herself and fans under attack during her Dangerous Woman Tour in Manchester, London. According to witnesses and security footage, a suicide bomber detonated an improvised explosive device killing 22 people. A year later, Grande would face another tragic loss in her life. Mac Miller, an ex-boyfriend of Grande, died of an overdose on Sept. 7, 2018.

The Netflix documentary intertwines Grande's new album and live performances with a backstage view of

Ariana and her personal life. Moments captured behind the scenes of Ariana hanging with her dancers and rehearsals while having her high ponytail wrangled are shown. This tour gives an in-depth view of Ariana and her emergence from the darkness that took her spotlight from performing on stage.

From the beginning, viewers are immersed into Ariana's "Sweetener" world. Grande sings an intro for her fans as she struts across the screen, building the crowd's anticipation. She emerges singing her hit single "God is a woman"

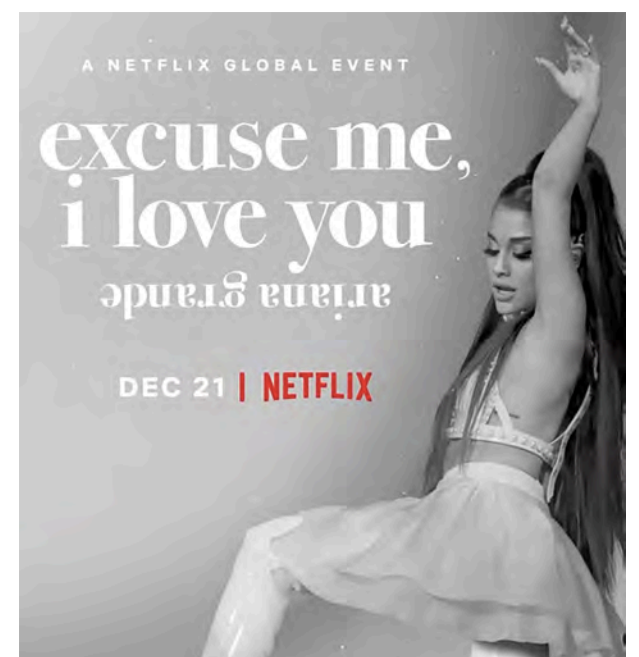
draped across a long table in similarity to DaVinci's painting of Christ in The Last Supper with 12 dancers. From there, Grande serves the screaming crowd with nothing but creativity and professionalism. Her fiery and alluring costume and wardrobe changes keep viewers wanting more. The set design and cinematography alone are entertaining and fascinating, not including her impeccable singing capabilities.

The documentary focuses on the performance of Grande's hits and bangers, but often cuts away to reveal

the ecstatic crowd, as well as Grande's struggles and accomplishments over the past years. If you are an Ariator or happen to love Ariana Grande, this creative and fascinating view

into the Sweetener World Tour is something that will keep you on the edge of your seat.

*"excuse me, i love you" is currently streaming on Netflix.*



*Photo courtesy of Netflix*

# Reviews

## Netflix's 'The Social Dilemma'

On Sept. 9, 2020, Netflix released "Social Dilemma," a documentary in the United States that explores the human impact of social networks with technology experts who previously worked for social media share their experiences. These tech experts helped create and improve social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Google, YouTube, Instagram, and have come together to inform viewers on what makes social media a helpful yet hindered tool.

Other experts such as professors and researchers explained how social media is a double-edged sword, how the algorithm works

and how it destroys mental health. These platforms pull users' attention by gathering their data, predicting their patterns and using push notifications to get them to be more active on the platforms.

By doing so, the company's profits are based on how much time users are on social media platforms, what aspects of the platform they use, what posts they view for how long, and how the user's behavior changes. The more users a platform gains, the more money companies can make from ad revenue.

These social media platforms are competing for the most attention from the most users so

they can gain the most profit. It is a profitable marketing tactic by having a third person – the website – finance how users communicate with others through a platform.

Students train in engineering at university to learn about persuasive technology, where they learn to manipulate people to use a company's platform and gain profit. The colors, word font and the algorithm are examples of persuasive technology used to gain more users. It makes individuals focus more on social media than real-life situations, and the unreal expectations of social media are causing a toll.

According to

researchers, women and preteen girls are cutting themselves or dying by suicide more than ever before. The rates have tripled compared to the last century due to the rise of social media.

Generation Z is said to be more depressed, fragile, and prone to low self-esteem. The expectations of beauty, fame, and wealth are constantly impressed through social media, which increases the effects of low self-esteem and feelings of uselessness and worthlessness.

There is also the issue of false information. With conspiracy theories, the algorithm shows what the user is interested in, and it will focus on that user's

interest, regardless of the truthfulness of that information.

Algorithms cannot tell the difference between false and real information, which companies attempt to moderate. However, tech experts say this is impossible since they do not control what the algorithm does.

False or misleading information on Twitter spreads up to six times faster than trustworthy news and can bring consequences such as riots, manipulation of information, and laws violated by vigilantes.

The documentary suggests that corporations be liable and taxed for the data they collect, so they do not misuse information or gather all the information on a

user. It also suggests that citizens protest and stand up against large corporations collecting data for money.

There are other options a person can do to reduce social media usage, such as turning off notifications or reducing the number of messages the user can receive. Other options include uninstalling social media and news apps that waste time, using a search engine that does not store search history, fact-checking information sources, obtaining sources with diverse perspectives, and limiting or forbidding the social media use of children.

*The Social Dilemma is now streaming on Netflix.*

## 'Night Stalker' (continued)

This documentary captures viewers' attention, and the story is unlike any criminal cases before or after, especially the unbelievable details of his eventual capture and arrest. "Night Stalker" stays interesting and is worth the watch.

It was revealed during the trial that Ramirez believed himself to be killing in the name of the Devil.

"We are all evil in some form or another, are we not?" asked Ramirez. The Night Stalker disturbed court pro-

ceedings, displaying a pentagram drawn on his palm and screamed "Hail Satan!" Ramirez was penalized with 19 death sentences.

"Big deal. Death always came with the territory. See you at Disneyland!" said Ramirez afterward. On June 7 2013, at the age of 53, Richard Ramirez died of B-cell lymphoma while awaiting appeals to his sentence.

"Night Stalker" is a terrifying documentary, staying on the Netflix top 10 list for at least three weeks

shows society's macabre interest in serial killers has not waned through the pandemic. Shown in four segments, the limited series runs 189 minutes (about three hours) total and keeps viewers on the edge of their seats. There will be many double-checked locks on doors and windows after watching the "Night Stalker: The Hunt for a Serial Killer" documentary.

"Night Stalker: The Hunt for a Serial Killer" is available to stream on Netflix.

## 'evermore' (continued)

"right where you left me" is another song that appears on the deluxe version of Swift's album. This song is about a woman who cannot seem to move on after her lover broke up with her. Swift gives vivid imagery of a young woman sitting at a restaurant gathering dust, unable to move and unable to speak as the world around her moves on. It is heartbreaking both to visualize and to listen.

"champagne

problems" is written with Swift's partner, Joe Alwyn, who writes under the pseudonym William Bowery. This song is about college sweethearts who have different plans for the same night. One is trying to end the relationship while the other brought a ring. When Swift says "but you'll find something real instead/ and she'll patch up your tapes-try that I shred," she means that the narrator was not ready to get married and that

she might be the one with the champagne problems.

Taylor Swift was able to transition beautifully into another genre. The more one listens to "evermore," the more one is able to find new things to understand and appreciate. Although she is new to the style of story songwriting, Swift managed to convey many universal emotions and thoughts through her lyrics.



# Wheels in Motion: Testing at a standstill

By Michael Kowis

I have been a UHD student for well over eight years and have taken many tests in my time here. Some were in the form of paper and pen with large print, and some were in digital form on Blackboard with a set time, and now, some are proctored over Respondus LockDown. I have never been in a testing environment so poorly optimized for those in the Differently abled community. In short, Respondus LockDown is a heavily monitored, testing browser add-on. It aims to discourage cheating in the three ways: facial recognition, cue detection,

and website disallowance.

It is in the following ways that LockDown is inappropriate for some people. On the night of Jan. 24, I had to take a test proctored through LockDown, and what many readers do not know about me is that my vision is not particularly good. In fact, my visual acuity is 2200/20 with nystagmus. In short, that means I need to get close to a screen to read anything, including the write-up of this article. This visual issue contradicts the operation of facial recognition, which means that I cannot



read the testing items while simultaneously staring at the webcam.

There is also the issue of taking a

photo of my ID because of my other disability, cerebral palsy, so I only have the use of one hand. That hand is cur-

rently typing this piece, which means, I cannot hold my ID while also working the camera.

The third issue, presented by student, Alexandra Jilles, is audio cue detection and how that interferes with the testing process. In her statement, she told me that she has an animal that occasionally makes noises; the software detects these noises and flags her as cheating when she is not. It is not fair to Alexandra Jilles when at any time, the software could flag her for poor behavior for no fault of her own.

In my observations of testing

environments, a few things should be clear. One, that testing items, not environment, should be challenging. What do I mean here? I mean to say that when professors create their exams, they have a certain idea of how challenging the items should be. When you add in a testing environment, the testing items should not become harder than what was planned for. In my case, all the testing items became harder not because the items themselves were challenging but because I was unable to see most of them.

*Continued on Opinions, Page 18*

# CDC promotes America's silent killer

By Jesse Fitzgerald Rodriguez Sr.

The CDC has let down Americans, overstepped on small business owners and magnified the pockets of corporate giants.

"This pandemic is the worst to hit Americans in over 100 years," reads the December 2020 Center for Disease Control and Prevention's press release. Though Americans wait desperately, there has been no explanation, no resolution.

One year prior, in December 2019, the CDC quickly deliberated and enforced strict regulations, mandates, and harsh rules on people and business owners. As a result, thousands of small businesses were forced to shut their doors, reject paying clients, and limit their

capacity, while big corporations dominated the online e-commerce world.

The CDC enforces and mandates mask, social distancing, and in a sense, controls Americans' social assemblies, community congregations, and many other organizations throughout the nation, even transforming all working environments.

Echoes across the nation ask when this will end. This outbreak of pandemic disease is now a global issue. Meanwhile, the CDC's research continues to capitalize on this global crisis by researching virus strains to innovate vaccines and eliminate the enemy.

To illustrate,

"This has been a year of challenges, but also of innovation, modernization, and advancement in public health," CDC Director Dr. Robert R. Redfield. While the CDC controls America's faith, the people wait for results and solutions while sickness and death funnel through the American country like a deadly, silent snake.

Many people may think that viruses are something new but on the contrary.

"In fact, this virus isn't new to the world, but it is new to humans," stated an article on WebMD.

Meanwhile, UHD students, faculty, and staff breathe uneasily. They fear going to class, going to work, and the

future of a minority education system is unstable, unpredictable. Regardless, the UHD system adapts to change to the best of its ability.

Without a doubt, priority number one is eradicating the enemy, the coronavirus, dubbed COVID-19. The reality is, there is no going backward, only forward, there is no chance of normality, but new opportunities arise every day. What do students do now?

Stay healthy, well-informed, and Interim President Dr. Antonio Tillis added in a UHD message to all students on Jan. 8, "As a community, we can rise above the greatest of challenges and emerge stronger than before."

I remain optimistic because President-Elect Joe Biden assured the American people that he would eliminate this virus.

"I said it before, I am not going to shut down the economy, I am not going to shut down the country, I am going to shut down the virus," Biden announced while campaigning in Florida back in October 2020.

In the end, America will overcome this crisis because America's leaders will not hinder as the CDC tries to put a chokehold on this strain, this novel coronavirus. Meanwhile, amid chaos, a nation unites and hopes for the best and prays for the worst to pass swiftly.

My grandma once said long ago, where there is chaos and obscurity, lies the seeds of new life, new opportunities, new creations and innovations, and a new way of living.

Maybe, but for now, online and virtual is expected, at a distance and secluded are suggested, limited and lost are the children, controlled and restricted are the people, but this pandemic, as all bad things in life, will soon come to pass. So, let us hope and pray that next time—the CDC and its associates will be better organized and prepared for anything that strikes this nation by surprise—again.

# Wheels in Motion: Testing at a standstill (continued)

The fact that I had a demanding time seeing testing items made the test harder than it should have been. In the case of audio cue detection, when students have to take their eyes (and minds) off a test to handle some environment issues, students need to know that they will not be punished for actions beyond their control.

It pains me to listen to the cases of students carefully studying course readings, lectures, and the

like only for those efforts to be made moot upon exam time. In preparing for this piece, I asked my brother, a student at Lone Star College and our in-house, certified IT expert his thoughts and solutions to the problem.

“Home environments are not a secure testing environment. Too many variables interfere between the student and the testing items. If universities are going to use LockDown, then they should use

it in the environment it was designed for, IE a testing center or the Office of Disability Services.” I believe that the correct solution to making testing environments more accessible is to do the following. If the student has a disability issue as recognized in part by the Americans with Disabilities Act Section 504, “federal law requires that school districts provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to qualified students

in their jurisdictions who have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.” In accordance with FAPE, I do not think that the use of LockDown meets the requirements, especially the part about appropriate education. To be clear, I mean to say that an appropriate testing environment is one in which the environment itself does not present a helping hand to some students while at the same

time handicapping others, it should not add to or take away test difficulty, and it should be appropriate to the abilities of all, whether you are differently abled or not.

In closing, while there are a wide variety of testing environments ranging from simple pen and item test to complex computer-graded exams, there is also, a broad differentiation of testing environments that are “appropriate” for individuals covered under ADA

Section 504. Most testing environments mentioned above would be considered “appropriate;” however, LockDown in its current iteration and delivery method is one exception. It is my hope that by going through this journey, I can enlighten others who may not see how testing environments can impact the difficulty and efficacy of testing items.

# Trump misuses social media to incite violence By Shaheryar Khan

On Jan. 6, two months after Joe Biden was declared the winner of the U.S. presidential election, a group of violent individuals from the “Stop the Steal” movement breached the Capitol Building in Washington D.C. The catalyst to these unprecedented events can be traced back two months ago on Twitter, where Donald Trump provoked his followers to “Be there, will be wild!”

Trump endured in his denial of defeat with a continuous thread of tweets saying, “He only won in the eyes of the FAKE NEWS MEDIA,” and “I concede NOTHING! We have a long way to go. This was a RIGGED ELECTION!” The subsequent riots were promised to be executed “completely peacefully” as put by right-wing political activist Ali Alexander, who organized the “Stop the Steal”

movement.

Trump’s following has become somewhat of a personality cult, brewing before his rise to politics and increasing significantly throughout his four-year reign. Throughout his presidential tenure, there was a great deal of moral ambiguity. Some of Trump’s diablerie consists of his Muslim travel ban, his policy to separate migrant families, which resulted in keeping children in cages, his infamous Twitter barrage, which embedded and influenced the minds of many Trump supporters far and wide. Having the title of “President of the Free-World” is not equivalent to hosting a television program.

A president’s words are essential and can significantly impact people’s lives, so having a president behave online as frequently as Trump did was very

unprofessional and not standard presidential etiquette. The “Make America Great Again” supporters used Trump’s online activity as fuel to fill up their minds, for they believed Trump over any other professional and all else.

Throughout the coronavirus pandemic, Trump continuously spread misinformation. Cornell University’s research concluded that Trump was the “single largest driver” of coronavirus misinformation, with a contribution of about 38%. Apart from his pandemic role, Trump was responsible for inciting millions of people who broke into the Capitol Building through social media posts.

Minutes after the election results confirmed Biden’s victory to become the 46th president of the United States, Trump’s Twitter was rampant. Trump

tweeted, “They are trying to steal the election.” The election was far from stolen; for every vote had been cast on the ballot. On Nov. 4, three days before Biden was declared the winner, Trump falsely claimed victory for himself, asserting “a fraud on the American public.” This remark was false, for Trump did not have concise evidence to support it.

The use of social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, has become a potent tool to rally up support for public figures for a long time now, and Trump has used this to his advantage. Twitter was Trump’s most prominent vessel of communication to his supporters. Social media misuse to garner violence is not a foreign concept. Facebook has been used to incite a genocide of the Rohingya people, a Muslim minority group in Myan-

March Some false accusations included a viral post about a Buddhist woman who was raped by a Muslim man and many similar posts written by anti-Rohingya groups on Facebook, fabricating propaganda. Myanmar military operatives proceeded to advance in the cleansing of this minority group. Facebook was subsequently held accountable for allowing hatred to spread on their platform of around 2 billion people.

On Jan. 8, Twitter took action by permanently banning Trump “due to the risk of further inciting violence,” ending his platform of 88 million followers. For many years, social media outlets like Twitter and Facebook allowed posts from world leaders like Donald Trump to proceed because they defended free speech. Twitter went forth to ban Trump’s account

because his tweets violated their rules against “glorifying violence.” Misinformation decreased by 73%, according to an original article by The Washington Post.

The world is a little bit cleaner from misinformation but at the cost of banning Trump from communicating through Twitter. The question emerges if the principle of free speech still exists in our society. In a tweet, Donald Trump Jr. stated that after his father’s suspension, “Free-speech no longer exists in America.” Then again, let us not ignore that Trump and many prominent right-wing individuals did rally up supporters to come and be “wild.” The Capital Hill riots resulted in 82 arrests, more than 50 injuries, and 5 deaths.

## Vaccine Dilemma

To vaccinate or not? That is the question. Perhaps you are one of the golden ticket holders in which you will be first in line to get a COVID-19 vaccination, or perhaps you are the winner of the unluckiest lottery ever. Regardless of the fact – you have surely taken a moment to consider getting the COVID-19 vaccine.

First, let us jump into the facts gathered thus far. As of today, the only folks being offered the vaccination are those who are 65 and older or first responders. Rightfully so,

I choose to believe that not only do we all agree on wanting to protect our elders, and the people that are working endlessly to safeguard our lives. So, what is the COVID vaccine?

The two main companies that are offering and supplying the vaccine are Pfizer and Moderna. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, both vaccines are no different from any previous vaccinations any of us had before. Therefore, if you have never had any problems, specifically, an allergic reaction after a vaccine, then you proba-

By Jennifer Ayala

bly will not have one with this one.

Both the Pfizer and Moderna require a second shot given six weeks after the initial vaccine. Following the initial vaccination, you will be given a vaccine card to keep up with the dates – so make sure that if you opt-in, you follow up with your second one.

Although, there is no need to worry because if you do not fall into the phase 1 vaccination schedule, President Biden has made plans to distribute 100 million vaccines within the first 100 days of being in office. Next,

local pharmacies will begin vaccinating in early February – just in time to spend lover’s day side by side with that special someone. That is, if both have decided to get the vaccine. Whether you choose to get the vaccine or not, that is your decision. I hope that your significant other is on the same page as you.

Herd immunity, anyone? Never in my life had I heard of this term. However, since the COVID-19 pandemic has hit, I am assuming we have all gotten accustomed to some lesser-known words. For those unfamiliar, herd immunity is when most of the population is

immune to infectious disease, which protects those who are not. Hence, those who choose not to vaccinate will still benefit from those who do. Pretty much how past infectious diseases have worked – the flu, measles, mumps, polio, and chickenpox are just a few to name. Likely, if you are one who has opted out of a flu vaccine, then you may well be on your way to not wanting the COVID-19 vaccine, and that is A-okay too. What is not okay is taking this opportunity to make someone feel bad for choosing to vaccinate or not. In the end, we are all going to have friends

and family that decide very differently, and at the end of the day, we will still love them – at least that is what I hope for us all.

So, will you get the vaccine? As the days approach for the vaccine to become more attainable, it is advised that you all start thinking about it, because right now, we have the option to choose.

The odds are, that you will have minor discomfort, and those can be found by a simple Google search, but include flu-like symptoms, pain, and redness around the injection site, headache, nausea, and chills.

## Insurrection leads to historic second impeachment

By Rachel Ann Preston

On Jan. 25, former President Donald J. Trump’s impeachment articles were delivered to the Senate Chamber.

This is a historical event, as no other United States president has been impeached twice. The official article of impeachment states that former President

Trump engaged in “High Crimes and Misdemeanors” by inciting the Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol. The attack on the Capitol Building left five people dead including Capitol Police officer Brian D. Sicknick.

Shortly before the Capitol building was breached, Trump gave a speech encour-

aging his supporters to fight, or risk not having a country anymore. The speech came after a multitude of public comments regarding the 2020 election results as “fraudulent” and “not certifiable by federal officials.”

Former Vice President Mike Pence was present during the insurrection, as

a joint Congressional session was held to certify the 2020 election results, the final certification of then President-elect Joe Biden. During the Insurrection, Congressional members were struck with fear and evacuated out as the rioters’ broke windows and barged into the elective offices.

The Impeach-

ment Article mentions further attempts to thwart the election results, urging the Secretary of State of Georgia to “find enough votes to overturn the Georgia presidential election results.” The former president is accused of being a danger to our democracy and a threat to our national security. Over a year

ago, Trump was given his first impeachment, cited for abuse of power and obstruction of Congress, making him the third U.S. president to have been impeached. During the Senate trial, he was acquitted. The second impeachment, the trial is scheduled on Feb. 9.

## Misinformation, denial and undying loyalty leads to violence

By Aansa Usmani

Since President Joe Biden’s election on Nov. 7 2020, former-President Donald Trump continually denied the elections’ accuracy. Though Trump’s bidings did not change the election results, they had devastating effects on the nation

Despite these

lawsuits, the outgoing president continued to promote falsehoods of election information—both on social media and in-person rallies—rallying up his base of devoted “MAGAts” to contest the election’s results within their home states. Additionally, the president contin-

ued promoting Jan. 6, the day in which the bicameral chambers certify the election. This date will forever be synonymous with violent protests and a failed attempt at authoritarianism.

The Capitol Insurrection on Jan. 6 was a perfect storm of misinformation, de-

nialism, and undying loyalty; all these combined elements would lead to the infamous insurrection, resulting in both Congressional and Senatorial colleagues—Democratic and Republican—fearing for their lives. These outraged rioters sought vengeance towards those—par-

ticularly Republicans—who accepted Biden as the incoming president.

The aftermath of Jan. 6 has risen tensions between the three political factions, the third being “ReTrumpicans.” The failed coup leader also suffered significant consequences, becoming the first president to be impeached twice and permanently suspended from main-

stream social media platforms, including his personal favorite, Twitter.

All these events could have been prevented had the president accepted defeat and promoted a peaceful transfer of power. The rioting cult-like supporters have shown how toxic relationships between misinformation and undying loyalty leads to its consequences within the real world.

# Proud Boys should be declared terrorists

By Argenis Nino

When a platform is in need, a singular voice may not meet demand. However, when there are enough people connected through the internet and social media, they gain the ability to promote their beliefs on a grand scale.

What happens when those beliefs with mob numbers endanger the democracy of the United States that is so highly regarded? The nation witnessed just that on Jan. 6, when members of the group in support of former

President Donald Trump banded together along with others to storm the Capitol Building.

Congress had gathered to count the electoral votes that had named Joseph R. Biden Jr. the next president of the United States. Being that Congress would ultimately say who was president, alt-right, Trump supporters, and the Proud Boys showed up to the Capitol after Trump's last rally before formally losing his title as president. He told attendees and follow-

ers to march towards the Capitol.

One could see Proud Boys members sporting their signature black and yellow colors in shirts, bandanas, and hats. Some in incognito to blend with the mob and some in all black. Proud Boys leader, Enrique Tarrio, commented on the endeavor.

"The Proud Boys will turn out in record numbers on Jan. 6, but this time with a twist."

Although uncounted for as investigations still

are undergoing by the FBI, there have been rough estimates surpassing the thousands manifesting but cannot be confirmed.

The Proud Boys are recognized as an alt-right group with degrading views on people of color, LGBTQ+ members, and non-Christians. They are not a foreign threat but have been compared now to that extent after the riots along with familial groups.

What is horrid is the fact they are not foreign terrorists but are bred within the

nation labeling themselves as "patriots." Founded by Gavin McInnes, he described the start-up as "Western chauvinists who refuse to apologize for creating the modern world." This meant they blindly followed the extremes of patriotism with a superiority complex.

In 2018, the organization escalated greater than what McInnes had expected, leading to his departure from the group. In that same year, the FBI labeled the Proud Boys, as "an extremist group

with ties to white nationalism," which incited more political violence through its development. Many negative connotations are tied to the Proud Boys and as they stand, things may only get worse. Through repeated acts of violence and hateful statements, if it were to be foreign groups, the label of terrorist would have been stamped on much sooner. What is stopping from recognizing the Proud Boys as such?



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The University of Houston-Downtown is seeking applicants for the positions of Editor and Business Manager for The Dateline, the student-run, bi-weekly newspaper.

## Editor Position

This paid position begins summer 2021 (\$425/issue; start date flexible), and the applicants must commit to fill the position for the entire 2021-22 academic year. Duties include responsibility for the overall operation of the paper. Editors assemble and manage a team of student writers and sub-editors and assign them to cover news and events. Position requires some familiarity with the use of Adobe InDesign page-making software.

The paper runs stories anticipat-

ing campus events as well as reviewing them, including student activities and organizations, academics, athletics and lifestyle, university administration, and student government; also cultural coverage of activities in the theatre, film, music, sports and arts communities, particularly as they are of interest to UHD students.

Qualifications include at least sophomore standing, at least one semester in residence at UHD, successful completion of basic writing and communications courses, and a current

3.0 cumulative GPA (3.5 preferred). Applications accepted until position is filled.

To apply, please send a letter of application indicating your reasons and qualifications for applying for the position. Include as well your resume as well as an unofficial copy of your UHD transcript. Send these documents to The Dateline faculty advisor, Joe Sample, Ph.D., Associate Professor, at samplej@uhd.edu. Applications are sought immediately and will be accepted until position is filled.

## Business Manager Position

This paid position begins fall 2021 (start date flexible), and applicants must commit to the position for the full 2021-22 academic year. The job involves both advertising sales and managing the business and financial operations of the newspaper.

The successful candidate will have a strong orientation toward personal selling and developing advertising revenue as well as effective budgeting and management skills. Duties include managing business and financial mat-

ters for the paper, in cooperation with the student editor and faculty adviser, and expanding the sales of advertising space in the paper, including to businesses in the campus neighborhoods of NoDo and Washington St. Typical commitment is 20 hours per week; salary is \$800 per month, plus 15% commission on ad sales.

Minimum qualifications include at least sophomore standing or higher, the completion of at least one semester at UHD, successful completion of basic

business courses, and a 2.5 GPA.

To apply, please send a letter of application indicating your reasons and qualifications for applying for the position. Include as well your resume as well as an unofficial copy of your UHD transcript. Send these documents to The Dateline faculty advisor, Joe Sample, Ph.D., Associate Professor, at samplej@uhd.edu. Applications are sought immediately and will be accepted until position is filled.