

DATELINE

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University reinstates soft opening for spring semester



Mario Perez, biotechnology student at UHD, gets vaccinated at the Welcome Center on Jan. 20.
Credit: Indira Zaldivar

BY INDIRA ZALDIVAR

Given the rise of the omicron variant in Harris County, UHD President Loren J. Blanchard announced on Jan. 10, a soft opening for the first two weeks of the spring semester.

The soft opening aimed to reduce campus density by offering those instructors teaching face-to-face classes the option of meeting with students in person once a week instead of two. Blanchard said that classes are expected to resume the regular spring schedule on Monday, Feb. 7.

The UHD administration's decision came after Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo raised the county's

COVID-19 threat level to "Red" earlier that morning. Hidalgo indicated a "severe and uncontrolled level of COVID-19," marking the third time the county has upgraded its threat level.

Last August, UHD implemented its first soft opening after the county, for the second time, upgraded the county's COVID-19 threat level.

"We will continue to monitor the pandemic's effects on our community and may make additional changes to the semester or classes should the need arise," Blanchard said in the announcement. "We will communicate with you as quickly as possible should UHD need to once again piv-

ot in the face of COVID-19."

Blanchard encouraged UHD students to take advantage of the COVID-19 safety mechanisms on campus. A Curative testing site is located on Girard Street next to the Jesse H. Jones Student Life Center and open seven days a week.

Monthly vaccination events will take place on campus, according to Blanchard. The most recent one took place on Jan. 20 at the Welcome Center. Mario Perez, who studies biotechnology at UHD, said he is glad to count with "accessible" on-campus vaccination events.

Rosa Parks inspires transit equity efforts

BY ANITA GOOLCHARAN

Feb. 4 marks National Transit Equity Day. The date honors the birthday of Rosa Parks, memorializing her life, legacy, and contributions to the Civil Rights Era.

Parks' refusal to give up her bus seat during the Civil Rights Movement led to her arrest in 1955, gaining national attention and triggering the start of a 381-day boycott of the Montgomery, Alabama bus system.

The boycott was a major turning point for the Civil Rights Movement.

"It was the very last time that I would ever ride in humiliation of this kind," Parks said. Her actions intertwined with the notion of transit equity,

highlighting the inequities of public transportation.

Transit Equity Day was created to help raise awareness of public transportation as a civil right. In Houston, the Labor Network for Sustainability also promotes Transit Equity Day to help fight climate change. According to the American Public Transportation Association, greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector produce one-third of all emissions in the United States. Using public transportation reduces travel by private vehicles, reducing the carbon footprint and conserving energy.

Activists and advocates often use Transit Equity Day

to bring awareness to further their agendas. This year Houston transit advocates plan to pose a challenge to board members of the Metropolitan Transit Authority to use public transportation.

"While Metro is committed to equity and has proven to be a good faith partner, we believe that public transit decision makers, who may not ride transit regularly, should do so to truly understand the full transit experience in Houston, including how convenient it can be to take the bus and also how challenging it is in certain areas that need more investments," Ines Sigel, the interim executive director of LINKHouston, an organization that advocates



Credit: Giselle Oviedo

for a robust and equitable transportation network in Houston, stated.

LINKHouston and other local advocates will ask for the board members to take public transportation during the week of Feb. 4 to challenge the board members to renew an appreciation

for the rider's experience. LINKHouston encourages the Houston community to celebrate the occasion by using public transit and sharing their experiences on social media using #TransitEquityDay and tagging @LINK_Houston.



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FIND US ONLINE!

Reigning Ms. Texas leads fight against gender-based violence

BY SHAHERYAR KHAN

Meet the amazing woman raising awareness to prevent family violence, sexual assault, and sex trafficking all over the nation and the world: Eileen Dong.

Originally from Shanghai, China, Dong has made Texas her home and her base of operation. Dong is a proud Texan and reigning USA Ambassador Pageant Ms. Texas.

“Pageantry is a platform for bringing awareness and prevention of the growing epidemic of gender-based violence and addressing cultural stigmas,” Dong said.

By trade, she is a business consultant providing cross-cultural communication to highly acclaimed companies such as Caterpillar and SAP and government agencies such as the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Dong is also a petroleum engineer and a NASA scholar. Apart from that, she is a dancer, actress, and model. She has modeled for big names such as L’oreal Paris, Formula One Grand Prix, CoverGirl, Marriot, Garnier, to name a few.

She uses her world-renowned platform to make a difference in the lives of the survivors that have been involved in human trafficking, domestic violence, sexual assault, and any other gender-based violence.

Dong is the spokesperson and ambassador for Hope Pyx Global, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization whose sole goal is to aid the victims and survivors and raise awareness.

According to a study conducted by the non-profit, a 2020 statistic confirms that 10,583 human trafficking cases were reported,

and 987 of them were from Texas. Houston is the largest hub for human trafficking in the United States.

Hope Pyx Global has helped over 11,000 survivors, and over 1.6 million listeners have heard her voice across various platforms.

Dong visited UHD to spread awareness on human trafficking in honor of Human Trafficking Awareness Day. She joined keynote speaker of the event and UHD graduate Dr. Nissi Hamilton, as Dong shared how she is a survivor of sex trafficking.

She returned to UHD two weeks later and spoke with Student Government Association Director of External Affairs Ariel Cruz on Instagram live, hosted by UHD iRadio intern Dalila Juarez. Dong spoke to the Gators on the Power and Control Wheel on



L-R: UHD iRadio interns Mercy Castro and Dalila Juarez; Humanitarian Eileen Dong, SGA Director of External Affairs Ariel Cruz, and The Dateline’s Shaheryar Khan. Courtesy: Eileen Dong

the broadcast, leading to physical and sexual violence. To view the entire interview, visit the SGA Instagram page @sgauhd.

Dong is a hero who continues to help many survivors of abuse every day. If you have been affected by violence of any kind, Dong

encourages you to join her support group on Facebook called Survivors Against Violence Everywhere.

Her Instagram account, @eileendongofficial, is also a reliable source of beneficial information and a fantastic way to support her cause. More inter-

views and other related content are available on Dong’s YouTube channel, TheMsTexasShow.

Gators who would like to learn more information on the fantastic work done by Dong and other volunteers, visit hopepyxglobal.org.

Local historic building offers alternate study space near campus



Houston Metropolitan Research Center. Credit: Carolina Valdez

BY CAROLINA VALDEZ

Just around the corner from City Hall is the Houston Metropolitan Research Center, a surprisingly excellent study destination. With such an intimidating name, it is easy to understand why many passerby do not pop inside to explore. Being

next door to the busier and more modern Houston Public Library could also be why this hidden gem is overlooked.

Walking in, the welcoming staff will let you know all the parts of the building that are accessible to the public. The research center houses historical docu-

ments from the city and the state, and old rare books.

Though you may not check out anything, patrons are welcome to view the archives and the books anytime.

One of the many significant parts about this gorgeous, historic building is the impressive reading room on the second floor. It is a large ballroom with rows of tables and lamps so that attendees can read or study.

There are plugs available on the tables, a perfect feature for students with laptops, and free wi-fi.

One is transported through time as the research center resembles a castle, with fine details in the architecture and its high ceilings. The Spanish Renaissance-style building was originally designed

by Ralph Adams Cram and William Ward Watkins in 1926. It was restored by the Julia Ideson Library Preservation Partners in 2010. The group is named after Julia Ideson, Houston’s first professional librarian, who worked for the city for 43 years.

“This place makes me feel like I’m in a movie! I can’t believe places like this are actually real,” said local Houstonian Christian Vazquez.

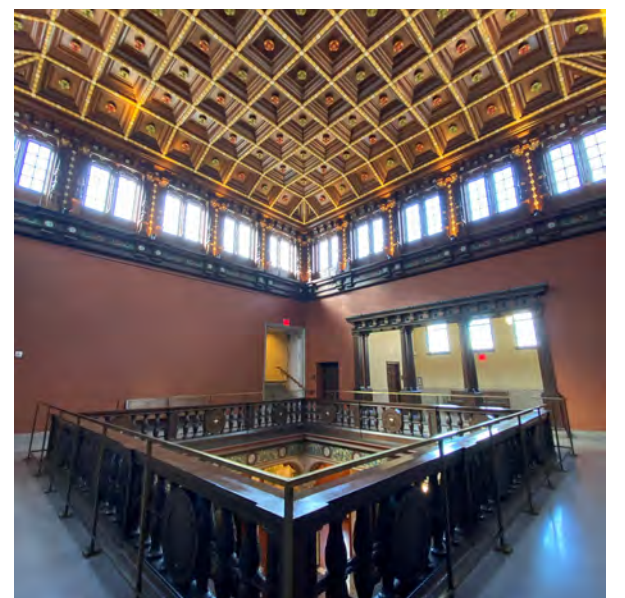
The beautiful reading room is not the only treasure hidden in this building. There is a box disguised as a book filled with things left behind by past discoverers among the bookshelves. Buried under the notes, pictures, and trinkets is a silver notebook with letters from people dating back to 2015. Some share their

life stories, while others express gratitude for being a part of such a wonderful secret.

It is truly a dreamlike location for students that prefer quiet and lonely places to study. If you are a UHD Gator uncomfortable with being around many people but still want to get out of the house, the

Houston Metropolitan Research Center is the perfect refuge.

Lastly, a warm sweater is strongly recommended since the building is kept very cold. The research center is open Tuesdays through Saturdays from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.



The third floor showcases natural light. Credit: Carolina Valdez

UHD K-pop Club welcomes new members

BY JORDYNN GODFREY

Are you looking for more ways to get involved at UHD? Are you passionate about or want to know more, about K-pop and Korean culture? If you answered “yes” to both, then UHD’s K-pop Club might be perfect for you!

K-pop Club President Asti Phea pursues a master’s degree in technical communication here at UHD. She talked with Dateline writer Jordynn Godfrey about the founding of the K-pop Club, her involvement, and club meetings.

“The K-pop Club had existed for three years prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, but disbanded because of the pandemic,” Phea said. However, as of August 2021, the K-pop Club is active again. The K-pop Club was founded by the Sports and Fitness Center Sports Coordinator Justin Sarabia.

Phea loves Korean dramas and listens to many K-pop bands. Due to her interest in Korean culture, she decided to join the K-pop Club last semester.

“I was at the very first interest meeting in August 2021,” Phea said. Due to her being the oldest in the Club, and proving her reliance

and responsibility, she was made Club President. “There were about 20 participants in the first meeting and now there are about 10 consistent members.”

“The K-pop Club meets every Friday from 4 to 6 p.m.,” Phea said. “We have two choreographers in the group who learn a new K-pop dance and teach it to the club every week. If you don’t want to dance, you can watch Korean dramas, or discuss and learn about Korean culture.”

The K-pop Club has a Discord chat for members to ask questions, stay in touch, make suggestions, and share videos of their choreographed dances so that members can practice on their own time.

According to the K-pop Club’s constitution and by-laws, the K-pop Club’s mission is to “create a community to enjoy K-pop culture at UHD, provide a space for K-pop connoisseurs to educate and entertain the UHD community, raise awareness of Korean culture amongst the UHD community, and leverage academic and professional opportunities in Korean educational institutions and economic markets for members of KPC.”

No matter how many credit hours they are taking per semester, any UHD student may join as a recorded member. Non-students may participate, but they cannot be official members of the Club. However, the community is encouraged as it is a social club, so everyone is welcome to participate.

The only other requirement for becoming a K-pop Club member is completing two hours of community service per semester. Phea stated that community hours would look like scheduled events for the entire club to attend that may be volunteering at a food bank or senior center, or perhaps holding a K-pop event for the Houston community.

If you are interested in joining the K-pop Club or want to learn more, the first interest meeting of the Spring 2022 semester will be held on Friday, Feb. 4 at 4 p.m. The K-pop Club meets in person on the third-floor studio of the Sports and Fitness Center.

THE DATELINE

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Submission Policy

The Dateline staff consists of students from UHD 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 UHD, 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 UHD. All paid writers must also complete vendor registration with the University of Houston System prior to contributing. Press releases, story ideas, news tips and suggestions are always welcomed. We encourage all students to contribute.

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Credit: Shaheryar Khan



@the_dateline

Center for Latino Studies recruits students to document pandemic

BY MADIHA HUSSAIN

The Center for Latino Studies is offering UHD students up to \$500 to document how the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has impacted Latinos. This new opportunity is called “Documenting the Pandemic Oral History Project,” created by Bonnie Lucero, the Director of the Center for Latino Studies.

Albert DeJesus-Rivera, the interim coordinator for the Center for Latino Studies, shined a light on the importance of this project and some of the details.

Students will first have to undergo some training to become interviewers. The exact dates of these training sessions will be updated on the UHD website soon. After a student has been trained, they will be able to seek out Latino individuals who have been impacted by the pandemic.

For an individual to be interviewed, they must pass certain requirements. They must self-identify as a Latino. The interviewee must also be comfortable detailing their experience during the pandemic, as this project may be

viewed by the public, media, researchers, and historians. DeJesus-Rivera mentioned that the interview should take place through a video chat. However, interviews through audio recordings may be considered.

DeJesus-Rivera explained that different communities may not experience life-changing events, the same way. He mentioned several factors that may result in the Latino community experiencing the pandemic differently than non-Latinos. One such factor would be the language barri-

ers that some Latinos face when confronted with information about COVID-19. As a result, some Latinos may not be as informed about certain guidelines or information regarding the pandemic.

Another factor may be immigration status. Some Latinos may fear the repercussions of receiving the vaccine or getting tested for COVID-19 as it pertains to their citizenship.

He also explained that several Latinos might seek religious leaders and family members for support during hardships.

However, the pandemic has severely restricted how religious or social events take place. He hopes that this project will be a present-day archive for how the pandemic has affected and will continue to affect the world.

DeJesus-Rivera vision for the project is to help community members in the future to prepare for a similar historical event. Since the pandemic is still ongoing, this project may even be able to assist community leaders to improvise soon to establish better guidelines for the health

and wellbeing of the public. The overall goal of the project, however, is to show how a major ongoing historical event is viewed through the eyes of an individual.

It is not certain when the project is expected to end. DeJesus-Rivera iterated that the pandemic is still ongoing. As guidelines surrounding the pandemic continue to shift, people will continue to be impacted by it. He hopes to document the pandemic through this project for as long as COVID-19 impacts daily lives.

CDC debunks latest COVID-19 vaccine myths

BY JORDYNN GODFREY

With the COVID-19 pandemic becoming politicized, many differing opinions on the virus and subsequent vaccinations linger. It can be difficult to know what is right or wrong as the information found on the internet can be overwhelming, if not scary. However, there is nothing to fear from COVID-19 vaccines, as they are the best protection against COVID-19. Following are common COVID-19 vaccine myths debunked with information gathered from the CDC’s website, [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov).

“The COVID-19 vaccine is unsafe because it was rapidly developed and tested.”

While the world may have pushed for the quick development of a vaccine against this deadly virus, the technology used to produce vaccines have been developing for decades. No steps were skipped in developing these vaccines either. On the contrary, they were conducted on an overlapping schedule for quicker development. COVID-19 was so

widespread and contagious that it did not take long to see if the vaccine worked for study volunteers.

“COVID-19 vaccines can cause dangerous long-term effects.”

It is unlikely for any vaccine to cause long-term effects. The COVID-19 vaccine tells your cells to create an immune response that helps protect you from getting sick with COVID-19 in the future. Once your body produces an immune response, it discards all vaccine ingredients since your cells no longer need it. The vaccine does not stay in your body long enough to cause long-term effects.

“The vaccine injects a microchip into your body so that the government can track you.”

COVID-19 vaccines do not contain microchips. Vaccines are meant to fight against disease, not to track your movement.

“COVID-19 vaccines can cause infertility or miscarriage.” There is no evidence that any vaccine, including the COVID-19

vaccine, causes male or female infertility.

Myth: “Pregnant people should not get vaccinated.” Pregnant people are at a higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 than those who are not.

Getting vaccinated can protect pregnant people from health complications that could affect them and their babies.

“The vaccine does not work since you can still get COVID-19 after vaccination.” While it is true that you can still get COVID-19 after vaccination, you are less likely to experience severe illness requiring hospitalization, or even death, if you are vaccinated. Being sick and vaccinated is much safer than being sick and unvaccinated.

“COVID-19 vaccines contain preservatives, fetal tissue, and other dangerous materials.”

Nearly all the ingredients in COVID-19 vaccines are ingredients found in many foods, such as fats, sugars, and salts. COVID-19 vaccines do not contain any dangerous or controversial materials.

“The COVID-19 vaccine will change my DNA.” The COVID-19 vaccine never enters the cell’s nucleus, which is where DNA is located. The COVID-19 vaccine does not interact with DNA at all. Therefore, it cannot alter or change your DNA in any way.

“The COVID-19 vaccine will give you COVID-19.” While you may experience short-term effects, such as aches, chills, fatigue, and fever, this is different from getting COVID-19. These effects are a normal response to the vaccine and mean that your body produces an immune response and builds protection against the virus. Pfizer and Moderna use mRNA technology in their vaccines, which means a virus is not in their vaccines at all, and Johnson and Johnson/Janssen vaccines contain a harmless version of a virus unrelated to the virus that causes COVID-19. Therefore, you cannot get COVID-19 from these vaccines.

“The mRNA technology used to make

COVID-19 vaccines is brand new.” While this type of vaccine is new, research and development has been conducted for decades. The mRNA vaccines do not contain any live viruses. Instead, it teaches our cells to make a piece of protein found in the virus that causes COVID-19. Once there, our immune system recognizes that it does not belong and responds to dispose of it, creating antibodies.

“I already had COVID-19, so I do not need a vaccination.”

Those who do not get vaccinated after recovering from COVID-19 are more than twice as likely to get COVID-19 again than those who got fully vaccinated after recovery. The COVID-19 vaccine causes a far more predictable immune response than being infected with COVID-19.

“Once vaccinated, I don’t need to take precautions such as masking or distancing.”

While the CDC green-lit to resume pre-pandemic normal activities, they still



recommend wearing a mask indoors in public to protect from variants and prevent spreading it to others.

The COVID-19 vaccines are reasonably safe and are imperative in protecting yourself, family, friends, and neighbors against the deadly virus that causes COVID-19. You may still get sick, but the vaccine will protect you from experiencing severe illness, making it about as harmful as the common cold or flu. Anyone age 5 and older is eligible for vaccination free of charge. Get vaccinated, get boosted, stay masked and stay safe!

For more information on COVID-19, variants, and vaccines, visit www.cdc.gov.

Judge orders disgraced pharma CEO to repay defrauded investors

BY EDWARD SAENZ

Martin Shkreli has been ordered to pay back the \$64.6 million in profits his former company, Turing Pharmaceuticals, earned to his investors. Along with this, Shkreli has been barred from being a part of the pharmaceutical industry for the rest of his life.

In early 2015, Shkreli rose to infamy when his company, Turing Pharmaceuticals, acquired the Daraprim drug from Impax Pharmaceuticals in September. Turing overnight skyrocketed the price of the life-saving malaria drug from \$13.50 to a bank-breaking \$750. Shkreli's brash and unapologetic attitude about the price gouging

led to him being dubbed "Pharma Bro" and "the most hated man in America," by the BBC.

Daraprim had been on the market since the 1950s and only had one U.S. supplier at a time, Impax and now Turing. It also had no patent protection, which meant that while unethical, what Turing did was technically "legal."

Turing went as far as to make changes to the supply distribution process to deter other companies from getting approval to study rival versions of the drug. As a result, Daraprim remained the only option in the U.S. market until March 2020, when the Food and Drug Administration approved the first generic version

of the drug. Shkreli is currently serving a seven-year prison sentence for securities fraud. In 2015, his then hedge fund MSMB Capital Management lied to investors about the well-being of his first pharmaceutical company, Retrophin.

In December 2021, a Manhattan court found that under Mr. Shkreli's control, Turing Pharmaceuticals (now Vyera Pharmaceuticals) had changed the way the drug was distributed and "impeded competition in the generic market."

Consumers were harmed by higher prices and practically no other options for the drug, "forcing many patients and physicians to make

difficult and risky decisions for the treatment of life-threatening diseases," the New York attorney general's office said in a news release.

"The rich and powerful don't get to

play by their own set of rules, so it seems that cash doesn't rule everything around Mr. Shkreli," NY Attorney General Letitia James said told CNN.

"New Yorkers can trust that my office will do everything possible to hold the powerful accountable, in addition to fighting to protect their health and their wallets."



Martin Shkreli gets arrested from his home in Manhattan. Courtesy: Andrew Burton/Getty Image

Houston Health Department confirms youngest COVID victim

BY MADIHA HUSSAIN

The city's youngest person to die of COVID-19 was less than 10 years old at the time of her death back in October 2021. The unnamed child's death occurred just weeks before the FDA authorized the use of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for children ages 5-11.

The exact identity of the young victim is not known to protect privacy laws. However, the Houston Health Department was able to confirm that the unnamed child was Black and had health issues before contracting COVID-19.

Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner used this tragedy to remind the public to receive their vaccines, wear masks, and get tested for COVID-19 to protect vulnerable members of the community.

Hospitalizations of children under 18 have broken records earlier this year. The health department also shared the mayor's sentiments and reminded the public of the rapid transmission of the omicron variant.

The 10-year-old child that passed away was one of 3,978 COVID-19 related deaths in Houston alone, as of Jan. 12. Houstonians under 19 accounted for just

0.20% of the city's COVID-19 related deaths. However, their deaths serve as a reminder that even younger individuals can still lose their lives due to COVID-19.

The Pfizer vaccine is now available for people ages five and up, while booster shots are approved for people who are at least 12 years old.

More information on free COVID-19 vaccinations or testing sites, is available at houstonhealth.org or 832-393-4220.

Supreme Court denies vaccine mandates for large businesses

BY SERGIO PRESA JR

The Biden administration's COVID-19 vaccine mandate for large businesses has been halted by the Supreme Court.

The mandate would have required that workers get the shot or be tested regularly and be required to wear a mask while at work. The court's majority ruled that the administration exceeded its authority in trying to implement the mandate.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration said that had the mandate been allowed to stand, it would have saved 6,500 lives and prevented 250,000 hospitalizations over a sixth month

period. The court in its conservative majority opinion reasoned that OSHA has never imposed a similar mandate and nor has Congress.

The three liberal justices on the court argued that the court itself overreached and substituted its judgement for health experts' judgement. President Biden was disappointed in the court's decision.

"I am disappointed that the Supreme Court has chosen to block common-sense life-saving requirements for employees at large businesses that were grounded squarely in both science and the law."


The president urged businesses to imple-

ment their own vaccine mandates.

While the court did not allow the vaccine requirement for businesses to stand, it did narrowly uphold the vaccination mandate for workers in the health care industry.


The mandate was allowed by a 5-4 vote in the court. President Biden said that the decision "will save lives."

Those two mandates are not the only ones tangled up in legal battles. A separate vaccine mandate for federal contractors is also on hold after lower courts blocked it. That mandate, however, has not yet been considered by the Supreme Court.



- Feb. 7 2021 - Tampa Bay Buccaneers win Super Bowl LV
- Feb. 8 2014 - First McDonalds opens in Vietnam
- Feb. 9 1825 - After neither candidate received the majority of electoral college votes, John Quincy Adams is selected by House of Representatives as sixth US President
- Feb. 10 1996 - Garry Kasparov, world chess champion, wins game to computer
- Feb. 11 1990 - Nelson Mandela is released from prison

This Week in History



Credit: Edward Saenz

Community leaders call for 'racist' Cy-Fair ISD trustee's resignation

BY SASHA SMITH

Derogatory, insensitive, and undistinguished, are some of the words community members have used to describe the comments of a Cy-Fair ISD trustee's on the number of Black teachers and dropout rates.

At a board work session in early January, trustee, Scott Henry, commented on the statewide average for Black teachers within the district is 10%, while in comparison to Houston ISD's 36%.

"The statewide average for Black teachers

is 10%, Houston ISD, which I'll use as the shining example, you know what their average number of percent-age of Black teachers is? Thirty-six percent, I looked that up," Henry stated.

He connected this statement to the dropout rate percentage, in Houston ISD's district, insinuating there may be a linkage between the racial background of staff and the academic performance of students.

"You know what their dropout rate is? Four percent. I don't

want to be 4%. I don't want to be HISD," he added.

Scott seemed very "passionate," as he stated on this topic, and wanted the "pre-mium place" Cy-Fair ISD has built to not be ruined by the inclusion of more Black educa-tors.

The NCAAAP Houston, FIEL, and government officials including Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner and Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo joined community leaders in asking the trustee to resign after learning of

his polemic statement. Cy-Fair trustees cannot remove Henry since he was elected.

"I want to be a shining example. I want to be the district stan-dard. I want to be the premium place where people go to be. And quite frankly, we have a limited budget with limited resources, and we have a great place. Let's don't mess it up for everyone else."

However, it has been shown from personal and multiple research outlets, that the inclusive and diverse nature of an educational

staff can greatly im-prove the education a student is provided with and help them develop better social attitudes.

"Inclusive systems provide a better-quality education for all children and are in-strumental in changing discriminatory attitudes. Schools provide the context for a child's first relationship with the world outside their families, enabling the development of so-cial relationships and interactions," the Open Society Foundations stated.

The environment that surrounds a student can impact them in a host of different ways, positively or negatively. However, the inclusion of multiple races and identities open an array of growth for a student and has never been a mistake.

"What we saw the other night was the racism said out loud," Hidalgo said. "And if we allow this kind of thing in a public forum by a public official that represents a school district, what are we allowing?"

Taliban will soon allow pre-teen girls to attend school

BY SERGIO PERSA JR.

The new Taliban rulers in Afghanistan said they are hopeful about opening all schools for girls across Afghanistan after late March. Since mid-August when the Taliban took back power, girls have been barred from attending school beyond seventh grade.

Concerns from around the globe are that the Taliban could impose harsh measures like those when they held power 20 years ago which excluded women from education, work, or public life. The global community is also reluctant to recognize a Taliban-run

government. The new Afghan year starts on March 21, which is when the Taliban said they are aiming to have classrooms open for girls, according to Deputy Minister of Culture and Information Zabi-hullah Mujahid.

In an interview, Muja-hid said education for girls "is a question of capacity."

He also added that girls and boys must be completely segregated in schools and said that finding ample room to accommodate that has been the biggest obsta-cle for bringing girls into education.

"We are not against education."

The restrictions on girls in education have so far only been in state-run schools and universities. Private schools and univer-sities in Afghanistan have kept operating normally.

The United Na-tions has launched a \$5 billion appeal for Afghanistan due to sporadic services such as electricity. The U.S. has put in \$145 billion on development and reconstruction in Af-ghanistan since 2001, when the Taliban were ousted by U.S. military forces. The poverty rate, however, was 54% even before the Taliban took back control over the country.

Dr. Anthony Fauci accuses senator of fueling violence against him

BY SERGIO PERSA JR.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the country's top in-fectious disease expert, accused Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul of making false accusations that have led to threats against him during a senate hearing.

Fauci said that Paul is doing it to raise political money. The Republican Senator has accused Fauci multiple times of lying about the pandemic.

Paul also alleged that Fauci tried to take down other scientists who did not agree with him. Many conservative figures have expressed disapproval with Fauci regarding how the pan-demic is being handled.

Since 2020, Fauci and his family have needed security due to received threats and harassment.

Fauci said that Paul's comments "kindle the crazies out there," and is frustrated that Paul "accuses me of things that are com-pletely untrue."

Fauci used the example of a California man who was stopped in Iowa for speeding, and he also had a gun in his car. The man told the sheriff's deputy that pulled him over that he was on his way to the U.S. Capitol to kill people in power, including Dr. Fauci. The infectious disease expert also pointed to Paul's website which

has a "fire Dr. Fauci" page that calls for po-litical contributions. He accused Paul of using the pandemic for his own political gains.

During the hearing, Fauci lost his temper with Sen. Roger Mar-shall who accused him of hiding financial disclosure forms that public officials are required to have.

"You're so misin-formed that it's extraor-dinary," Fauci respond-ed. Fauci pointed to the fact that the documents are available to the public via request. Off camera, a frustrated Fauci was heard mut-tering "what a moron" regarding the remarks made by Marshall.



Celebrate Black History Month. Cedit: Sarah Ramirez



Reviews

Arca takes over electronic music world, represents LGBTQ community

BY YASMEEN AMMOURAH

With the new popularity arising in the experimental music scene from Charlie XCX and her late producer SOPHIE to 100 Gecs, Arca is powering her way through the electronic music world.

Arca finished her new “KICK” series that she began in 2020, amidst the rise of the COVID-19 pandem-

ic. Boasting multiple producing tags for infamous artists, Arca is now on the rise as a solo artist.

From youth, Alejandra Ghersi was already wrapped around music of all sorts. She created a love for house music from her father and the community she surrounded herself with in Caracas, Venezuela. In her earlier years, she

also worked with well-known artists before attending New York University for music recording.

As she started making a name for herself, she caught the eye of Kanye West and ended up writing and producing some of his songs. Later on, her work would be spread out to soon well-known artists like FKA Twigs

and global indie pop-star, Bjork from 2014 to 2017. This led up to the inevitable production of the “KICK” series.

Listeners get to catch many hints of her identity that also collide with her heritage.

As a trans-woman, she writes about her experience with gender identity with the nonbinary. Her songs render how fluid and noncha-

lant one can be when queer. Other artists like SOPHIE and Laura Les similarly represent the LGBTQ community, but there is a lack of intersectional representation in the genre. Arca paves the way for many artists as a Latina hyper-pop/experimental artist who is also gender queer.

Though Arca has been well known for

years now, “KICK” finally brings her into the mainstream spotlight after working on Lady Gaga’s “Chromatica Remix” album.

There is more to come from this industry and Arca leads with the torch in hand.

‘Encanto’ represents vibrant array of Latin American culture, music

BY KARINA RODARTE

Disney’s “Encanto” is a movie the whole family can enjoy. The film is rich with relatable characters, a spectacular music track, and a background so colorful and lively that every scene is beautiful enough to frame.

The magical film centers around a Colombian family blessed with magical gifts once their sentient home, their “Casita” deems them of age. The gifts stem from an enchanted candle that appeared to the grandmother, Abuela, when she lost her husband.

The oddball of the family, Maribel, is constantly compared to her extraordinary family and is looked down upon by them and her village. When the miracle is in danger, Mirabel goes on an adventure to uncover a family secret and save everyone.

“Encanto” leads viewers on an emotional rollercoaster, from sparking sympathy for Mirabel to feeling annoyance with the “golden child,” Isabella.

Abuela’s complex character shows obvious favoritism and

makes gaslighting remarks at Mirabel’s innocent attempts to help her family. The ending, featuring Abuela’s villain backstory, will leave most in tears and the film finishes with a happy, but unexpected ending.

The character design is not to be ignored. Luisa’s build has never been seen before on a Disney film by a key female character. With a broad face, broad shoulders, muscular arms and a wide waist, she still wears her hair with a bow and wears a pretty, long dress.

Luisa’s power is superstrength, and she is indestructible. Her brawny build makes sense. Surprisingly, the creators of “Encanto” had to fight with Disney Studios tooth and nail because Disney wanted Luisa to have a smaller, petite frame.

Furthermore, merchandise for the film was focused on Isabella even above the main character, Mirabel, because they assumed children would gravitate towards the “pretty” doll. But the demand for Luisa merch is on the rise while

Isabella’s declines. Disney underestimated the desire of little girls to see a strong woman on the screen who probably reminds them of their mothers.

The movie has dark and light-skinned Latinos, from the red-headed Aunt Pepa to her Afro-Latino husband, Felix. The stereotypically beautiful character, Isabella, has a deep skin tone which is refreshing for audiences. It allows for Latinos of all ages to feel represented on the screen.

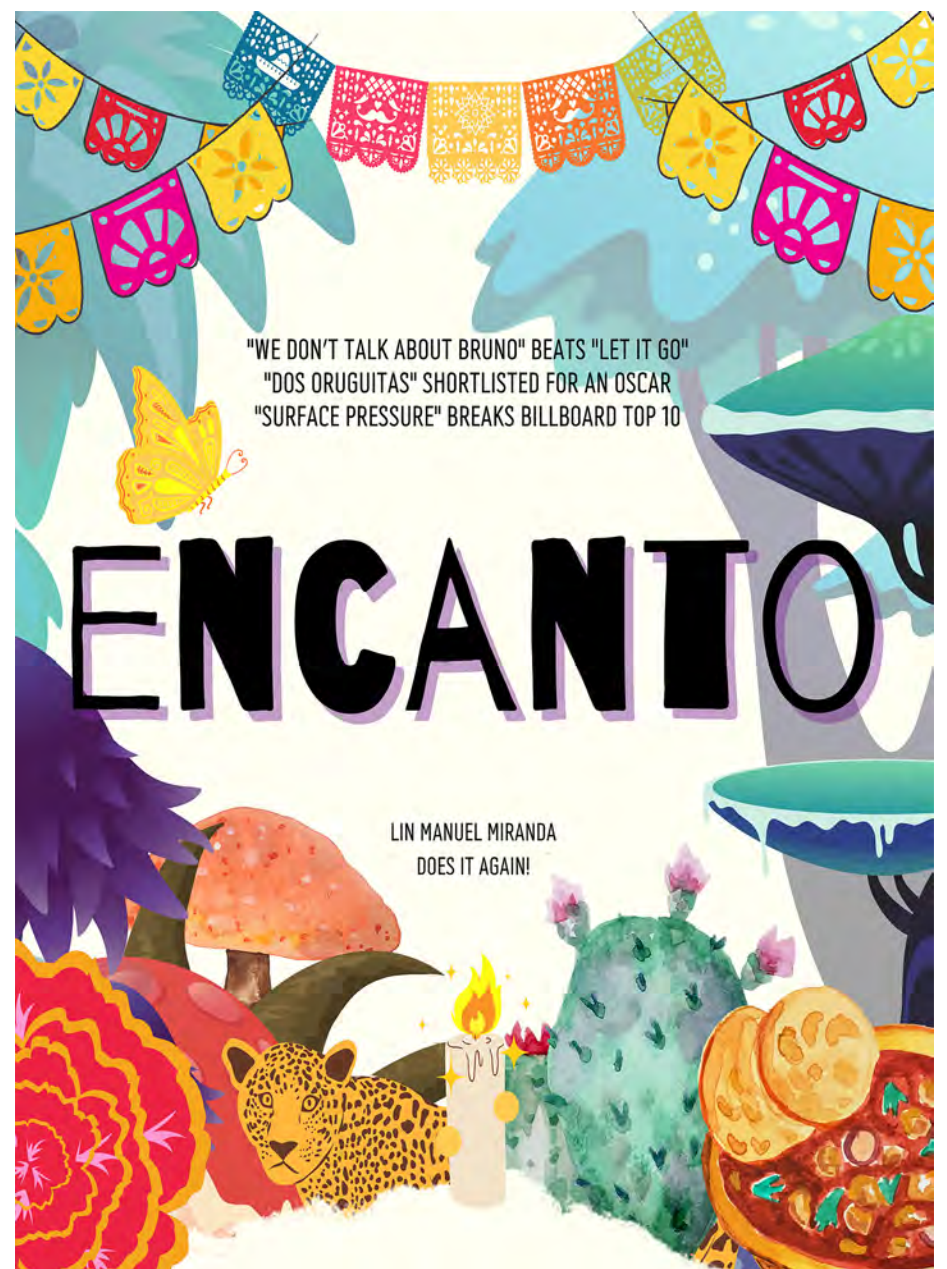
The film has quickly taken over social media and the popularity of the movie’s featured single, “We Don’t Talk About Bruno” has surpassed “Frozen”’s “Let It Go.” Tens of thousands of viewers of all ages have made voiceover tracks of the songs, cosplays of the outfits, and posted their deep analyses on the character arcs in the film.

Here are some fun easter eggs to look out: Bruno dancing in the background during Dolores’ solo of “We Don’t Talk about Bruno.” Also, the power of each character is

embroidered in their clothes; Luisa has a dumbbell pattern sewn on the edges of her skirt; Camilo has chameleons for shapeshifting; and Dolores has sound waves on the col-

lar of her dress. Lastly, the inside of Abuela’s enchanted room in the Casita is the little home that her and Pedro had before they had to flee when the village was attacked by invaders.

If you have not already seen “Encanto,” make plans to do so. It is a movie for people of all ages. It is currently playing in theaters and is available on Disney+.



Credit: Karina Rodarte

Reviews

Del Toro crafts magnetic visuals in thriller ‘Nightmare Alley’

BY JAMES JUREWICZ

“Nightmare Alley” is one of the best films released in 2021. This noir thriller is based on a 1946 novel under the same title written by William Lindsay Gresham.

Set in the 1930s, Stan Carlisle (Bradley Cooper) joins a midwestern traveling carnival, complete with a sideshow of talented and unique performers. Clem (Willem Dafoe), who owns and runs the operation, sees promising potential in Stan. He eventually works and trains with the psychic Madame Zeena (Toni Collette) and her husband Pete (David Strathairn). Using codes and signals, the duo appears supernaturally gifted. Stan carefully studies the clairvoyant techniques.

He also begins a relationship with Molly (Rooney Mara) who works in the carnival and quickly falls in love with Stan. After learning the trade, Stan convinces Molly to leave the carnival to start their own clairvoyant act in New York City. The couple find success entertaining rich New

York socialites.

Stan fortunately connects with a skeptical audience member Lilith Ritter (Cate Blanchett), a prominent psychologist with many wealthy and powerful clients. Together they concoct a scheme to profit from Stan’s abilities with a willingness to reach into dark and seemingly supernatural places.

The film’s director, Guillermo Del Toro Del Toro crafted a haunting noir thriller that displays the macabre brutality of humanity. From practical effects used in the film to the fantastic performances of the cast, the resulting film is visually magnetic and realistically authentic. The film is worth watching multiple times and Cooper’s performance is one of his best.

Del Toro drew everything in his personal notebook months before any pre-production.

“Although it is a period movie, it always speaks about the now. It’s a drama, [not] supernatural. It talks about truth, lies, and understanding reality,” the director mentions



Courtesy: TSG Entertainment

during an interview on Jimmy Kimmel Live.

“Nightmare Alley” is packed with talented and familiar actors. Bradley Cooper, who has consistently been a popular celebrity since ‘09 with the start of “The Hangover” film series, delivers an electric performance. Cooper may even expect an Oscar nomination for the ‘22 Academy Awards.

The character of Stan truly takes a

journey. He is the first and last face seen on-screen, and the audience accompanies him throughout the sinister odyssey. Cooper is convincing as a carnie turned con-man. Stan is determined, charming and sometimes ruthless. The man uses his intelligence and good looks to quickly rise through the carnival ranks.

Pete and Zeena’s lessons on the trade come complete with a warning; “You never

do a spook show.” By “spook show” Pete explains that at the show’s end, they always reveal their mystical connection to the dead is fake, therefore not profiting from dangerous psychological deception.

Willem Dafoe was born to play the owner of this very type of carnival. The camera lingers on his distinct look, and his sharp features are beautifully framed by his extravagant top hat. Clem is both inviting and remorseless, willing to do anything to keep his carnival alive. He also keeps order by hoarding and selling alcohol to his employees.

The most disturbing aspect of “Nightmare Alley” is the reality and authenticity of the carnival. The film replicates the sector’s history of cruel and inhumane treatment to people with certain disabilities.

The carnival’s “geek” is the most extreme example of this cruelty. The “geek” was a homeless man with substance abuse episodes. The carnival owner laced their alcohol with an addictive opium extract, then used

workers’ physical dependency to break them down psychologically. The result was a “wild man” who would then sometimes be asked to devour live animals for the amusement of a paying crowd.

In the case of “Nightmare Alley,” live poultry is on the menu. It is the disposable and replaceable aspect of the “geek” that is most troubling, there is no longevity in the career. It is unsettling to fathom this was a common carnival operation less than a century ago.

This film overcame the challenges of 2021. The pandemic shut down filming for six months. Upon returning with 200 necessary extras, 15,000 COVID-19 tests were used during production.

“Nightmare Alley” runs 150 minutes (about 2.5 hours) and is now playing in cinemas, coming to HBO Max on Feb. 1.

‘We Don’t Talk About Bruno’ bests ‘Let It Go’ on Billboard top Hot 100

BY KARINA RODARTE

Yes, it finally happened, “Let it Go” has been dethroned from Disney’s No. 1 spot by “We Don’t Talk About Bruno.”

With 29 million streams and 8,000 downloads purchased, “We Don’t Talk about Bruno” sits comfortably at No. 2 on Billboard’s

top Hot 100 only two months after its release. In comparison, “Let it Go” peaked at No. 5 in April 2014, five months after its initial release date.

The song is a group performance where the magical family and various townspeople sing about the black sheep of the family and his knack for jinxing people. With

character solos that are extremely fitting, like Dolores’ whisper solo and Isabella’s elegant performance, it is a gem to hear.

It is now the highest charting song from a Disney film since 1955. Lin-Manuel Miranda, the man behind the addictive “Hamilton” soundtrack, has outdone himself and this song

may soon become a classic.

The song he wrote for Abuela’s backstory, “Dos Oruguitas,” is now on the short list for the Oscar of best original song.

Miranda’s work on the entire soundtrack is gaining momentum because as of Jan. 24, Luisa’s song, “Surface Pressure” has broken

into the Billboard top 10.

“We Don’t Talk about Bruno” is currently in a three-way tie for Disney’s second-best performing song ever. “Colors of the Wind” in the “Pocahontas” film and “Can You Feel the Love Tonight” from “The Lion King” both sat at No. 4 in 1995 and 1994 respectively.

The only Disney song to blow both out of the water is “A Whole New World” in “Aladdin,” which had an outstanding No. 1 spot in 1993. Only time will tell if Miranda has given Disney a new record in this millennium.

Reviews

All-female team in 'The 355' delivers acclaimed exhilaration

BY JAMES JUREWICZ

"The 355" is a techno-espionage action film released in early January.

Though at first, some of the teams are at odds; the women all quickly realize that they share a common goal.

The team consists of all female members. CIA Agent Mace Browne (Jessica Chastain) teams up with four other women to reclaim stolen access to globally hazardous internet technology. Joining Mace are Khadijah Adiyeme (Lupita Nyong'o), Graciela Rivera (Penelope Cruz), Lin Mi Sheng (Fan Bingbing), and Marie Schmidt (Diane Kruger).

Each woman works for their respective countries' intelligence agency: United States' CIA, China's Ministry of State Security (MSS), Germany's Federal Intelligence Service (BND), Colombia's National Intelligence Directorate (DNI), and Great Britain's Secret Intelligence Service



Courtesy: Universal Pictures

(MI6).

"The 355" is a very unassuming title and sounds more like a movie showtime. Chastain's character explains the title of the film derives from by is talking with her CIA partner Nick Fowler (Sebastian Stan) George Washington's first female spy during the revolution. They called her Agent 355 because they "didn't want the world to learn her real name, but her legacy lives on."

The women all work so well together

as a team that moviegoers deserve a sequel. The teamwork in the film was reminiscent of the "Oceans 11" film series starring George Clooney, Matt Damon, and Brad Pitt. However, the intentions of the characters in "The 355" are altruistic rather than for financial gain. The film is reminiscent of a serious "Charlie's Angels."

All five of the main cast members have extensive experience in the action genre. Each actor has multiple action movie credits.

Director Simon Kinberg and the filmmaker produced a style that is both slick and colorful. Kinberg brings the five actors together and generates great performances. The team chemistry within the group is immediately apparent when the women assemble onscreen.

The action scenes are realistic and exhilarating. A particularly serene scene lulls the audience into a false sense of security because a massive explosion and an invasion of an armed

crew will have a viewer jump.

However, the film is not without its flaws. The story could have used an overhaul. How many times will cinema audiences face a catalyst for World War III? Also, the plot is intermittently slow via a 124-minute runtime. Tighter editing would effectively speed up the plot.

What works well is that the film is entertaining. The actors' teamwork and chemistry are also notable. The film is grounded with

action that is realistic, reasonable, and extremely exciting.

Chastain was so committed to her character that she was injured doing one of her own stunts.

"I had to go to the hospital, I was doing a scene where I had to fall and hit my head on the marble ground, and I misjudged the distance, and I heard a crack," Chastain mentioned in an interview with Access.

Luckily, she was unharmed. Chastain also produced "the 355" and was able to put the film together on her own.

"It was completely made outside the Hollywood system," Chastain added. "I don't think anything like this has ever been done before where actresses were the bosses, the owners of the film."

This freedom is likely a contributor to the reason the film was so entertaining.

"The 355" is now playing in movie theaters.

'The House' showcases creepy characters, brings unexpected bliss

BY YASMEEN AMMOURAH

In the essence of stop motion in the world of Wes Anderson to Tim Burton films, "The House" is an extremely compelling series.

The animated anthology is artistically beautiful with extreme faces and detailed animal figures. These childish features give charm to adult films. As the plot thickens and gives a vivid idea of what "The House" is, there is a slight happiness to the story.

Viewers first meet a human family set in late 19th century London. The characters from the beginning look extremely disturbing due to the proportions of the face, making the audience feel immediately uncomfortable.

The story is about a family moving into a new house given to them for free who experience horrors like no other. This first part is the best of the series due to the writing, the plot, and the unique approach to stop motion animation films.

The extremely creepy twist will spark fear in anyone approached with a sketchy offer.

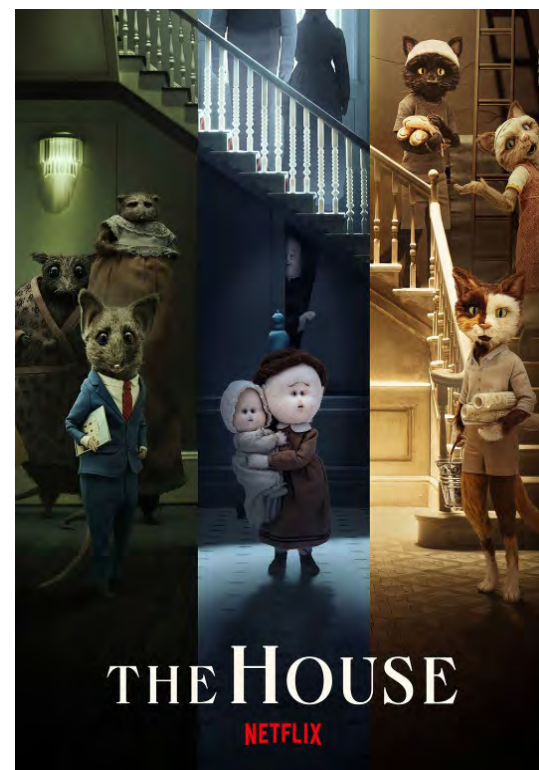
In the second part of the series, a rat who is a real-estate rat agent is working on a bitter-sweet house and trying to sell it while evidently failing. It is later taken over by a couple and their extended family, leading it into a wasteland.

It appears as though this episode's purpose was to gross out the audience. An over exceeding number of

insects in this film was a great twist but was overall more disturbing than scary.

Towards the end, a landlord gets stubborn about leaving the same house after a flood. Also, she is close with two residents but then feels them drifting apart.

At the end, the story felt somewhat necessary to the film and offers the audience some bliss after despair throughout the tale. This will truly make you fall in love with "The House."



Courtesy: Netflix

Houston Texans fire coach, franchise continues to struggle



David Culley at Texans press conference. Courtesy: Mark Lane of Texaswire

BY JAMES JUREWICZ

After only a single season, the Houston Texans have fired head coach David Culley. The firing comes on the heels of a losing record of 4-13.

The Texans were hindered by a combination of factors. An exodus of star players hurt Culley's situation. Houston was also plagued by quarterback

woes, player injuries and personal behavior all influencing the season.

There are a few varied factors to consider about Culley getting sacked by the Texans.

Three crucial players were no longer present to Houston. Deandre Hopkins, a multiple pro-bowl wide receiver, was traded to the Arizona Cardinals

for what many believed was an aging running back in David Johnson.

Along with Johnson, the Texans received a second-round pick for the 2020 season and a paltry fourth rounder in 2021. For a blue-chip wide receiver, who was a cornerstone of the franchise, many considered the trade to be a horrible decision

by the former troubled head coach Bill O'Brien.

JJ Watt, a future NFL Hall of Fame defensive lineman, was allowed to test free agency after the season. Houston's longtime fan favorite followed Hopkins to Phoenix when the pass rusher signed with Arizona as a free agent in the 2021 offseason.

Deshaun Watson was supposed to be the Texans starting quarterback to start the 2021 season. The three-time, pro-bowl quarterback is just 26 years old and signed a titanic \$177.5 million dollar Texans extension in 2020.

Instead of starting, Watson did not play for the Texans in 2021 as both the NFL and the Texas court system decided his eventual fate. Watson was recently accused of sexual as-

sault by over 20 different massage therapists. Though trade rumors persisted through the season, as of now Watson is still with the team. He has yet to see any league discipline and still faces litigious accusations of serious predatory behavior.

Quarterback Tyrod Taylor was signed in early 2021 and began the season as the Texans starter. When Culley was the quarterback coach with the Buffalo Bills in 2017, Taylor was on the roster.

Taylor won his first game as starter against the Jacksonville Jaguars, spoiling the inaugural game of the rival Jaguars first overall pick Trevor Lawrence. At first, the reunion yielded positive results, Taylor was unfortunately injured in week two and replaced by the third round Davis Mills.

Taylor made a brief comeback for week 13 but was eventually benched for poor play against the Indianapolis Colts.

The Texans were a mess when Culley inherited the team during the 2021 offseason. "Unstable" is the word ESPN's Adam Schefter used on NFL Live to describe the Texans previous few seasons. Culley was also a first-time coordinator having never called an offense at the pro level.

His last time calling the plays was as the Texas-El Paso offensive coordinator in 1990. One more season with a physically and mentally healthy quarterback would have been the proper way to gauge Culley's potential to grow and flourish with the team.

Novak Djokovic faces career-defining decision due to vaccine hesitancy

BY EDWARD SAENZ

Novak Djokovic has been deported following his temporary detention in Australia. The tennis star entered the country early this month to compete in the Australian Open, a tournament the 34-year-old star has won nine times.

Upon entering the country on Jan. 5, Djokovic was sent to a detention facility as he was not yet vaccinated, a requirement to enter the country. Prior to entering the country, however, he was granted an exemption so he could compete in the tennis tournament.

On Jan. 10, a judge ordered Djokovic to be released from his holding and allowed to enter the country. After several more days of deliberation, it was decided to cancel the tennis stars visa and have him deported.

"Mr. Djokovic had received, on 30 December 2021, a letter from the Chief Medical Officer of Tennis Australia recording that he had been provided with a 'Medical exemption from COVID vaccination' on the grounds that he had recently recovered from COVID," a court document released to the public said.

With Djokovic unable to compete at the Australian Open, his claim to No. 1 in the world could be taken from him if either Daniil Medvedev or Alexander Zverev win the tournament.

Tennis Australia said they respect the decision of the Federal Court.

"We look forward to a competitive and exciting Australian Open 2022 and wish all players the best of luck," the entity added.

A bigger worry, however, is that following a visa cancellation, the Australian government reserves the right to ban the individual from entering the country for three years.

Since 2020, Djokovic has repeatedly refused to publicly divulge his vaccination status and once said he was opposed to vaccinations entirely. His vaccine hesitancy could have consequences that stretch far past just Australia.

As of Jan. 24, France law states that "anyone who has proof they tested positive within the previous six months is exempt from having to show a vaccine pass."

Under this law, Djokovic could possibly play in the French Open this May as he tested positive for COVID-19 in mid-December.



Novak Djokovic on the court at the 2020 Australian Open. Courtesy: New York Times

The French Open organizers have said, however, that it is too early to comment on the matter and that just 72 hours prior he would have been banned from entering the country.

The tennis stars' future remains in limbo and will have to be checked on a case-by-case basis. Under cur-

rent global restrictions, Djokovic will be able to compete at Wimbledon in England but will be denied entry into the United States for the U.S. Open.

Tennis legend Rafael Nadal won the Australian Open, ending the three way tie he had with Djokovic and fellow tennis legend

Roger Federer in Gram Slam titles. If Djokovic is to surpass them, he may have to put aside his hesitancy and get vaccinated.

Six Invitational relocates to safer location as omicron variant surges

BY EDWARD SAENZ

Ubisoft's Rainbow Six: Siege world championship, the Six Invitational, will no longer take place in its usual home in Quebec. With rising Omicron cases the company has opted to move the event to Stockholm.

"In light of renewed regulations and event restrictions in Quebec, Canada, hosting the Six Invitational 2022 [in Quebec] is no longer possible," Ubisoft tweeted on Jan. 14.

Despite the setback, the Six Invitational is still set to run from Feb. 8 to Feb. 20. The event will take place in what esports has dubbed a "closed studio environment." This means the event will have strict sanitary requirements for all players and staff. A minimal number



Ninjas in Pajamas team with their Six Invitational 2021 trophy. Courtesy: Ubisoft

of people running the event will be onsite, and the event will not have a live audience of any kind.

As the omicron variant surges, esports events across the world have had to adapt to the ever-changing situation. In early January,

Valve announced that their yet-to-be-fully-announced Fall Major was canceled due to many countries going back into lockdowns and travel restrictions ramping up. However, after supporter backlash, Valve announced the event would have to

be postponed and would happen in a closed studio environment.

In late December, Swedish based Tournament Organizer DreamHack announced that their planned event in Anaheim, California in early February was canceled. This was due

to the company not being sure if they could safely hold the event amid rising coronavirus restrictions in the state.

The problems stretched far past the Six Invitational main event. The North American, Asia-Pacific and European regional

events were all held online. Ubisoft attempted to host the Latin American qualifier in a studio. However, the event had to be postponed halfway through following a COVID-19 outbreak among the players and event staff.

The 2021 Six Invitational was also marred by COVID-19 restrictions. The event was originally meant to be hosted in early 2021 in France but had to be delayed until May when France went into lockdown days ahead of the event.

With the Six Invitational set to kick off in just over a week, Ubisoft announced that the yet-to-be-completed Latin American regional event will take place in Stockholm in a closed studio environment ahead of the main event.

Saudi Arabia begins quest to become world's esports powerhouse

BY EDWARD SAENZ

The largest independent esports tournament organizer in the world, ESL Gaming, formerly known as Electronic Sports League, has been sold to Saudi Arabian-owned Savvy Gaming Group for \$1 billion. The deal was made by ESL's now former owner, Modern Times Group, on Jan. 24.

The deal comes after years of rumors that MTG has been attempting to sell the ESL Gaming brand. In previous years, the sale was linked to Chinese mega-corporation Ten-

cent. Various Asian tech companies were also linked to a possible ESL purchase.

Along with ESL, Savvy Gaming Group is also acquiring an ESL competitor in FaceIT for \$500 million. FaceIT is a unique tournament organizer that assists bigger brands in running events. For many years they worked alongside Dreamhack and ran all their Counter Strike Global Offensive events until 2015. In November 2015, MTG purchased Dreamhack for \$28 million. This came just a few months after

they had purchased ESL for \$960 million.

The Savvy Gaming Group is owned by Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund called the Public Investment Fund. The entity was created aiming to become the "leading gaming and esports group domestically and internationally and will work to further develop an integrated ecosystem for the sector," the PIF said in an interview with National Business News.

Due to Saudi Arabia's various human rights atrocities, the deal has been met with

extreme negativity from fans of ESL. Since the announcement, several prominent figures in the CSGO scene have spoken out against the company. Some even went as far as saying they would never work with ESL again. A statement that is all but career-ending as ESL runs the vast majority of the esports calendar.

In an esports podcast called "The Four Horsemen," FaceIT's Chief Business Officer Mik Attisani hinted that Savvy Gaming Group is in the process of also purchasing the Danish TO Blast Pro


Series. If that sale is to go through, the Saudi group will own over 95% of the CSGO calendar. This hint is not unfounded as Blast Pro Series entered a partnership with the Saudi Arabian NEOM project in 2019 and hosted their 2019 finals event in Bahrain.

ESL has not wasted any time using their new deep pockets of money. In late December, ESL announced a \$500,000 women's only Counter Strike Global Offensive league in partnership with Intel. ESL stated the leagues goal was to highlight

the "all inclusive and friendly" CSGO community as well as encourage women to play CSGO.


On Jan. 13, ESL kicked off the year by announcing that the Louvre Agreement had been extended until 2025. The Louvre Agreement is a partnership between ESL and 15 of the world's biggest esports teams.

ESL's 2022 circuit of events kicks off with IEM Katowice in Poland on Feb. 15 with a doubled \$1 million prize pool.




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Our Links!

Credit: Edward Saenz

Environmental racism restricts food access for low-income residents



Credit: Giselle Oviedo

BY ANITA GOOLCHARAN

For the new year many people often set a resolution of eating healthier. However, for many low-income neighborhoods, this goal is often out of reach due to environmental prejudices against them.

Environmental racism refers to environmental injustices that disproportionately impact people of color. Supermarket chains neglect inner city areas,

often home to low-income residents which are disproportionately Black, brown or Indigenous communities.

A study conducted by Kelly Bower from Johns Hopkins School of Nursing concluded that neighborhoods of color often have less access to supermarkets in comparison to their white counterparts, despite similar poverty levels.

The inadequate access to quality super-

markets is a prime example of environmental racism, a term coined by civil rights activist, Reverend Benjamin Chavis.

For many Texans, the go-to grocery store is H-E-B with 21 locations in the greater Houston area. However, for east Houston residents, H-E-B is not easily accessible.

Residents of the Third Ward welcomed in 2019, the area's first H-E-B. For the first

time in nearly 30 years, Third Ward residents saw a new full-service grocery store built close to their home.

This is a dramatic contrast to neighborhoods such as West University Place where they are within proximity to three H-E-B stores along with other high-end grocers such as Whole Foods and Trader Joes.

Whole Foods has locations in neighborhoods such as Hunters

Creek Village, River Oaks, and other west Houston neighborhoods, but there are no locations in any of the east Houston neighborhoods. Trader Joe's also follows a similar pattern with stores located in higher income and neglecting low-income communities.

Grocery stores provide a necessary service many use at their convenience, but large chain grocery stores bypass many

neighborhoods of color or low-income communities, exaggerating a public health epidemic.

Low-income residents, such as those of the Third Ward, deserve access to grocery stores just as much as high-income residents.

Large chain grocery stores should consider the neglected areas of town so that low-income residents may have accessible grocery store options.

Competition conceals real problem among social movements

BY YASMEEN AMMOURAH

Activism has created a shift of problematic ideals with raising awareness. When we see activism, there is a blunt but powerful meaning behind it.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic brought a rise in activism, such as the worldwide protests to the death of Houston native George Floyd, the support of the Black Lives Matter movement, and many other

social issues. Specifically, we have seen a rise in awareness of foreign countries like the Palestinian apartheid crisis after the demolition of houses in Sheikh Jarrah.

Many supported the residents of Sheikh Jarrah, sparking the Free Palestine movement.

The Free Palestine movement, brought forth by Mohammed and Muna El Kurd, seemed to bring hope for the Sheikh Jarrah resident.

However, people were starting to compare the victims in Palestine to the oppression of Jewish people during the Holocaust. These two events are quite different. Comparing the two create a sort of competition off of movements which end up becoming problematic

When social issues begin to be compared, it creates a toxic competition of "who had

it worse," completing missing the point of activism, which is to bring awareness to a cause. To compare two different events creates division and controversy when what is needed is awareness and action.

This also applies to American activism such as the Stop Asian Hate movement and the Black Lives Matter movement. When unionizing, there is a large competition as to how much attention is

given to these groups.

Another example is when LGBTQ groups face oppression as queer people, there is a sort of tension as to how they feel more oppressed in a heteronormative and cisgender-based society. Some compare this form of hate as the equivalent to racism when sexual orientation and race persecution are not the same.

Awareness for social causes should not

depend on how much attention one cause gets compared to another.

When advocating for something, if comparisons start then there is a large disconnect from the purpose of the movement.

This leads to a regressive route where social groups compete against each other in the "oppression Olympics."

They would benefit more if they allied together to fight their oppressors.