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AMERICAN

UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE | FALL 2020

PRO DC STATEHOOD AND PROUD

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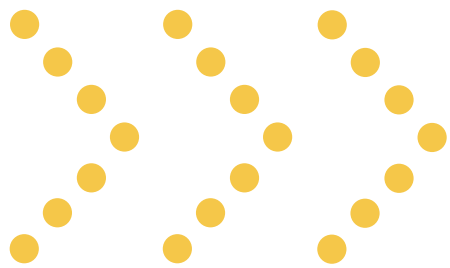


POV

WASHINGTON PLACES
FROM YOUR POINT OF VIEW

*An AU insider's
perspective on next page*





When Jessica Owens-Young hung up her soccer cleats in her late 20s, the star striker needed a new goal. That she traded shin guards for stretched canvas may seem curious, but the **CAS HEALTH STUDIES PROFESSOR** says athletics and art share more than one thinks at first brush.

“It was just magical the way I could paint the field with a ball,” she says. “I see painting in a similar way: as an expression of myself as a person.”

The native Marylander always enjoyed doodling on her homework, but it wasn’t until she took an oil painting class at Columbia Arts Center in 2018 that a **COLORFUL NEW WORLD** unfolded before her. “Often as adults, we don’t try new things because we’re afraid to be beginners. But you never know where it’s going to take you.”

It’s taken Owens-Young to the basement of the Catonsville home she shares with her wife, Shanté, and feline apprentice, Milo. Stuffed with finished portraits and works in progress, the laundry room studio has become her **CREATIVE SANCTUARY**: an oasis from the stress of virtual learning and a tumultuous 2020.

Some of her African American subjects—James Baldwin, Angela Davis, DC mayor Muriel Bowser, SPA/MPP ’00, (previous page)—are famous faces, while others are everyday people: family, friends, and strangers who come to Owens-Young in her dreams. But all share a **QUIET STRENGTH AND DIGNITY** that have become the artist’s signature.

“A lot of people, when they think of Black art, expect to see Black pain or trauma. That suffering matters, but Black folks have many, many other stories,” she says. “I try to paint **JOY AND RESILIENCE**—I want to show how Black folks thrive.”

Visit american.edu/magazine for more about Owens-Young and follow her on Instagram @truthofstrength.



POV
Professor
Jessica Owens-Young
CAS/MS '10

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MANAGING EDITOR
Adrienne Frank, SPA/MS '08

COPY EDITOR
Madeline Laird

STAFF WRITER
Andrew Erickson, Kogod/MS '22

WRITERS
Patty Housman
Alice Manos
Melissa Nyman
Pam Roberts
Kay Summers

ART DIRECTOR
Maria Jackson

PHOTOGRAPHER
Jeffrey Watts

CLASS NOTES
Traci Crockett

VICE PRESIDENT, COMMUNICATIONS
Matthew Bennett, SPA/BA '00, SPA/MA '01

ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT, CREATIVE SERVICES
Kevin Grasty

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, CONTENT STRATEGY
Laura Garner

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magazine@american.edu

FROM THE EDITOR

Why We Can’t Sleep

I am sitting cross-legged on my parents’ green shag carpeting, the early-morning Arizona sun streaming through our living room window on a perfect January morning in 1986. 4, 3, 2, 1, and *liftoff*! Seventy-three seconds later, my excitement turns to confusion then horror as the space shuttle carrying seven crew members, including a teacher whose name had become a household one, disappears into a Y-shaped plume of smoke.

It wasn’t until we watched a documentary this summer about the *Challenger* explosion that I realized I was the same age that my son is now when tragedy punctured a perfect blue sky—and with it, a bit of my innocence. It was a moment that defined Generation X, as Ada Calhoun writes in her new book *Why We Can’t Sleep*.

“There was little ‘hunkering down’ with family in the 1970s and ’80s. Back then it was not seen as the adults’ job to help children understand and process their fears, disappointments, and sorrows. . . . Our generation is mocked for helicopter parenting our children. We hear that we don’t let them fail enough, that our swaddling them in protective gear has left them unprepared for life. This may be true. But, if so, it may well stem from traumas like the morning of January 28, 1986.”

We have all hunkered down this year as we weather a deadly global pandemic, a racial reckoning in the wake of George Floyd’s killing, and a presidential election so fraught with chaos and division that it felt like democracy itself was on the ballot.

Like millions of students across the country, my eight-year-old has spent most of 2020 on a laptop. He hasn’t hugged his beloved grandma in 11 months, and he’s loath to close his eyes at night for fear of what might appear in his dreams. I’ve done my best to both protect and arm him with knowledge: about the importance of science, equality, justice, empathy, peaceful dissent, and the vote. I’ve also carved out plenty of time for laughter, silliness, and quiet cuddles on the couch.

We will all be forever changed by this year, but perhaps none of us more so than my son’s generation. I have no idea how 2020 will shape his education, his relationships, or his outlook on life. I just hope when he looks back on this truly unprecedented year, what will be indelible in his mind is what I tell him each night, before he finally surrenders to sleep: You are safe, and you are loved.

Take care of each other,
Adrienne Frank
Adrienne Frank
Managing Editor
Send story ideas to afrank@american.edu.

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June’s historic vote brings DC one step closer to the Douglass Commonwealth

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recipe *pork butt and smoked corn*
from *former governor Mike Huckabee (R-Arkansas)* serves *10*

ingredients

PORK
1 cup apple juice
1/2 cup soy sauce
2 teaspoons hot sauce
2 teaspoons garlic powder
1 teaspoon Cajun seasoning
1 (5-7-pound) pork butt
1 bag apple or mesquite wood chips,
soaked for at least 1 hour
1/2 cup yellow mustard
3 tablespoons barbecue rub

SMOKED CORN
1 cup salt
2 gallons cold water
10 ears corn (in husks)

directions

1. The night before smoking the pork, mix together apple juice, soy sauce, hot sauce, garlic powder, and Cajun seasoning. Using an injector syringe, inject pork butt with soy sauce mixture. Cover pork butt with barbecue rub then a layer of yellow mustard.
2. Cover pork with plastic wrap and place in refrigerator overnight.
3. The next morning, remove pork from refrigerator and plastic wrap and allow to reach room temperature (approximately 1 hour).
4. Set smoker temperature to 225 degrees and add wood chips.
5. Place room-temperature pork on middle rack, fat-side up. Let cook unwrapped for 8 hours.
6. While pork is smoking, mix salt into cold water and soak corn in husks for at least 4 hours.
7. Remove pork from smoker and wrap it in foil. Then, return it to smoker for another 2-3 hours until internal temperature reaches 160 to 180 degrees.
8. Approximately 1 hour before pork is done, place corn on lowest rack in smoker. Cook for 30 minutes, turn over, then cook for another 30 minutes.
9. Check meat temperature, then remove pork and corn from smoker.
10. Allow pork to rest for 15 minutes, then remove bone and pull apart.
11. Peel back corn and serve together.

UNITED TASTES OF
AMERICA

CAPRI CAFARO GOT A TASTE of the unifying power of food when she served as minority leader in the Ohio Senate. The Democrat, who represented the Buckeye State's 32nd district, baked pies—cream-flavored, with a cookie crust—for her colleagues across the aisle whenever they worked together on important legislation like Ohio's Medicaid reform law. The simple act of breaking bread—or sharing a slice—"would set the table for compromise, regardless of political ideology,"

says Cafaro, now an executive in residence at the School of Public Affairs and host of *Eat Your Heartland Out* on the Heritage Radio Network. That recipe for bipartisanship was the impetus for Cafaro's new cookbook, *United We Eat*. Released on July 4, it features dishes representing all 50 states and the District, with submissions from Democratic and Republican leaders and even an Independent: former congressman Larry Pressler of South Dakota, who shares a recipe for wife Harriet's glazed buffalo medallions.

"Cooking is part of my DNA," says Cafaro, an Italian American who marks every Christmas with homemade pizzelles and her grandmother's signature tomato sauce. "We can all relate to having heirloom recipes passed down from one generation to the next. It's humanizing for people to talk about their mother's recipes—and a way to start a civil conversation." The book is a palate-pleasing stew of family favorites (former Democratic National Committee chair Donna Brazile calls her mother Jean's seafood gumbo "a labor of love"), local flavors (Democratic representative Debbie Dingell's fried goat cheese cherry balls are a nod to her Michigan roots), and sweet treats (former Republican National Committee chair Michael Steele serves up a Maryland

favorite, Smith Island cake). There are also award-winning dishes, like Democratic senator Amy Klobuchar's taconite tater tot offering, which took home top honors at the inaugural Minnesota Congressional Delegation Hotdish Competition in 2011—no small potatoes. "We all like to eat; we all need to eat. Sharing a meal holds our communities together while allowing us to build bridges across the aisle," Cafaro says. After a particularly contentious election season, we're all hankering for a peace of pie. Visit american.edu/magazine for former South Bend, Indiana, mayor Pete Buttigieg's Hoosier pie recipe.

3 MINUTES ON . . . Climate Change Adaptation

John Nordgren, SPA/BA '91
Managing director, Climate Resilience Fund



Climate change is often subtle, but when there are **massive wildfires** in three western states **burning millions of acres**, killing dozens, and producing smoke that reaches the Atlantic Ocean, people pay attention.

Also this summer, temperatures reached **100°F in the Siberian tundra**, 5 million people in Bangladesh were displaced by flooding, and planet Earth recorded its highest-ever temperature—130°F in Death Valley. This



confirms what we've known for some time: global warming is **incontrovertible physics and chemistry**, and its impacts are becoming more **dire**.

A 2018 report from the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predicted **2.7°F of warming by 2040** at our current rate of greenhouse



gas emissions. Even with **mitigation** we will continue to confront two types of disruptions: unidirectional trends, like earlier changes in seasons, and high unpredictability—in dryness, precipitation, and extreme weather events. So, we must adapt the way we invest and plan to **minimize the impact** of climate change.

Mitigation, or reducing emissions, remains critical. But since the early 2000s, when effects of rapid climate change first became observable, **adaptation** has emerged as a prophylactic to the intensifying and **irreversible effects** of climate change. From coastal Virginia cities building on higher ground to New York City investing in reflective surfaces to plan for heat, adaptation involves incorporating climate change data into decision-making and building **resilience**: the ability of a community or a natural system to withstand impacts.



Last year, the Global Commission on Adaptation estimated that investing **\$1.7 trillion on adaptation** this decade would yield more than \$7 trillion in environmental and social benefits in the future. This is already underway, as a growing number of large corporations and communities of all sizes are increasingly factoring climate risk into decision-making. For example, the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact, composed of four counties, has worked since 2009 to prepare for a **rising sea level**, examining land use, development, water availability, and social vulnerability.

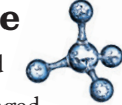


This approach to decision-making is increasingly important because the climate impacts we're grappling with now are the **consequences of our emissions** 30 years ago or more. Similarly, we might not see the benefits of positive



changes we make today—like more new energy vehicles—for another 30 years. Every year we wait to take climate change seriously, however, extends that timeline. We must continue reducing our emissions to **glean insights** about our energy systems and nature that we wouldn't otherwise know.

Climate change is too broad of an issue for everyone not to have a role. Corporations need to take the lead in becoming more sustainable. Government needs to be **responsive to science**. And people need to be engaged and make **responsible choices**, from the cars we



drive to the votes we cast. During the pandemic, we've seen commuter emissions and office energy use slashed. There are **good things** that can happen from **bad circumstances**. We just need to work together and build resilience.



WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE

Most people enjoy sunsets, nature walks, and the season’s first snow, but they find insects and thunderstorms pesky, even perilous. Such is the difference between wilderness and the subject of School of International Service professor Paul Wapner’s latest book: wildness.

“Wildness is not simply a place but a state of mind,” says the environmental scholar. “It stems etymologically from ‘self-willed’—the idea that there are things operating independently of human interest, human design, human power.”

A digestible and accessible little volume, *Is Wildness Over?* posits that in our centuries-long quest for stability, comfort, and predictability, humans have “tried to tame or otherwise control wildness.” And the consequences—calving glaciers, devastating wildfires, record-breaking heat waves, and rising oceans—have been catastrophic.

“People throw environmental harm onto the lives of others rather than deal with it themselves,” Wapner writes. “They toss it across space, time, and species. They send it to other communities, the future, and into the lives of other creatures. In each case, some benefit while others suffer. Too many ignore

those on the receiving end. They turn a deaf ear to the vulnerable and politically weak, whether human or nonhuman. In this sense, climate change and mass extinction represent more than technical problems. They are atmospheric and terrestrial expressions of injustice.”

Wapner likens wildness to energy in that “it can’t be created or destroyed.” So when we banish it from our comfortable, climate-controlled homes, “it doesn’t just disappear or evaporate; we actually push it in two directions.”

First, we push it horizontally, downstream, to those who are less advantaged than us. Take nuclear waste.

“We haven’t solved the problem; we just displace it,” Wapner says. “We push it across time and say, ‘Oh, we’ll bury it in canisters that won’t last as long as the waste itself. And good luck, future generations.’”

We also push wildness vertically, catapulting unpredictability and danger up to the global level.

Climate change, biodiversity loss, deforestation, and other global environmental dilemmas result from the displacement of wildness from our immediate lives, forcing it to accumulate at the planetary level.

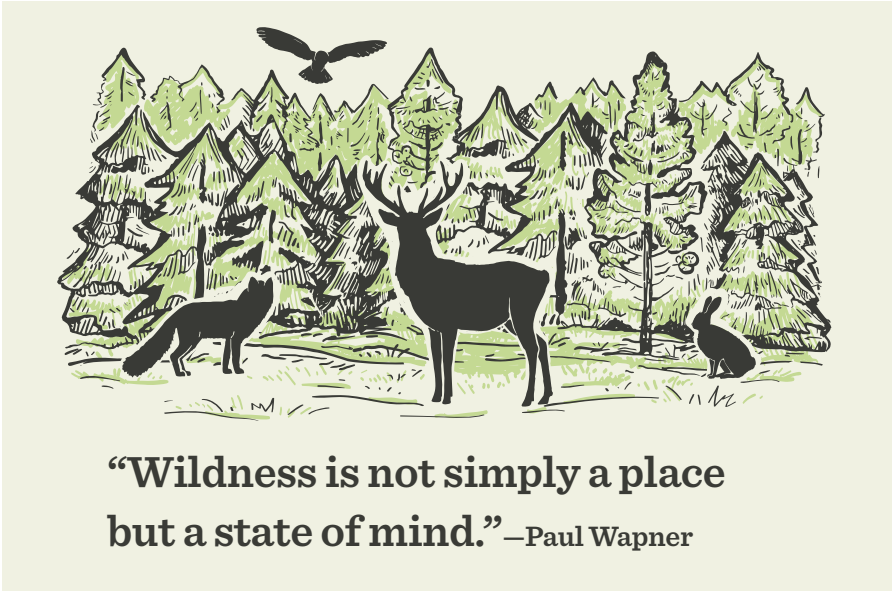
Toward the end of the book, Wapner poses a question to readers: Are we, the privileged, willing to approach our relationship with nature in a fundamentally different way? He calls this process rewilding.

“I’m not asking for us to eschew electricity and comfort completely, but I do think there’s space for us to experience a little more discomfort and a little less scratching every itch we have by turning to fossil fuels and sanitizing our world. And every animal that sort of bothers us, we’ll just either wipe it out or

push it away from us. I think that’s at the root of the problem.”

During the pandemic, Wapner has been hunkering down with his wife in New Mexico—where rewilding involves slithering into coexistence with rattlesnakes.

“On the one hand, I’m thankful for the rattlers; they tell me that the land is healthy—it can support all kinds of critters. We also have coyotes, rabbits, lizards, and occasionally bears and elk on the land. We are blessed with radical otherness in our midst,” he says. “On the other hand, I’m terrified of being bitten by a rattlesnake. A snake’s indifference to me and my designs scares me. I’m working on living with the dual dimensions of wildness. It sounds crazy, but doing so is making me more awake to the world and my life.”



COMMISSION(ED) OFFICER

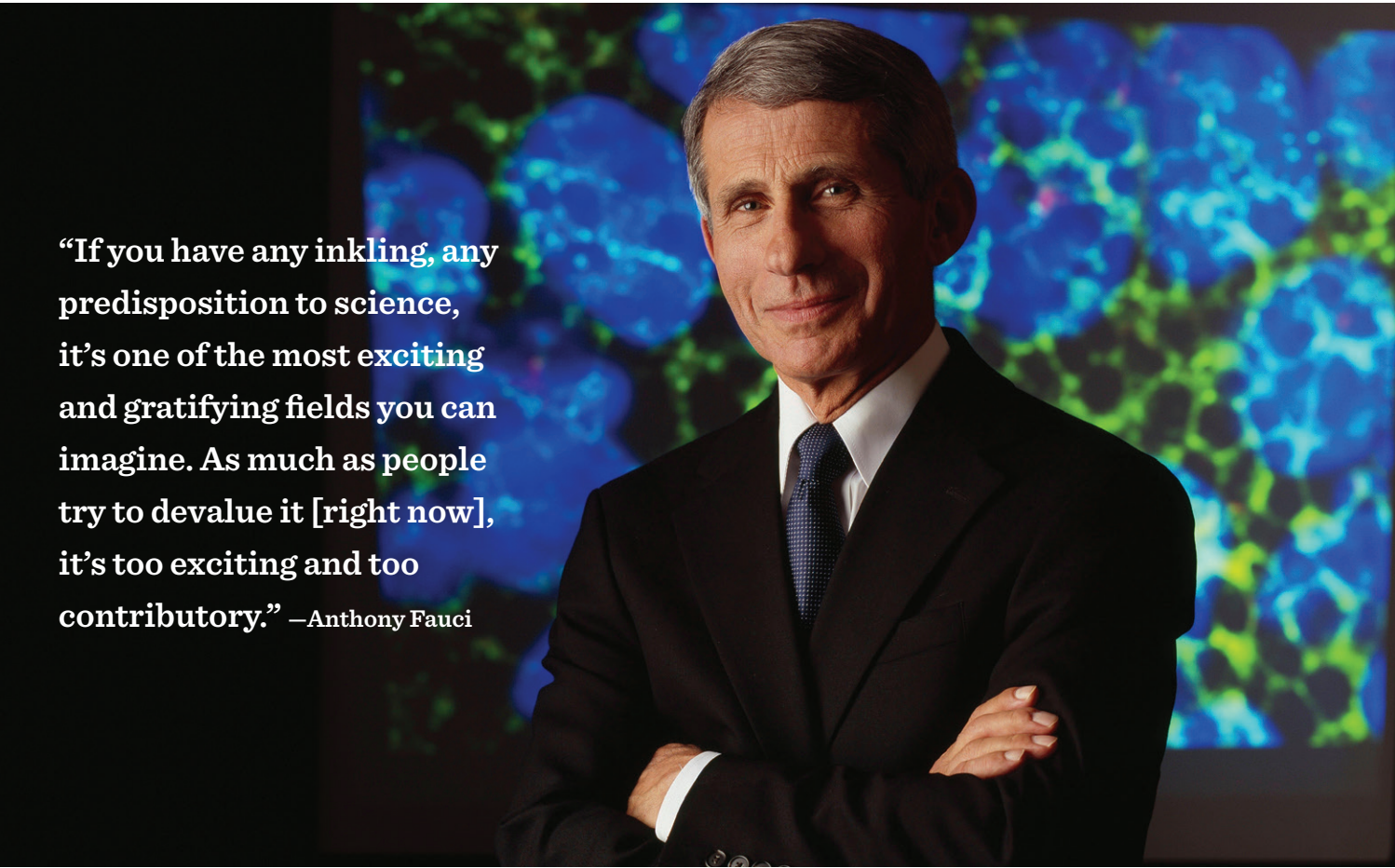
Arturo Porzecanski, SIS distinguished economist in residence, has been named to the new President’s Advisory Commission on Hispanic Prosperity, which aims to increase academic and economic opportunities for 60 million Hispanic Americans. “[We] are the single largest racial or ethnic minority group in the US,” he says. “Beyond our cultural, economic, and service contributions, we are now a political constituency to be reckoned with.”

GOOD FOR POPEYE AND THE PLANET

Spinach doesn’t just provide energy in humans. It also has the potential to help power fuel cells, according to a new paper by chemistry professor Shouzhong Zou. When converted from its leafy, edible form into carbon nanosheets, spinach—an inexpensive and renewable biomass—acts as a catalyst for an oxygen reduction reaction in fuel cells and metal-air batteries. The paper was coauthored by three students.



PHOTO: NIAD/ALAMY



THE VOICE OF EXPERIENCE

ANTHONY FAUCI’S TIES TO AU RUN DEEP.

The nation’s top infectious disease expert—who’s helmed America’s response to such public health crises as HIV/AIDS, the swine flu, and now, COVID-19—jogs past the university on New Mexico Avenue every morning, often waving to friend, former colleague, and fellow runner, President Sylvia Burwell.

Running is “absolutely essential to my mental health,” the 79-year-old marathoner said during a virtual event hosted by the

Kennedy Political Union on October 6. “You come back from an intense day either in front of Congress, in the White House, in a lab [and] I gotta get outside.”

The hourlong chat with Burwell—who worked with Fauci as secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services from 2014 to 2017—came just four days after President Trump tested positive for COVID-19. Although the longtime director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases tries not to wade into politics, he was emphatic that they have no place in a pandemic.

“When you and I were struggling through Ebola and Zika,” he said to Burwell, “there were disagreements, but we always knew that the enemy was the virus. It wasn’t the person who disagreed with you. When you make public health measures an oppositional position, you’ve essentially lost the game.”

“Everybody’s got to be pulling together in the same direction,” he continued. “You can’t have divisiveness and rancor in public health messages—it gets in the way of getting the job done.”

With swaths of unmasked Americans continuing to shun the social distancing practices Fauci has been preaching since March, he predicts another spike as temperatures drop and people

move indoors, where the virus is more easily transmitted.

“People call it a second wave, but it’s really a resurgence of the current wave we’re in. And right now a resurgence doesn’t look pretty,” he said, with models predicting a deadly winter.

Fauci, who received an honorary doctorate from AU in 2018, offered a sunnier forecast for colleges, universities, and students everywhere craving a return to normalcy.

“I’d like to say spring, but I think it’s much more likely as we get into the summer and fall . . . and a good chunk of the public is vaccinated [by the third quarter of 2021] that we can think about in-person being the rule and not the exception. We will get there.”

SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN

AU's "campus jewel"—the gleaming new Hall of Science—opened in September.

"It's concrete-and-glass evidence of our commitment to a renaissance in the sciences at AU," says CAS interim dean Max Paul Friedman.

Nestled next to Bender Arena, the 125,000-square-foot building houses the brand-new neuroscience department, along with biology, environmental science, and chemistry. It boasts cutting-edge labs and

classrooms where students can learn alongside faculty to address everything from environmental degradation to health disparities.

"The opening of the Hall of Science, with its state-of-the-art laboratories and core research facilities, is a transformative event for the Department of Neuroscience," says distinguished professor Terry Davidson. "It will increase the ability of our faculty and students to gain the knowledge of the brain and nervous system that is needed



to address current and future challenges to human health and well-being."

Science is the fastest-growing area of undergraduate study at AU. Over the past several years,

CAS has grown its research funding by more than 100 percent, securing 50 awards from the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation.

ART OF HEALING

Amid a spike in COVID cases and coast-to-coast protests this summer, it would've been easy for Vanessa Guillén's story to get lost in the headlines. But three AU women ensured we would remember the slain soldier's name.

Guillén disappeared from Fort Hood—where her family said she was being sexually harassed—on April 22. After her remains were found in the Texas desert on June 30, artist and SOC adjunct Frida Larios painted a mural in her memory in Columbia Heights, the heart of DC's Latinx community.

"This is in solidarity with Vanessa's family and to give a face to her case in Washington—and for the community to have the opportunity to heal through art," Larios says.

On July 30, Azul Torres, SPA/BA '21, and Romina Martin, SPA/BA '20, helped organize a vigil on Kenyon Street to honor Guillén—who was murdered by a fellow soldier—and draw attention to issues of systemic violence, oppression, and exploitation. "She was somebody," Martin says, "a daughter, a sister, a 20-year-old, a member of her community, serving her country."

GUILLÉN MURAL PHOTO BY MUKUL RANJAN

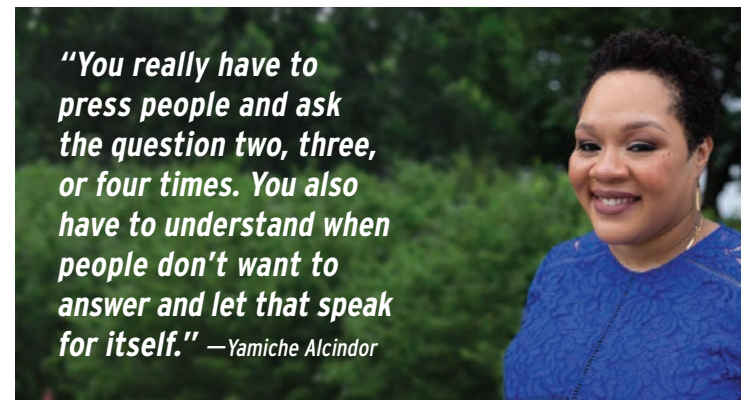


A GOLD-STAR U

For the fifth consecutive time, AU has received a STARS gold rating from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education. The STARS tool allows colleges to track and measure their progress on sustainability metrics across campus, from classrooms to dining halls. AU was a STARS charter participant and the first DC university to sign onto the program in 2010. Today, 1,007 institutions use STARS.

A GLOBAL EDUCATION

Eleven AU alumni and an SIS doctoral student have been named Fulbright scholars—from 10 last year. Founded after World War II to promote international goodwill, the program, funded by the US State Department, offers research, study, and teaching opportunities in more than 140 nations. Boasting excellent foreign language skills and cross-cultural expertise, AU's awardees will be posted to countries like Jordan, Russia, and Brazil.



Yamiche Alcindor—the PBS NewsHour White House correspondent who's drawn the ire of President Trump for her pointed and poignant questions—headlined a virtual event on October 1 sponsored by the Kennedy Political Union, SOC, and the Blackprint, AU's student publication dedicated to amplifying marginalized voices. An alumna of USA Today and the New York Times, Alcindor joined PBS in 2018, often covering the intersection of race and politics. "After I started covering all these different shootings and issues on race, it made the journalism right and better," she told moderator and SOC professor Jane Hall. "If you are a newsroom without a diverse staff, you're not doing journalism right." A familiar face at White House press briefings, which have drawn more viewers during the pandemic, Alcindor says the fourth estate is more important than ever. "People are dying. People have lost their jobs. People are grieving. I take it to heart that I have the privilege to question the president of the United States and hold him accountable."

HEAD OF THE CLASS

AU is 25th in the nation for undergraduate teaching according to new *US News and World Report* rankings released in September. Overall, the university checked in at No. 76 among national universities—up a notch from last year.

"AU is a dynamic community of changemakers, from our outstanding teacher-scholars who shape their fields and inspire in the classroom to our purpose-driven students who are committed to confronting the challenges of

our changing world," President Sylvia Burwell says. "Our focus on scholarship, learning, and community produces an educational environment like no other, where students can pursue their passions and prepare for impactful careers in a supportive, collaborative setting."

The university also ranked 43rd for first-year experiences by our peer institutions, 35th among the most innovative universities, and 11th for study abroad programs.

More than 70 percent of AU students participate in 130 study abroad programs in 30 countries.

KOGOD'S STOCK ON THE RISE

The school's online MBA program, which launched in 2015, ranked No. 7 for marketing and No. 12 for management by *US News and World Report*. The 48-credit program was also named the 6th best in the country and 19th best around the globe by QS World University Rankings. Eric-Enrico Hunt, CAS/MA '14, director of online programs, says the accolades underscore "Kogod's mission of using business as a force for meaningful change."

MADE IN THE USA

The Ford Ranger leads the way in the eighth annual Kogod Made in America Auto Index. The pickup, which hit the market again in 2019 after an eight-year hiatus, boasts a domestic content score of 85, racing past the Chevy Camaro in second place. GM is in a three-way tie for third with Chevy's Corvette and Colorado and GMC's Canyon.

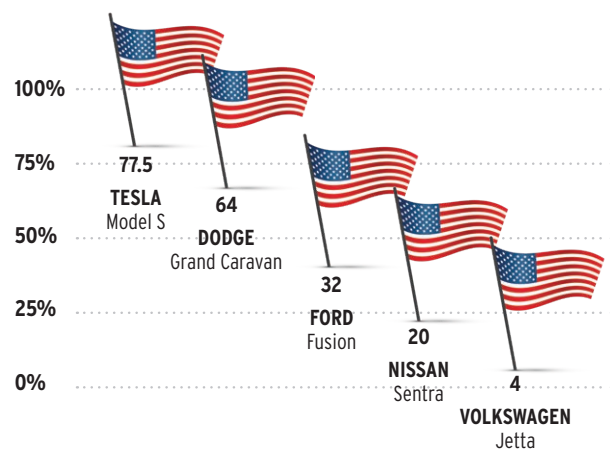
For international business professor Frank DuBois, the pandemic presented some challenges in compiling his 2020 index. He got a late start on dropping by dealerships, many of which were closed in the spring. He conducts on-site visits to record information from vehicle stickers, supplementing data collected by the National

Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Since 2013, DuBois has ranked cars sold in the US in terms of how many American parts (transmission, engine, body, chassis, electrical components) they contain. Other factors include where a vehicle is assembled and whether an automaker's global headquarters is located in the US. The searchable index includes more than 500 vehicles.

With four Tesla models making the top 10 this year, DuBois mentions the possibility of a separate index for new energy vehicles. "Batteries are the future," he says, and the rare earth minerals used to make them are "the new oil."

Pulling Ahead: What's Your Vehicle's Domestic Content Score?



PERFECT 10

AU has received the Arbor Day Foundation's Tree Campus USA designation for the 10th year in a row. The honor recognizes universities that promote healthy trees and foster the spirit of conservation. "We want everyone to view AU as a special place within the urban framework of the nation's capital," says arboretum manager Mike Mastrotta of our 84-acre campus, which is home to more than 3,500 trees and 385 species and varieties of woody plants.





ROLL MODEL

AS THE SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION prepared to hit “play” on the Game Lab and its game design graduate program, which launched in 2014, an idea began circulating at AU’s Bender Library.

“If you’re a medical school, you’re going to have skeletons and anatomy books because you need to support that curriculum,” says communication librarian Derrick Jefferson. “We knew we were going to have to buy games.”

Jefferson, who came to AU in 2013, is not a gamer himself, but he was game to take a *Risk* on a

new challenge. So he rolled the dice, piecing together a diverse collection of games—some video, mostly board—including new offerings like New York Slice, Hive, and Squirrels! along with classics such as Trivial Pursuit and Monopoly (the fourth-best-selling game of all-time, after chess, checkers, and backgammon). While a few games, like 2019’s popular, bird-themed Wingspan, are elusive—“That’s my white whale,” Jefferson says—the collection, built with purchases from Labyrinth near Eastern Market, now numbers nearly 300 titles.

Although SOC was the impetus for the *Operation*, the collection has proved a valuable tool across the board at AU. School of International Service and School of Public Affairs professors used Pandemic to reinforce theoretical concepts during the Ebola outbreak. A flight simulator helped an SIS instructor teach the Cold War. And pre-COVID, students would often *Go Fish* for games, checking them out from the library for a weekend of fun.

Amid the pandemic, board games and puzzles have grown even more popular, with sales jumping by 46 percent this year, according to Reuters. Whether a cure for boredom, stress, or both, games are comforting because they allow us “to disengage with technology and really be there with our fellow players,” Jefferson says.

Though unavailable this semester for safety reasons, the games remind Jefferson that a library’s reach extends beyond books—a lesson he first learned in 2010 as an LSU graduate student in New Orleans. There, he restored and worked at libraries damaged by Hurricane Katrina. With reduced access to physical collections, staff leaned on digital offerings to support academic research and provided internet access to community members.

“When we’re painted into a corner, we find ways to meet the needs of our users,” Jefferson says. “Libraries aren’t just buildings. They’re resources, people, and experiences.”

ILLUSTRATION BY JAYLENE ARNOLD
PHOTO BY ZACH D. ROBERTS/NURPHOTO/GETTY IMAGES

EXTREME MAKEOVER

Far-right extremists have evolved their look over the last 20 years, from shaved heads and combat boots to the khakis and polo shirts they donned when they descended on the University of Virginia with tiki torches in 2017. Many now look “more like the neighbor next door than the Aryan Brotherhood prison gang member” that people envision when they think of a racist skinhead, says Cynthia Miller-Idriss, School of Education professor and director of AU’s Polarization and Extremism Research and Innovation Lab (PERIL).

Clothing is just one example of how far-right extremists across the United States and around the globe have dressed their hate in new aesthetics and tactics. And, as Miller-Idriss explains in her latest book, *Hate in the Homeland: The New Global Far Right*, these groups have pivoted to the mainstream with frightening results.

There were a record 1,040 hate groups in the US in 2018—including 148 white nationalist organizations, up from 100 a year prior—according to Miller-Idriss.

To explain the rising threat of these groups, the education and sociology professor goes beyond the *how* and *why* of

radicalization by digging into the *where* and *when*—the everyday places, spaces, and gateways that normalize extremism.

By weaponizing youth culture—clothing, music, the hypermasculinity of mixed martial arts, and the edginess of internet memes—far-right groups are able to exploit entry points for the spread of conspiratorial and hateful ideas.

People might not be consciously drawn to those ideologies, but “they’re attracted to a whole other set of emotional impulses—a desire to belong

or a sense of brotherhood and connection,” Miller-Idriss says. “They’re feeling isolated or depressed or anxious. They’re looking for something online and a community draws them in, offering scapegoats for their problems, explanations for why things are the way they are, and solutions for their plight that seem to make [their belief systems] fall into place.”

Hate in the Homeland describes vulnerabilities and recruitment practices that are troublingly relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic, as millions of stressed and lonely young people are spending more time online and less time with the responsible adults in their lives.

The result is a “perfect storm” of pathways to extremism. Miller-Idriss tries not to be a

scaremonger despite her area of expertise, but the alarms are now sounding loud and clear.

“Radicalization is a long process, and people don’t get exposed to this material and then plan an attack tomorrow,” but the seeds of violence are now being planted, and “this is the moment to be intervening.”

In the final pages of *Hate in the Homeland*, Miller-Idriss cites the need for “innovative, flexible, and youth-driven ideas” to halt the surge of far-right extremism. Her efforts did not stop at the back cover. In late June, PERIL partnered with the Southern Poverty Law Center to produce Building Resilience and Confronting Risk in the COVID-19 Era, an 18-page toolkit for parents and caregivers that highlights warning signs of

online radicalization, methods for engaging youth, and ways to intervene.

Having “open, nonjudgmental conversations” with young people and helping them understand how conspiracy theories work before they get sucked into them is critical, Miller-Idriss says.

It ensures that the next time a loved one turns on the monitor, we’ll know *what* to monitor.



PRACTICING ANTI-RACISM

More than 150 AU student-athletes, coaches, and Athletics staff have joined the new Anti-Racism Education Collective. Led by Spencer Bonahoom, senior academic counselor for student-athlete development and leadership, the collective facilitates small-group virtual discussions about racial injustice and inequality and how to practice anti-racism. “It’s important to reflect, learn, and engage with each other,” Bonahoom says.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

SOC’s new one-year master’s in media, technology, and democracy will launch in fall 2021. Geared toward experienced professionals “who want to understand what’s beneath the surface of today’s cultural trends and communication systems,” the 30-credit program allows students to “craft publishable research targeted to their passions and professional ambitions,” says Professor Aram Sinnreich.



ROOTED IN THE GAME

Almost a year after Marsha Harper was named head coach of the women’s soccer team—and the first African American to hold the post in the program’s 30-year history—she remains undefeated in the strangest way. Harper’s never once coached her squad in-game and has no idea when she’ll make her debut on the sidelines.

COVID-19 has twice red-carded college soccer programs, canceling spring training in March and postponing the fall season in August—at least until spring 2021. But Harper, a self-described “glass-half-full kind of person,” still sees opportunity in a delayed kickoff: to strengthen communication and relationships within her team, cultivate an advanced tactical mindset among players, and recruit her heart out over Zoom.

“I never would have ever guessed this setup in my wildest dreams,” says Harper, who made four stops as an assistant coach, including a recent two-year stint at the University of Massachusetts, before landing at AU in January. “Of course, I would have wanted to coach them through a few games—just one, even—but the



of South Florida—“I didn’t score much, so [my coaches] put me at center back,” she laughs—Harper coaches a system that blends sturdy defense and offensive creativity through possession. On practice days, she prefers efficient, up-tempo training sessions.

Since AU went virtual, the team has discovered Harper’s affinity for PowerPoint and inspirational quotes like, “Your attitude determines your altitude,” a nod to her Denver roots, and the African proverb, “When the roots are deep, there is no reason to fear the wind.” And because she’s planted the seed of possibility, players also now believe that they can compete for the Patriot League championship.

“Right off the bat, Marsha was really focused on confidence and redefining who we are as a program,” says midfielder-forward Juliana Saling,

great thing for all of the players is they now get to reestablish themselves and their identity.”

The Eagles at least had a chance to learn Harper’s before campus closed in March. A former defender at the University of Florida and the University

Kogod/BSBA ’22.

“A big thing for her is spreading positivity,” adds defender Tori Kent, CAS/BA ’21, “making sure that everyone’s 100 percent in every day.”

Even 100 percent online, that remains true. The Eagles trained

“I never would have ever guessed this setup in my wildest dreams.”

—Marsha Harper

apart this fall, but Harper asked them to put their coaching hats on together. Each week, they dissected one Patriot League opponent’s film and presented a scouting report detailing personnel and tactical patterns to stay sharp.

The exercise follows a summer in which players grew closer, bonding over more than just soccer. They tuned in to team seminars on nutrition and personal finance, organized a talent show, and launched an Athletics-wide photo campaign in June to combat racism and social injustice.

Now they’re just eager to test their togetherness with a safe return to the field.

“It’s definitely disappointing to have to wait until spring, and even that might be a little rocky,” says Alysia Vazquez, SPA/BA ’23. “But it’s a small setback for a major comeback.”

Another Harper-ism to illustrate that, even before her first game, the new coach’s program has taken root.

PINNING DOWN PLAUDITS

Wrestler Elijah Murphy, CAS/BA ’20, CAS/MA ’21, was one of seven recipients of the Billie Jean King Youth Leadership Award at the 2020 ESPYs in June. Murphy, who accepted the award virtually, was honored for his work with DC’s Grassroot Project, ensuring middle schoolers have access to physical activity. The psychology major, who will complete his master’s in just one year, will receive a scholarship, mentoring opportunities, and leadership coaching.



POLL WATCHER

ON NOVEMBER 4, 1948, months after his campaign was declared dead, President Harry Truman flashed a lively smile at a St. Louis rally as he displayed a copy of the *Chicago Daily Tribune’s* infamous headline: “Dewey Defeats Truman.” The iconic photo of the incumbent, whose victory defied pollsters and pundits alike, serves as a reminder of the price of hubris and imprecision in polling, which has been paid many Novembers since.

In the wee hours after another historic upset in 2016, W. Joseph Campbell blogged that, “for American media,” Donald Trump’s win was “like 1948 all over again.” From Trump’s triumph came the idea for the School of Communication professor’s seventh book, *Lost in a Gallup*, in which he digs into eight voter survey snafus spanning nine decades.

Campbell discovered that while each quadrennial quagmire had its own quirks—like polling ending early in 1980, faulty exit polls in 2004, and substandard state surveys in 2016—they shared common themes. One was an interplay between pollsters and media to shape—occasionally incorrect—election narratives. “Journalists deal all the time with ambiguity,” he says, and thus pre-election data presented as “cold, hard facts” is just catnip.

Another commonality was late-breaking shifts in public opinion. That’s why, even as former vice president Joe Biden’s lead over Trump held steady in mid-October at about 10 percentage points, Campbell urged caution. “Downplaying, but not ignoring, polls and expecting surprise seems prudent—because when polls fail, they can fail in surprising ways.”

- ☐ George Gallup published his first opinion poll in October 1935.
- ☒ Warren Mitofsky of CBS News conducted the first national exit poll in 1972.
- ☐ The *Literary Digest* projected FDR to win 40.9 percent of the 1936 vote. He landed 60.8 percent.
- ☒ The closest published poll in fall 1980 predicted a 5-point Reagan victory; his margin was 9.7 points.
- ☒ Over three days in 2000, Gallup’s polls swung from Gore plus-10 to Bush plus-3.
- ☐ FiveThirtyEight correctly predicted 49 states in 2008, 50 in 2012, and 45 in 2016.
- ☐ Gallup retreated from presidential polling after 2012.
- ☐ Real Clear Politics’s final 2016 national polling average was Clinton plus-3.2. She won the popular vote by 2.1 points.
- ☐ In 2016, the *Huffington Post* pegged the probability of a Hillary Clinton win at 98.2 percent.

EAGLES ON ESPN

Despite a lost fall sports season, the Patriot League has found its digital home. The conference announced in September that it agreed to a multiyear deal with ESPN+ to make the digital platform the exclusive broadcaster of live and archived Patriot League competitions—more than 800 events per year across 24 sports.

STAND UP and STAND FIRM

confronting and dismantling white supremacy

BY ADRIENNE FRANK

Racism is learned. But for Derek Black, it was also inherited.

The only son of Don Black—a former Ku Klux Klan grand wizard and prominent white supremacist who founded Stormfront, the first major hate site on the internet—Derek was born prejudiced to his father’s hate-fueled ideology. As a 10-year-old, Derek taught himself to code and launched a Stormfront site for kids, where he mused that he was “learning pride in myself, my family, and my people.” By the time the child prodigy became a man, he was hosting a daily radio show with Don and was poised to bring white nationalism into the political mainstream.

Intellectual and articulate, Derek never used racial slurs or advocated violence, which made his message—that a “white genocide,” resulting from immigration, affirmative action, political correctness, and multiculturalism, was just over the horizon—more palpable to those on the far right. It’s cherry-flavored cough syrup: racism that goes down easy.

The godson of David Duke—the former Louisiana legislator and neo-Nazi dubbed “America’s most well-known racist” by the Anti-Defamation League—Derek was the anointed one, the heir to a movement now 155 hate groups strong.

And then, inexplicably, he walked away.

In his book *Rising Out of Hatred*, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Eli Saslow chronicles Derek’s evolution from soft-spoken leader of the white nationalist movement to one of its most outspoken critics. It’s a painful process that has required shedding both his beliefs and the family that shaped them, and wrestling with overwhelming guilt for his harmful and hateful actions, for which Black has said it will take a lifetime to atone.

It’s a journey that began at liberal New College of Florida.

Derek was known on the Sarasota campus for his studiousness and the black cowboy hat that sat atop his flaming red hair. Astonishingly, he was dating a Jewish woman when his true identity was revealed on a message board in 2011: “Derek Black. White supremacist, radio host . . . New College student????”

“When I showed up [to college], I was not looking to have my mind changed. I really thought white nationalism was true and that we were the real heroes,” Derek said during the July 28 episode of *Cape Up*, the podcast hosted by *Washington Post* opinion writer Jonathan Capehart. “But when the campus turned against me, once they realized what I was advocating, I couldn’t just say, ‘Oh, you don’t matter.’ They were real people who I couldn’t dismiss. They weren’t anonymous people on the internet. I knew how smart they were. I took classes with them. I knew them as full human beings.”

That the seed of such a powerful transformation was planted at a university is one reason why professors in AU’s Writing Studies Program named Saslow’s book their 2020 Writer as Witness selection.

Now in its 23rd year, the program convenes all incoming students around a “community text,” which they read over the summer, before meeting with the author at the start of the semester for a Q&A session. The book—always a work of nonfiction, selected within five years of publication—explores challenging and often controversial issues, from corrections

and climate change to gentrification and genocide. Professor Maya Brown, chair of the Writer as Witness selection committee, said the program is an entrée to the intellectual and emotional rigors of college: students learn how to craft a researched argument, pose tough questions, listen respectfully, and engage civilly—even when the answers are uncomfortable.

“College can be a scary time, a vulnerable time, a time when you’re asked to think differently and challenge what you always believed,” Brown said. “Derek’s story is an extreme version of this, but it’s a common experience. I still remember the rug being pulled out from under me in a number of wonderful ways in college. It changed the way I think.”

Saslow, who met virtually with students on September 2 from his home in Portland, Oregon, described how his own beliefs were challenged as his reporting took him deeper into the bowels of white nationalism.

“I have a lot of practice in my work spending massive amounts of time with all kinds of people. But sometimes I’d leave my conversations with white supremacists and just want to go back to my hotel and stand in the shower,” said the *Washington Post* writer. “Hearing somebody sit there and espouse racism and anti-Semitism . . . my job in those conversations was not—unless it was useful to the reporting—to challenge them and have ideological fights. My job was to get as much information as I could so I could hold it to account in the text, which is a much more powerful place to do it.”

“No one wants to spend 100 pages in the horrific cocoon of white nationalists,” Saslow said. So the bulk of the book focuses on Derek’s transformation and those classmates who forced him to reconcile the ugliness of

his ideology: Matthew Stevenson, an Orthodox Jew who hosted him for Shabbat dinner every Friday, and Allison Gornick, a cautious but curious woman who sought to understand Derek’s beliefs so she could effectively dismantle them.

“When Derek was outed on campus, every student, almost to a person, made the choice to do something,” Saslow said. “They had radically different ideas, but they all decided to engage. I have taken that as a lesson for myself, that apathy is the worst choice, and defeatism is the worst choice. There are a lot of good conversations about what to do when confronted with awful, hateful ideas. But the first choice that we all need to make is to do something and to invest some of our energy in fighting back.”

On September 17, FBI director Christopher Wray warned that white supremacist and anti-government groups pose the most pressing threat to domestic security. Less than two weeks later, during the debate with former vice president Joe Biden, President Trump told the Proud Boys—a group known for their anti-Muslim and misogynistic rhetoric, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center—to “stand back and stand by.”

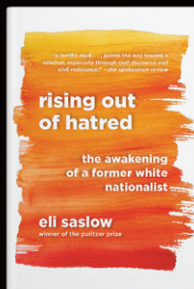
Derek Black may have turned his back on white supremacy, but the movement hasn’t abandoned its racist and divisive objectives.

“The fact that white nationalism has been, if not tacitly endorsed, at least dog-whistled to from some of the highest places in our country, has emboldened and empowered these ideas,” Saslow said. “White nationalism is not an outside agitator. What makes it so dangerous is that it’s inherently part of what America has been, and dismantling it means reexamining and confronting many of the things that this country has stood for.

“This is the fight that’s in front of us.”

The Writer as Witness selection process begins with a crowdsourced spreadsheet of titles, which is whittled down to 10 texts that every committee member reads. While Brown and her colleagues waded through the contenders for 2021, here are the previous years’ selections:

2020 <i>Rising Out of Hatred</i> Eli Saslow	2009 <i>True Enough</i> Farhad Manjoo
2019 <i>The Sixth Extinction</i> Elizabeth Kolbert	2008 <i>The Devil’s Highway</i> Luis Alberto Urrea
2018 <i>Strangers in Their Own Land</i> Arlie Hochschild	2007 <i>The Ponds of Kalambayi</i> Mike Tidwell
2017 <i>We Gon’ Be Alright: Notes on Resegregation</i> Jeff Chang	2006 <i>Love in the Driest Season</i> Neely Tucker
2016 <i>S Street Rising</i> Ruben Castenada	2005 <i>Fragments of Grace</i> Pamela Constable
2015 <i>Chasing Chaos</i> Jessica Alexander	2004 <i>Newjack: Guarding Sing Sing</i> Ted Conover
2014 <i>The Influencing Machine</i> Brooke Gladstone	2003 <i>First They Killed My Father</i> Loung Ung
2013 <i>Notes from No Man’s Land</i> Eula Biss	2002 <i>Savage Inequalities</i> Jonathan Kozol
2012 <i>The End of Country</i> Seamus McGraw	2001 <i>Bad Land</i> Jonathan Raban
2011 <i>The Good Soldiers</i> David Finkel	2000 <i>Almost a Woman</i> Esmeralda Santiago
2010 <i>The Moral Underground</i> Lisa Dodson	1999 <i>My Own Country</i> Abraham Verghese
	1998 <i>There Are No Children Here</i> Alex Kotlowitz



Excerpt from *Rising Out of Hatred: The Awakening of a Former White Nationalist* by Eli Saslow

During the next month, Derek began to feel as if he were occupying two lives: breakfast at New College with Rose and one of her transgender friends and then Thanksgiving dinner with Don, Chloe, and a few former skinheads in West Palm Beach; overnight talks edging toward dawn with his Jewish girlfriend and then early mornings spent by himself

in the courtyard outside, calling in to his white nationalist radio show as Rose continued to sleep, laughing along as his co-host mimicked a Jew by whining about Israel in a nasal, high-pitched voice. Once, Rose asked him for a ride to

her early morning doctor’s visit, and the appointment ran long. They were just beginning to drive back to New College at 9:00 a.m., when the cue-in music from “I’m a White Boy” began playing on the radio in West Palm Beach. Derek’s co-hosts and his audience were depending on him. He couldn’t miss the show. He lied to Rose and told her that he needed to make a phone call home, but instead he dialed into his radio show. He spent the next ten minutes broadcasting live on the air, making innocuous small talk to his white nationalist audience about the Florida weather while Rose sat oblivious in the passenger seat. She could only hear his side of the conversation, and she believed he was on a routine call with his parents.

Derek had been cultivating separate identities ever since he was about ten, when he built two websites in the same week. On one, DerekBlack.com, he shared

photos of Spider-Man, Alan Jackson, and his baby niece, “A.K.A. The Cutest Baby in the World!!!” The other, kids.stormfront.org, was aimed at “white people across the globe,” and it had links to racist songs and Duke’s website. Children could play a white pride version of the video game Doom, shooting watermelons at villains who had black faces, talked in gangster slang, and wore big golden chains. Or visitors could cast a ballot in the fake presidential campaign Derek created, listing Don Black and Robert E. Lee as candidates for president and Adolf Hitler as a possible running mate. “Now is the time for white people to take back our freedom and win so all can see our heritage in its greatest glory,” he had written.

Derek’s personal web page created a few thousand hits; his Stormfront page surpassed 400,000 visits within a few years. For almost a decade, Derek updated both pages, maintaining both a public and a private life, and there

was always room for both. But now at New College it felt to him as if both identities were eating up ever more space—his fame expanding within the movement, his private relationships deepening—and a conflict between them seemed inevitable. Every day he waited to be unmasked, the tension exploding within him in waves of anxiety and guilt. Either his New College friends would learn about his political activism and shun him, or, much worse, white nationalists would discover that he had befriended a Peruvian immigrant and begun dating a Jewish woman, and he would become an embarrassment to his family and a discredit to the cause.

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CHRONICLING HERSTORY

"MY FRIENDS AND I might still be in elementary school, but we know life isn't equal for everyone and we know what is right and wrong. We stand in the shadow of the Capitol and we know that we have seven short years until we too have the right to vote."

Washingtonian Naomi Wadler was just 11 years old when she addressed throngs of peaceful protestors on the National Mall during the 2018 March for Our Lives to end school gun violence. The orange scarf Wadler wore, knitted furiously the night before by her Aunt Leslie, is among the artifacts featured in the National Museum of American History's powerful—and

empowering—new exhibit: *Girlhood (It's Complicated)*.

Part of the American Women's History Initiative—the Smithsonian's ambitious effort to collect, document, and share the diverse stories of women—*Girlhood* explores the ways girls, from Helen Keller to Minnie Jean Brown to Dominique Dawes, have spoken up, challenged expectations, and left their mark. Featuring 200 objects spanning two centuries, the exhibit proves that girls are made of much stronger stuff than sugar and spice.

"Throughout American history, girls have resisted attempts to be defined and have used their voices to effect change," says Anthea Hartig, Elizabeth MacMillan Director and the first

woman to lead the museum. “Yet this is not an exhibition about ‘girl power.’ If anything, this exhibition demonstrates that historically, girls have been denied power and agency. What it means to be a girl—and a woman—has continuously been debated and negotiated, but [it] has always been part of the national conversation.”

AU distinguished historian in residence Kathleen Franz served as project director and chief curator of *Girlhood*, which runs through January 2, 2023, before touring the country.

"It was a privilege to work with the large creative team to create something unique, new, and powerful to celebrate the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage and to focus

on the political voices of girls over time," says Franz, a curator in the museum's work and history division. The exhibit's debut, which came just days after the museum reopened to the public, also coincided with International Day of the Girl on October 11.

Featuring colorful artwork by Krystal Quiles (above), the exhibit is divided into five sections: news and politics, education, work, wellness, and fashion. Among the highlights are a sampler stitched by 13-year-old Betsy Bucklin in 1781; Keller's touch watch; the 1959 graduation dress worn by Brown, one of the Little Rock Nine; and Dawes's leotard from the 1996 Summer Olympics.

Can't get to the museum?
The exhibit is also online:
americanhistory.si.edu/girlhood.

THIS I KNOW



RACHEL
SINGER

SPA/MS '94, WCL/JD '98

For the families of crime victims, the lengthy time between the tragic death of a loved one and the arrest of the responsible person can be arduous and lonely, punctuated by frustration and pain. That same distance, however, carries a promise for many families. Their mourning is regrettably prolonged, but with the passage of time comes ever-improving technology—a big advantage for law enforcement.

A large part of my job is dedicated to investigating old, unsolved homicides. These cases often involve witnesses who are deceased or have moved, so we rely heavily on forensic evidence.

New and more sensitive DNA testing developed over the past few years has created huge breakthroughs for prosecutors, leading to the resolution of many old cases across the country—including in Brooklyn, where I work—that were cold even in the recent past. In these instances, the passage of time benefits the investigation, provides us with cutting-edge tools to solve cases, and—when we succeed in getting justice—affords families a measure of closure.

Singer is chief of the Forensic Science/Cold Case Unit in the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office.



GREGORY
HARRY

CAS PROFESSOR

In *Star Trek*, the starship *Enterprise* travels between stars in a matter of hours, as does the *Millennium Falcon* in *Star Wars*. These stories hypothesize an unrealistic warp drive—but even moving at multiples of the speed of light, it would take years to traverse the distance between stars.

In my *Exoplanets in Fact and Fiction* class, we study planets other than Earth as they are observed by astronomers and imagined in science fiction. It has made me realize that many people, including sci-fi writers and readers, don't appreciate the enormity of astronomical distances.

In *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, Douglas Adams writes: "You may think it's a long way down the road to the chemist, but that's just peanuts to space." An *Apollo* astronaut traveled 240,000 miles to the moon; the recently launched *Perseverance* rover will travel 48 million miles to Mars; and a trip to the nearest star, Proxima Centauri, which NASA plans to visit in 2069, must cover 4.2 light years—or 24 trillion miles.

It is less than four miles from my house to the nearest Rite Aid. Peanuts.

Harry chairs AU's physics department.



ESTELLE
RICHARDSON

SPEXS/WSP '12

When I pictured marathons, I envisioned crowds of cheering spectators at the Boston Marathon, reaching out to high-five the hands of decorated athletes like Shalane Flanagan, decked out in America's colors. I imagined the crowd's roar growing louder until it became deafening.

Ultrarunning—distance events longer than 26.2 miles, typically on trails with significant elevation gain—is different. I run miles with no spectators and few aid stations, sometimes before sunrise. In the rugged wilderness landscape, I'm surrounded by stunning purple wildflowers, snowy peaks, and the occasional moose—but almost no humans.

In those moments of solitude and pain, I see opportunity. If I can push through discomfort—the throbbing headaches, a raging stomach, muscle fatigue—I know I can tell my bosses something they don't want to hear, call a candidate with bad news, or spend hours writing a detailed document. These asks don't seem as demanding when I remember I've run up a mountain, summiting more than 14,000 feet in the heat.

Richardson is a technical recruiter and ultramarathon runner in Boulder, Colorado. She finished 95th overall and 16th among women at the Pike's Peak Marathon in August.



KAREN
KLEIBER

SOE/MA '00

Distance learning has its challenges. Some assume they're inherent in teaching remotely, but as an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) coordinator, I know that these obstacles stem from deep gaps in equity, access, and communication.

Almost 50 percent of families in my school district speak a language other than English. Our 36,000 English learners speak more than 200 languages—most commonly, Spanish, Arabic, Vietnamese, and Korean—and 67 percent receive free or reduced lunch. When we closed in March, many of our students did not have access to online learning and received packets in the mail. This fall, all students have a laptop and, if needed, a MiFi router. We've also implemented translation tools like United Language Group and Talking Points to improve multilingual communication.

Only when we ensure English learners have access to technology and WiFi and communicate with families in a language they can understand, will the distance in distance learning disappear.

Kleiber is the K-12 ESOL coordinator for Fairfax County Public Schools, the nation's 11th largest school district.

A city of suits.
The land of legislation. Ground
zero for American politics. Named
for our first president—and the only
one never to inhabit the White House—
Washington is bustling, ambitious,
and even a little idealistic. Meet nine
congressional Eagles who make it
their mission to serve. (Our list was
compiled before ballots were
cast and counted on
November 3.)

METRO



CENTERED

FEDERAL CENTER SW

10 STOPS FROM TENLEYTOWN-AU

REP. HALEY STEVENS
(D-MI)
SPA/BA '05,
CAS/MA '07

REP. DAVID TRONE
(D-MD)
AU TRUSTEE

REP. DONNA SHALALA
(D-FL)
SPExS/WSP '61

REP. DONALD MCEACHIN
(D-VA)
SPA/BA '82

REP. JAMIE RASKIN
(D-MD)
PROFESSOR OF LAW
EMERITUS, WCL

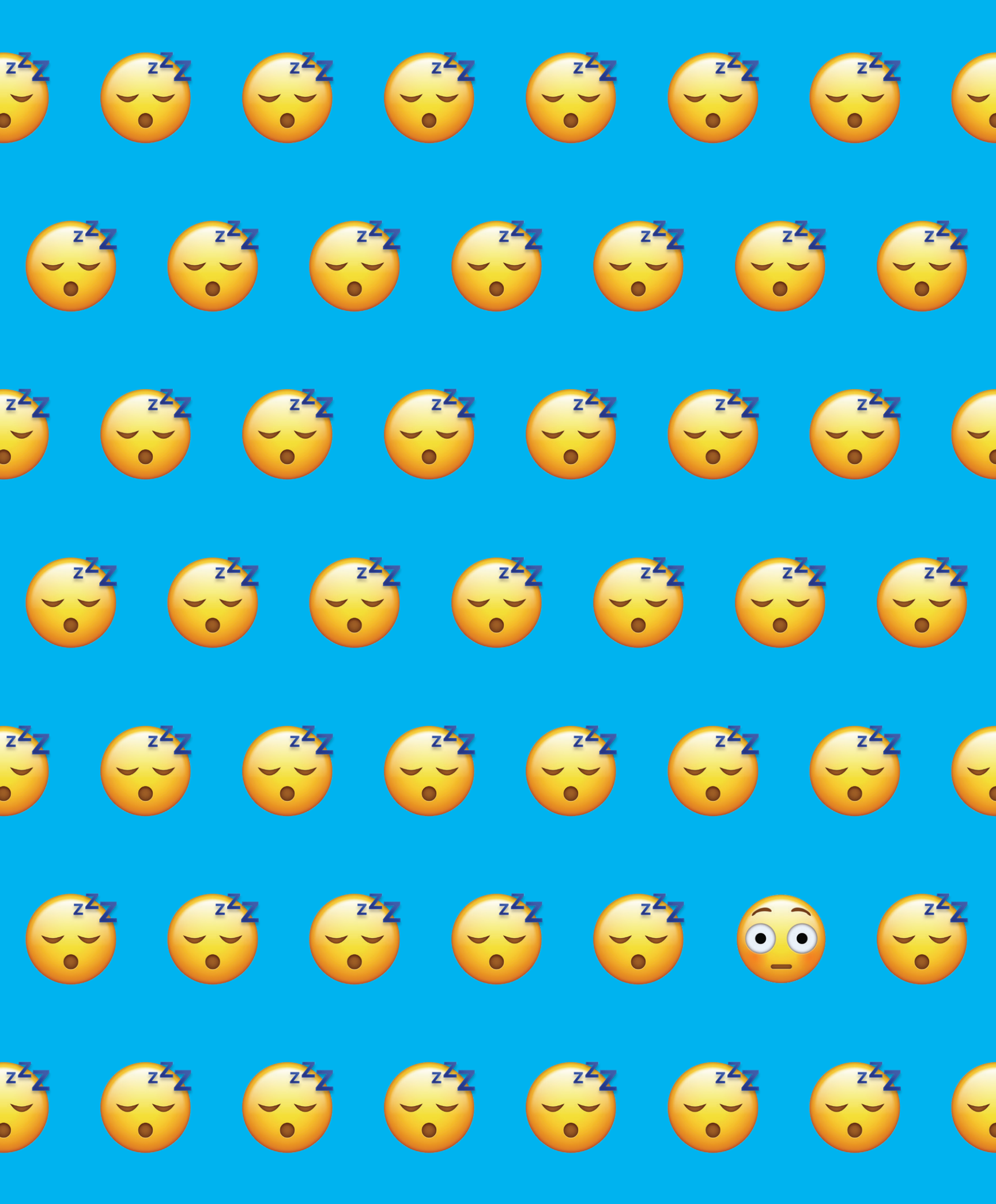
REP. SUSAN WILD
(D-PA)
SPA/BA '78

REP. STACEY PLASKETT-DUFFY
(D-VI-AT-LARGE)
WCL/JD '94

REP. JULIA BROWNLEY
(D-CA)
Kogod/MBA '79

REP. JAMES MCGOVERN
(D-MA)
CAS/BA '81,
SPA/MPA '84

PHOTO BY MATTHIAS HÄBERG



GOOD NIGHT, AND GOOD LUCK

How do you sleep at night? The answer for many Americans: not well. One in three adults gets less than 6 hours of shut-eye, and studies show that during COVID-19, more people are experiencing less restful sleep. Pull back the covers on how we betray our bedtimes.

By Andrew Erickson
(6.25 hours of sleep per night)

Illustration by Maria Jackson
(6 hours)

If you've ever had trouble sleeping, Amanda Chue once stood in your slippers. Just as she began studying z's as a psychology graduate student at AU, Chue, CAS/MA '17, CAS/PhD '19, was having trouble catching them. She struggled for months with insomnia, a disorder defined by acute or chronic difficulty falling or staying asleep. Now a psychologist at the Arlington/DC

Behavioral Therapy Institute and a mood dysregulation researcher at the National Institutes of Health, she engaged in some of the same tired habits as her clients: cuddling up in bed with her iPhone and trying to force an early bedtime.

In retrospect, all that tossing and turning was helpful. Now a squeaky-clean practitioner of proper sleep hygiene, Chue (8 hours) can both "relate to some of those negative cognitions" surrounding sleep and counter them. "If I didn't sleep that well, I learned to keep trying. I didn't give too much power to the insomnia," she says. She is also more conscious of inadequate sleep as an easy-to-overlook—yet potentially life-altering—troublemaker.

Whether the product of voluntary sleep deprivation (20 percent of college students pull an all-nighter at least once a month) or disorder (22 million Americans suffer from sleep apnea), a lack of rest can have nightmarish consequences. It's linked to 7 of the 15 leading causes of death in the United States, including accidents and hypertension; diseases like diabetes and obesity; and declines in memory and cognitive function. And proper snoozes are growing scarcer.

In his bestselling 2017 book, *Why We Sleep: Unlocking the Power of Sleep and Dreams*, UC Berkeley neuroscience and psychology professor Matthew Walker writes that 30 percent of American adults sleep less than 6 hours a night, up from just 2 percent a century ago. And more than 65 percent of adults fall short of the recommended 7 to 9 hours at some point during the week, according to the National Sleep Foundation.

Until dogs discover DirecTV, humans are the only mammals who intentionally limit their sleep. So many of us regularly make a conscious choice that runs counter to our biological need, but it's a decision that can be complicated or nullified by work, worry, or, lately, the world having turned upside down.

Sweet dreams are not made of this. If over the last eight months you have awoken, confused and heart pounding, from a REM-cycle encounter with bugs, a prison cell, or an invisible foe in hot pursuit, you're not alone. In the early stages of COVID-19 lockdown, a study from France's Lyon Neuroscience Research Center noted a 35 percent increase in dream recall. The shift could be a sign of more fragmented

sleep, and a waking nightmare that has us all on edge.

Heightened, vivid stress dreams "could be reflective of situations that we're still trying to make sense of emotionally," says Aria Ruggiero, CAS/MA '16, a clinical psychology doctoral student studying sleep at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. "This pandemic is essentially a collective trauma that our society is going through."

Trauma can mean trouble for our sleep cycle. When we're worried or anxious, the sympathetic nervous system flicks on, increasing heart rate and blood flow and releasing cortisol, our primary stress hormone. It is fight or flight mode, Ruggiero (8.25 hours) says, and the body's instinctual response to evading bears is not conducive to counting sheep.

A *Current Biology* study of 435 people in Austria, Switzerland, and Germany this spring reported an uptick in sleep time, but a decrease in sleep quality and mental wellbeing. Humans crave routine. That means many of us have struggled through a year that has been anything but.

Hitting snooze on a crack-of-dawn commute is a silver lining of the pandemic, albeit one that comes at a cost. By sleeping in until it's time to clock in, we open ourselves up to later and more inconsistent bedtimes and can miss social prompts and light cues that help balance our body's circadian, or sleep-wake, rhythm.

"Most of us have a circadian rhythm that's a little bit longer than 24 hours," says Ed Huntley, CAS/MA '05, CAS/PhD '12, so it requires external cues to keep it in check. Whether our office is downtown or down the hall, Vitamin D should be priority A in the morning, says Huntley (8 hours), a research investigator at the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center. And without daily rituals like catching the morning train or walking to the breakroom for coffee, successfully winding down at night starts with finding replacement habits to "allow you to wind yourself up to launch into your day."

Except "launching" implies we've moved at all.

Whether we're in search of comfort or just strapped for space, the bedroom has also become a dining room and an office—further blurring the line between work and home and allowing the stress of 9 to 5 to bleed into our "off" hours.

Even though Huntley has studied sleep for close to 15 years, he’s guilty of occasionally sacrificing slumber to meet work deadlines. But the pandemic has underscored for him the importance of boundaries. As a dad trying to strike the right work-parenting balance from home, Huntley recognizes that when he gets good sleep, he’s better able to take care of himself and his children.

“Part of the reason why sleep gets taken for granted is most of us have a fairly robust sleep-circadian system in place because our social lives create a routine,” Huntley says. “But in the absence of that, it’s up to us to impose some structure.”

Consistency is an admirable sleep goal—but it’s far from a universal luxury. Take Mitchell Kannry, SPA/BA ’05, who eats dinner with colleagues every fourth night at 6, then begins winding down at 10 for a night he knows will be restless. That’s because he sleeps at his office: Engine Company No. 4.

A battalion chief in the DC Fire Department’s special operations division, Kannry doesn’t take as many calls as he did in his line officer days. But the veteran firefighter, who joined DC Fire in 2004 as a junior at AU, shares a workplace on Sherman Avenue in Northwest DC with a fire engine, an ambulance, and an air unit. That means his 24-hour shift, which starts and ends just after dawn, often culminates with a flurry of early-morning lights and sirens.

“Even if you’re not on a call, it’s never really a peaceful night,” he says.

Kannry (*5.5 hours the night before work, 4 during a shift, and 7 on nonwork nights*) is one of 15 million US shift workers for whom a regular sleep schedule is just a dream, according to the National Sleep Foundation. They work round-the-clock to extinguish fires, suture wounds, and stock shelves. Irregular schedules require ingenuity to keep workers awake and alert when the stakes are highest.

Economic risk, as measured by casualties and damage, quadruples for the most fatigued rail workers, according to a 2011 Federal Railroad Administration study. In *Why We Sleep*, Walker notes that medical residents working a 30-hour shift are 36 percent more likely to make a serious error than those on the clock for 16 hours or fewer.

It’s Lindsay Schwartz’s job to rein in the risk, transforming transportation and other

“What I’ve come to realize through research and clinical practice is that sometimes it’s easier to accept that you’re just going to have a bad night of sleep, not make yourself sick with worry.”

—Aria Ruggiero

shiftwork professionals into model sleepers. Schwartz, CAS/PhD ’18, a behavioral scientist for the Baltimore-based Institutes for Behavior Resources, works closely with the nonprofit’s SAFTE-FAST biomathematical model, which analyzes several work and sleep factors to predict cognitive performance and mitigate the risk of fatigue.

The tool counts among its users all major US airlines, the Federal Aviation Administration, and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority. This summer it helped Azul, one of Brazil’s largest airlines, determine ideal departure times and in-flight rest periods for special trips to China to retrieve medical supplies.

Working with clients to protect workforce rest has taught Schwartz (*7.4 hours*) that fatigue risk amounts to more than punch cards and pillow time. It is a complex mosaic composed of sleep history, shift transitions,

time zones, and even nap opportunities. Sleep is like work—we might not complete a task on the first try, but it’s important that we keep at it to avoid falling behind.

“Sometimes employees need to sleep 5 hours at night and 3 hours later,” Schwartz says. “That might not be as good as getting 8 hours, but in our work, we don’t worry so much about what’s perfect. We worry about what gets the job done in the safest way possible.”

Breaking up sleep depends on the profession—a pilot with a set schedule might feel more comfortable napping than a resident on call for emergency surgeries—as well as the person.

Kannry’s advice to young firefighters: settle on a routine that’s least disruptive to *you*. Some in the fire service prefer to nap until noon after completing a 24-hour shift. Kannry discovered early in his career that the first two sleeps following a shift are his most precious, and that a lengthy nap risks sacrificing one. So he snags a short 4-hour power nap during his firehouse night and pushes through the next day, allowing his schedule to “balance itself out” within 24 hours.

“You get there through trial and error, and whatever the plan is, it’s never going to work all the time,” Kannry says. “The nights that you’re not at work, it’s trying to develop those good habits so that when you do get some downtime, you’re able to sleep.”

His routine is consistently inconsistent, but after 16 years as a firefighter, he can rest easy knowing that it works for him.

Even with a sleep plan, some nights will be a rude awakening. When people toss and turn, they can become fixated on the z’s they’re not catching, allowing the fear of fatigue to bankrupt their beauty sleep.

Ruggiero and Chue both encounter clients whose anxiety builds as the bedside clock ticks away on a full night’s rest. Ruggiero calls this phenomenon “rumination.”

“It’s pervasive worry that keeps people up at night, thinking about how tired they’re going to be the next day,” she says. “What I’ve come to realize through research and clinical practice is that sometimes it’s easier to accept that you’re just going to have a bad night of sleep, not make yourself sick with worry.”

Self-induced torment over tiredness is one of many triggers amid a troubling 2020 that can stimulate our stress response system. But

it’s important to remember that, for most, good sleep is just on the other side of the pillow.

A 2018 University of Pennsylvania study found that close to 25 percent of Americans wrestle with acute insomnia each year, but that nearly 75 percent return to good sleep within 12 months. Less than 7 percent slide into chronic insomnia—at least three nights a week for three or more months.

For those who are struggling, help is just an acronym away.

If our thoughts begin to spiral as we doomscroll news on Twitter, Trisha Nakano Bhagen, SOE/MAT ’04, reminds us to STOPP and take time for mindful pauses. The nutrition educator and health and wellness coach with the US Department of Veterans Affairs tells her clients to *stop, take* a few deep breaths, *observe* what’s going on around and within, figure out the *purpose* of what they’re doing, and *proceed*.

“We can’t control the spread of the pandemic. We can’t control whether schools are open or not,” Bhagen (*7.25 hours*) says. “But when everything else is unknown and you’re trying to grasp at straws to establish normalcy, then you can structure it into your life: ‘I can control what time I get up, what time I eat breakfast, and what time I turn off my device and signal my body that I’m ready to go to bed.’ You just have to be a little nurturing with yourself.”

Cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia (CBT-I) is also an option for the bleary and weary. The treatment focuses on sleep hygiene, sometimes moving to sleep restriction—a paradoxical practice through which a patient intentionally reduces time in bed to cut back on hours spent staring at the ceiling. Through small, incremental increases, 5 hours will eventually become a healthier 7 or 8. More importantly, the fear of missing out on sleep is put to bed.

“People think, ‘I only got 5 hours last night, today’s gonna be shot,’ and then they’ll lower their activity level that day accordingly,” Chue says. “That thought isn’t helpful, so we practice challenging it. Usually their ability to function is better than they believe. It’s about regaining confidence in your ability to sleep.”

Not every rest will be what dreams are made of, but even in the face of unprecedented stress, subpar shut-eye is not worth losing sleep over.

ENTER SANDMAN

Still yawning after your fourth cup of coffee, fighting heavy eyelids after lunch, or staring at the ceiling at 1 a.m. after eight episodes of *Schitt’s Creek* on Netflix? You’re not alone.

Just as our sleep postures vary—74 percent of adults snooze on their side—there’s no one-pajama-size-fits-all solution for a good night’s rest. Still, there are things we can all do to scrub bad habits and practice proper sleep hygiene. Turn out the lights and get comforter-able with these best bedtime behaviors:



MORNING

- Wake up at the same time every day.
- Take a few minutes to acclimate before grabbing your phone.
- Go outside and get some natural sunlight.
- Get your blood pumping by walking around the block.
- Start the workday somewhere other than bed if possible.
- Set up a workspace with ample light.



AFTERNOON

- Avoid napping after 3 p.m., and for most adults, naps of longer than 20 minutes.
- Eat a healthy lunch.
- Stop drinking caffeine at least 6 hours before bed.
- Exercise, but not too late.



EVENING

- Eat an earlier dinner to avoid late-night indigestion.
- Stay hydrated, but remember too much liquid too late is problematic.
- Step away from work to set boundaries.
- Call a friend or loved one to stay connected.



NIGHT

- Skip booze before bed—it increases cortisol and reduces REM sleep.
- Limit your sugar intake, but a light snack is fine.
- Take a hot bath to lower your core body temperature.
- Turn off electronics right before bed; blue light blocks melatonin.
- Try a white noise machine.
- Set the thermostat to a cooler temperature.
- Try to avoid over-the-counter sleep aids.
- Prop up a partner who snores—or talk to a doctor if it’s not a quick fix.
- Reserve at least 30 minutes to wind down before bed.
- Avoid forcing an early bedtime if you’re not sleepy.
- Make sure your bedroom is dark and quiet.
- Go to bed at a consistent time.
- Be patient—change doesn’t happen all at once.



EARLY MORNING

- Get out of bed if you wake up for more than 20 minutes and do something relaxing until you get sleepy.

COUNT US IN

By Andrew Erickson

Ihágase contar! Ako mapabilang. វ័. Be counted. Everywhere they looked this summer, residents of Long Beach, California, were reminded—in Spanish, Tagalog, Khmer, and English—that their city was counting on them. “We tried to put it in front of peoples’ faces as many times as we could,” says Julian Cernuda, 2020 census project manager. More exposure leads to more responses, so “Be Counted, Long Beach” was plastered everywhere in the coastal city of 460,000: billboards, sidewalks, buses, tote bags and T-shirts, Facebook, and even COVID-19 testing centers. Outreach grew more complicated in a touchless world, but Cernuda, SPEXs/WSP ’12, was already ahead of the game when the coronavirus hit. By summer 2019, his team had canvased its hard-to-count neighborhoods and low visibility housing units—like converted garages and granny units—to provide the US Census Bureau with an updated address file. They also met with representatives from 45 local organizations to brainstorm how to educate residents about the decennial questionnaire and motivate them to complete it.

The census determines not only the apportionment of seats in the House of Representatives but also the allocation of federal funds—an annual tax dollar pie of \$1.5 trillion—for Medicaid, infrastructure, food programs, and more. An incomplete count leads to lost cash: up to \$20,000 per uncounted Long Beacher over the next decade, Cernuda says. In 2010, more than two-thirds of American households responded online, by mail, and over the phone, and more than 550,000 enumerators went door-to-door to nudge the stragglers. That undertaking is challenge enough in a “normal” year. Throw a pandemic into the mix and it becomes much more likely that people—historically, people of color—will fall through the cracks. The Urban Institute estimated in 2019, even before COVID-19, that Black and Latinx Americans could be undercounted by as much as 3.5 percent.

Navigating this enumeration period also meant confronting constant logistical and legal roadblocks. Last summer, the US Supreme Court blocked a citizenship question from appearing on the questionnaire. And in September, federal courts prevented the Trump administration from excluding undocumented immigrants from the census and from ending the count a month ahead of its October 31 deadline. Another ruling by the US Supreme Court then stopped the count on October 13. Mixed messages can cause confusion, fear, and distrust. Natasha Quiroga, WCL/ JD ’07, SIS/MA ’07, sought to combat all three. The senior counsel for the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law spent much of 2020 running a census protection hotline staffed by 200 pro bono attorneys.

“Every day something new is happening,” Quiroga said in late August. “We’ve had a lot of people report potential scams or ask, ‘Can my undocumented neighbors still fill out the census form?’ It feels good to be able to reassure folks and to make them feel like they’re counted.” It was an important step toward ensuring accuracy and fairness in a process that comes once every 10 years—but impacts our lives every day.

The Apportionment Act of 1911 expanded the House of Representatives to 433 members with room to grow by two—one each for new states Arizona and New Mexico. The law took effect in 1913, capping the lower chamber of Congress at 435. Take a (House) seat and learn how the last 10 censuses have shifted state representation.

Along with Delaware, Wyoming is the only other state whose representation has **held steady** at one since 1913. (Idaho and New Hampshire have remained at two.)

Nevada **quadrupled** its delegation to four in just four census cycles.

California **jumped** eight seats after the 1960 census—the largest single-cycle gain in the last century.

After achieving statehood in 1959, Hawaii and Alaska each received a representative, **growing the House** to 437 seats until 1963, when it shrunk back to 435.

Alaska, which has one representative, is the **largest congressional district** by land area in the US.

North and South Dakota’s delegations have **shrunk** by 67 percent since 1913, going from three representatives to one.

Missouri had the **sixth-most** representatives in 1913. Today, it has the nation’s 18th largest delegation.

Michigan is the only state to **gain and lose** at least five representatives since 1913.

New York’s 13th District is the **nation’s smallest** at 10.2 square miles.

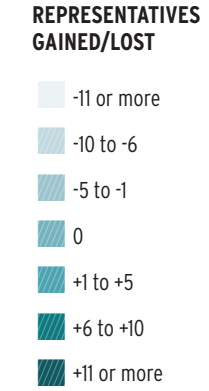
Pennsylvania has **shed seats** in nine straight censuses after reaching a peak of 36 in 1913–23. It is projected to lose one of its 18 remaining seats this cycle.

Delaware has gone 197 years—longer than any other state—**without a change** in its number of representatives. The First State had two representatives from 1813–23 and has had one since.

Virginia **fielded** the largest House delegation until 1813. New York (1813–1973) and California (1973–present) have held that distinction since.

Texas is projected to **gain up to three** congressional seats following 2020 census reapportionment. It would be the Lone Star State’s eighth consecutive cycle with a gain.

Florida’s delegation **grew** from 4 to 27 representatives in just nine census cycles.



Note: Apportionment resulting from the 2020 census will take effect prior to the 2022 election cycle.

In 1913, there were **roughly 210,000 constituents** per representative. Today, there are about 750,000.

By federal law, individual census records are **not publicly available** until 72 years after they are collected.

In 2010, about 565,000 enumerators went **door-to-door** to finish the count—up from 70,000 a century earlier.

The equal proportions method—which gives one seat to each state and uses a **mathematical formula** to divide the remaining 385—has been used since 1940.

Native Americans were **not recognized** by the census until 1840 and enumeration on reservations did not occur until 1900.

Heading into the 2020 election, state lawmakers were responsible for congressional and state **legislative redistricting** in 35 and 36 states, respectively.

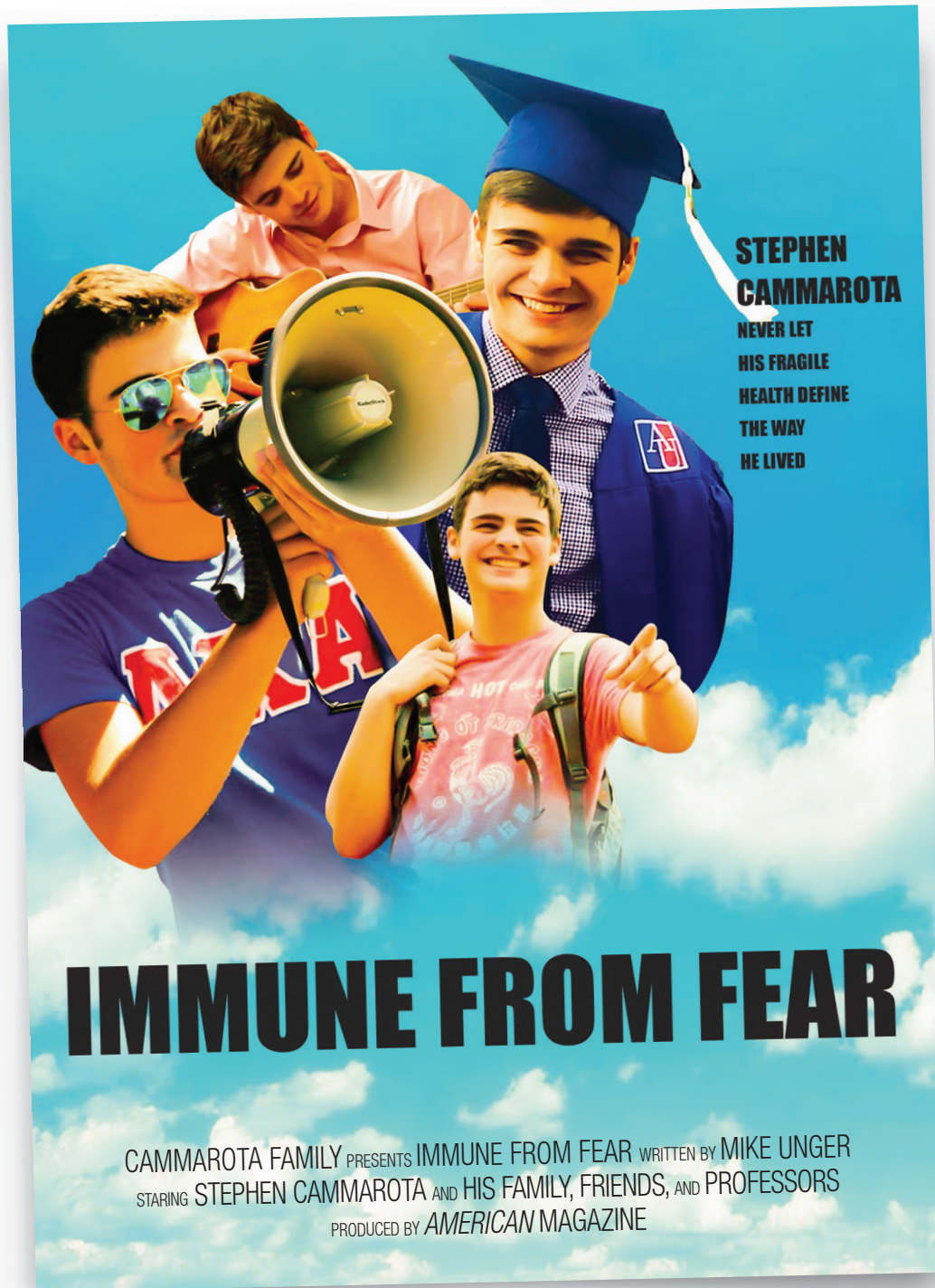
Twelve states’ delegations have been **cut by at least 50 percent** since 1913.

The 2010 census finished **\$1.6 billion under budget—**largely because 72 percent of households completed the questionnaire on their own.

Enslaved people were counted as **three-fifths of a human being** in the first eight censuses.

Only once has **reapportionment failed** to occur: after the 1920 census, when rural district representatives, fearful of America’s urban shift, delayed legislation.

More than 1 million members of the armed forces, other federal employees, and their dependents **living abroad** were included in the 2010 apportionment counts.



Both the movie and the meal were pure Steve. For dinner: bowls of spicy bún bò Huế soup from a local Vietnamese takeout. On the screen: a movie so esoteric that it surely would have prompted a smart-ass-yet-good-natured reminder from him that he was a cinema studies minor.

It was June 3, and Stephen and Liz Cammarota were celebrating their son’s 24th birthday. They chose his favorite cuisine and

one of the films he most respected to honor him. It was the first time his mother had seen *Mulholland Drive*.

“She’s still scratching her head,” his dad says.

So has pretty much everyone who’s ever seen it. To an outsider, the David Lynch project might have seemed an odd choice for family movie night, but for Stephen and Liz and their daughter, Sarah, it was the perfect pick.

“We watched a David Lynch movie because he likes David Lynch. *Liked* David Lynch,” Liz says, her voice trailing off.

They are recounting the evening the next day while sitting in their kitchen in Blue Bell, Pennsylvania, about 20 miles northwest of Philadelphia. Each crevice of the home is filled with the most cherished and brutal of memories. The country is ensnarled in the grip of a global pandemic that has turned life

upside down, but the Cammarotas’ world was upended months before the coronavirus arrived. That happened on August 25, 2019, when their firstborn, Steve, died at just 23 years old.

“He figured out a way to live his life to the fullest and treat people better than they expected to be treated, and to give back,” says Stephen, who has a different middle name than his son. “Because to him, if you knew you might die young, that would be the best way to live as a young person.”

Stephen James Cammarota, SOC/BA ’18, would probably hate this story. He was stricken with one medical condition at a young age, and acquired additional diagnoses throughout his childhood. Still, he never let his fragile health define the way he lived. In fact, he cringed when the spotlight shined on him. Whenever he was praised for leading a volunteer effort on campus, thoughtfully bringing a friend a drink from Starbucks, or nailing a project at work he’d often respond with a self-deprecating joke.

“This portrayal of Stephen as a saint wouldn’t please him because it’s omitting something important about Stephen, which is that he had . . . Satan’s sense of humor,” his sister, Sarah, said during her eulogy at his memorial service. Be that as it may, Steve was a guy friends could count on, a dude they could trust, the cutup who always was armed with a smart or searing or sometimes dark joke that usually hit its mark.

“He would do this thing called ‘Steve-ing out,’ where he would go on these rants about how terrible the traffic is in DC or the movies he didn’t like,” says his friend Jonathan Chick, SPA/BA ’20. “But he was actually a very kind and loving person. He could find a balance between when to be serious and when to joke around.”

Chick remembers the first time he saw Steve. It was at a Lambda Chi Alpha party (both were brothers), and Steve was wearing a “ridiculous” Christmas tree suit. He also remembers the last.

“We would go to trivia night at Breadsoda,” Chick says. “One time we were walking back

from trivia and he was like, ‘You know, guys don’t say they love each other enough. I love you man.’ I was like, ‘I love you too.’ That was one of the last things he said to me. He just cared so much about his friends and family and wasn’t afraid to say it.”

The first clue came in second grade, when Steve started coming home from school black and blue. He was diagnosed with immune thrombocytopenic purpura, a blood disorder known to cause bruising and internal bleeding due to a decrease in platelets, the cells that form clots.

Two rounds of chemotherapy followed before another diagnosis: Common Variable Immune Disorder (CVID). Steve had no antibodies to fight off infections.

Steve was a guy friends could count on, a dude they could trust, the cutup who always was armed with a smart or searing or sometimes dark joke that usually hit its mark.

“They weren’t able to diagnose the CVID originally because typically you present with a lot of infections, which he did not have,” Stephen says. “They couldn’t believe that he hadn’t been sick all the time because he had zero antibodies to fight off the common cold, measles, mumps. Anything.”

After the chemo, he took steroids, which caused the rail-thin kid to balloon. During Little League he had to wear a batting helmet in the outfield, lest a misplayed fly ball cause uncontrollable bleeding. Yet his parents took it all in stride, and their oldest son followed. The reason: their youngest son, Sam.

When Steve was seven years old, a pregnant Liz was rushed to the hospital. There, doctors told her that her baby, who was born prematurely, would not make it.

Sam was diagnosed with microcephaly, a condition where the head is smaller than normal, before he was born. The prognosis: he would be in a vegetative state when he was delivered—if he lived at all. Although

he’s severely cognitively disabled, 16 years later he’s alive and well.

Because of Sam, Stephen and Liz’s outlook on life changed. When Steve was presented with his own health challenges, the family was able to keep things in perspective.

“Steve had the expectation that Sam wasn’t going to make it,” Liz says. “At a very young age he was very mature. I don’t think he ever said, ‘Why is this happening to me?’”

Other than taking weekly doses of immunoglobulin to boost his immune system, Steve was a normal kid. He loved *Star Wars* and *Lord of the Rings*; he wasn’t much of a jock.

“He was good at tennis, but I don’t think he cared enough to become really good,” Sarah says. “So he played on the JV team for one year and then just played for fun. He

was a John McEnroe type where if he missed a serve or something, he would smash his racquet on the ground.”

He brought a gentler disposition to the courts when, for a service-learning project, he and his neighbor Julia Friedenberg founded Tennis Buddies, a nonprofit that hosts clinics for kids with

special needs. It’s still going strong today.

Music was more his speed. He played saxophone in the jazz band even though his musical tastes tended toward new wave. Duran Duran and New Order were two favorites. When his high school band director asked for a volunteer to play the bulky contrabass clarinet, Steve was the only person who stepped up.

“He couldn’t say no to anyone,” Sarah says. “I don’t want to say he was a pushover, because it wasn’t out of a sense of obligation, it was more out of a sense of, ‘Oh, no one else is going to do it? I’ll do it.’”

After a cancer scare in high school Steve penned an essay entitled “You Are Going to Die, So Be Happy” (see sidebar). Heavy stuff for a 17-year-old. Beautifully written, the piece is insightful and hopeful.

“Allowing the possibility of death into my life allowed me to move past my fear,” he wrote. “I started focusing more on the time I thought I had left, making the moments

count and not focusing on the petty trivial pursuits that had governed a large part of my life.”

That was the attitude he carried to AU for the four most formative years of his life.

Kendall Lawrence, SIS/BA '18, is terrible with names. For the first weeks of her freshman year she could only remember the funny guy she met while playing Cards Against Humanity in the Centennial lounge as “the kid with no immune system.”

“He mentioned it during an icebreaker during Welcome Week. It was his ‘fun fact,’” she says. “He didn’t hide it, but he also didn’t let it affect how he chose to live his life.”

The two became close friends, and eventually roommates. They cooked together and ate their way around Adams Morgan. During their senior year, Steve helped Lawrence get a job at SOC’s SubHub.

Steve was a fixture in the McKinley Building. Like so many, he came to Washington thinking he’d pursue a career in the political world, but after an internship in Senator Bob Casey’s (D-PA) office, he became interested in public relations instead. For Professor Gemma Puglisi’s PR portfolio class, he dressed up as Clawed during an event to show support for Covenant House, a nonprofit that provides services to youth facing homelessness.

“He was one of the most caring students I ever had,” says Puglisi, who invited him back to her class to speak with her new students. “The last time I remember [seeing] him, it was a semester after I had him. I was gearing up for the same class’s final presentation. He saw me moving chairs and said, ‘Professor, I can help you move these. How’s your class?’”

Puglisi dedicated the spring 2020 semester of her course to Steve. Her students raised about \$2,000, which they donated to Georgetown University Medical Center, where Steve was treated before he passed away.

As a senior, Steve was on the board of EagleTHON, a 12-hour dance marathon that

raised \$29,657 for Children’s National Hospital. He was a go-getter with such an infectious positive attitude that Alan Fleischmann, SIS/BA ’87, SPA/BS ’87, gave him a job after college following just a seven-minute interview.

“We were looking to hire someone who would work in the office of the CEO,” says Fleischmann, founder, chairman, and CEO of Laurel Strategies. “My chief of staff came back from a really short interview and said, ‘I don’t think he’s right. He’s too junior.’ I wanted to meet him, but people in my office were saying, ‘You don’t have time. You only have seven minutes until your next meeting.’ I walked into the conference room and he stood up and never sat down again. I got to know this kid in seven minutes like you normally would get to know someone in an hour. At one point I said, ‘I need an all-in person.’ He looked at me and said, ‘I don’t have another gear.’ He said it with a fire and a passion.”

“... Stevo was passionate about being a good human being, which made him highly critical but equally empathetic and selfless at the same time. . . . He expected people to meet a high standard.”

—Stephen Cammarota

Steve traveled with Fleischmann, who chairs the SIS Dean’s Board of Advisors, to New York on a couple of business trips. During one, Fleischmann was choking on a piece of food in his hotel room when Steve rushed in to help.

“When it was all over and I was better, the two of us were lying next to each other on one of the two beds in my room talking, looking up at the ceiling. I think his line was, ‘Is this what a typical day on a business trip with you is like?’ I miss not seeing him get older.”

The Cammarota family vacations in Hilton Head, South Carolina, almost every year. While Steve was growing up, he would fish with his dad. The two would plant

themselves on the beach, cast their lines into the ocean, and sometimes reel in small sharks. In 2019, Steve joined the family for a week. As usual, everyone enjoyed the sun, sand, and each other’s company. Steve even played a histrionics-free tennis match with Sarah.

On his drive back, he stopped in Ocean City, Maryland, to hang out with some friends. That night his parents began receiving what they describe as “incoherent” texts.

“He was confused, he wasn’t forming sentences,” Liz says. “In the beginning, I thought he’s in Ocean City with his buddies, he’s hungover. I told him, ‘You need to go get hydrated.’ But he wasn’t making any sense.”

Apparently, Steve also understood that something wasn’t right, because when he got back to DC, he Ubered to Georgetown University Medical Center. His dad arrived soon after he was admitted to the intensive care unit.

“When I got there, the hemoglobin in his blood was down to almost zero,” Stephen says. “He was getting no oxygen to the brain. They said, ‘What year is it, Stephen?’ and he said, ‘October.’”

His condition deteriorated quickly. Doctors thought he might be suffering from hemophagocytic lymphohistiocytosis, a severe systemic inflammatory syndrome

that can cause a strong activation of the immune system, but they weren’t sure. Steve had a massive stroke then slipped into a coma. Seven days after he checked himself into the hospital, he passed away. His parents still aren’t exactly sure what killed him.

No parent wants to contemplate their child’s funeral. But in the days immediately following Steve’s death, Stephen and Liz knew that they didn’t want a solemn memorial. They dubbed the service “A Celebration of Life.” The program featured a picture of a smiling Steve alongside movie poster-style blurbs (“Man throws grill off roof. Hilarity ensues.” “A heartfelt look at the human condition.” “Two thumbs up.”) and a list of Steve’s not-so-greatest hits (“Believed in Santa until the seventh grade.”)

More than 300 people packed the auditorium in Steve’s high school to remember, laugh, and cry.

“It was the first celebration of life that I’ve been to that actually felt like a celebration of life,” says his friend Desmond Calhoun, SOC/BA ’18.

“From his birth to his death, he was an enigma,” Stephen said in his eulogy. “If you only paid attention to his rants, you would think he was the most miserable SOB there was, but if you hung past the rant and cynicism, you realized there was a reason for

them. I don’t know how to explain it other than to say Stevo was passionate about being a good human being, which made him highly critical but equally empathetic and selfless at the same time. . . . He expected people to meet a high standard. If you were his friend, that meant a lot because it probably meant you were as selfless as he was.”

The Cammarotas are trying to preserve that selflessness by starting a nonprofit in their son’s honor. Do Better 4 Steve will help disabled and disadvantaged youth in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania.

Money donated in Steve’s honor already has subsidized one child’s fees for summer camp at the local YMCA, an early partner of the foundation.

Though the pandemic has slowed progress on the nonprofit, Stephen and Liz have registered it with the IRS and secured a domain name. They hope it will be up and running by what would have been Steve’s 25th birthday, when they’ll once again celebrate their lovable, quirky, resilient son over Vietnamese takeout and a movie—just not *Mulholland Drive*.

YOU ARE GOING TO DIE, SO BE HAPPY



By Stephen Cammarota

It may sound morbid, but people have an expiration date. Sometimes people don’t even get a chance to make it that long. Car crashes, sickness, acts of God, all of these things have the potential to snuff out the light of life. I don’t dwell on this reality; I merely acknowledge it. Accepting mortality allows for a more fulfilling life. You are going to die, so be happy.

Last year it was very likely that I had lymphoma. Various preceding medical complications, including a blood disorder and an immune deficiency, as well as two courses of early-age chemotherapy, had most likely mutated my cells into cancer cells. The outlook was grim, all of the tests came back positive. When I was first made aware of this, I did not know how to feel. I didn’t cry, I wasn’t angry, I was just puzzled. I thought, “Young people don’t get cancer.” The enormity of the situation was very real, and I understood it, but I just couldn’t bring myself to feel anything. The full effect of this news came crashing down on me about a week later. I would have panic attacks and be unable to function. I finally knew damn well what emotion I was feeling, and it was fear. If things kept on going the way they were, I was going to die from panic long

before the cancer got to me. That’s when I made the conscious decision to accept the fact that I might die, and it might happen sooner rather than later. It was liberating.

Allowing the possibility of death into my life allowed me to move past my fear. I started focusing more on the time I thought I had left, making the moments count and not focusing on the petty trivial pursuits that had governed a large part of my life. Gone were my worries about the quiz I failed and if my hair looked OK that day. (It did.) I devoted more time to family and the things I liked to do. This was not denial, this was freedom. I realized that I might die, and this made me appreciate what time I had, and how much my friends and family cared. I was feeling better than I had in a long time. The news came that this wasn’t cancer, just a flare up of a preexisting condition. The response my father received after relaying the information was, “that’s cool.” Needless to say, he was surprised.

Nobody lives forever. Realizing this has made my life all that more precious. I thankfully do not have cancer, although I am still 50 percent more susceptible than the normal person. I make more time for the more important things, and I worry less about the small stuff. Accepting that death is as much a part of life as life itself allows for a more fulfilling and rewarding experience. This I believe.

CALL OF DUTY

When COVID-19 hit our shores, 40,000 new contact tracers hit the phones, bringing dignity to data collection and humanity to the biggest public health crisis in a century.

BY ANDREW ERICKSON

THE 833 OR 857 AREA CODE doesn't reveal much, but the caller ID—MA COVID TEAM—is like a smack to your (hopefully masked) face.

You were perhaps lucky or careful enough to avoid for eight months a virus that has killed more than 225,000 Americans and infected 8 million. Now you might be a link in the chain, and this incoming call serves as a warning: coronavirus knows someone you know.

You've seen the health department's ads—"The greatest act of love is answering the call"—and decide to pick up.

Hi, this is Marie calling from the Community Tracing Collaborative, working with Partners in Health and the Department of Public Health in Massachusetts on the COVID-19 response. Am I speaking with . . . ?

Yes, you confirm, while trying to convince yourself that this is neither scam nor dream.

We're trying to stop this pandemic and you can help. Someone who tested positive for COVID-19 reported that they came into contact with you recently. I'm not saying you have the virus or that you're going to get the virus, but do you have a few minutes to discuss what this might mean for you?

It means that, if you follow advice, the next two weeks will be boring at best. It also means that Marie Alden, SIS/BA '21, will become a familiar, friendly voice, calling at

least every other day to check in, monitor your symptoms, and help connect you with resources like food and medication.

Since April, the international studies major has been a contact tracer in her native Massachusetts, spending 20 hours a week tracking and tamping down COVID-19. She is one of nearly 40,000 crisis-time contact tracers and case investigators, according to National Public Radio, working for state and local public health departments, nonprofits, and other contractors to chase a slippery and unpredictable adversary.

They deal in sensitive, complex information, often for a little more than 20 bucks an hour, and bring dignity and humanity to data collection, talking those with COVID-19 and their contacts through their fears while facing some of their own.

For Alden, it was the unknown. "There are just so many hypothetical reactions," she says. "I didn't know if people would be shocked or scared or angry and not want to share any information, so my first couple calls, I was timid." Her unease is not unusual. Matthew Reise, CAS/BS '17, worried that Marylanders would try to guess who had exposed them to the virus. And Kara Suvada, CAS/BS '17, fretted about fumbling over words or being bombarded by the most loquacious Georgians she called and missing key information.

None of the investigative Eagles, however, let their worries get in the way of their unselfish goal: to be good enough at their jobs—ensuring contacts are informed, tested, and isolated—to play a small part in making them obsolete.

"We care, it's as simple as that," Alden says. "We want this pandemic to end. *Everyone* wants it to end. So please, pick up the phone and help."

ALDEN DIDN'T INTEND to be on contact tracing calls this spring—or even on this continent.

She was settling into her second semester studying social justice in São Paulo in March when COVID began spreading worldwide, forcing her early return home. "Feeling a bit lost," she discovered that Partners in Health, the global health nonprofit with which she had volunteered the previous summer, was spearheading Massachusetts' contact tracing program. Alden had also spent eight months speaking only Portuguese, an asset in a state home to one of the nation's largest concentrations of Brazilian immigrants.

Earlier this year, the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) estimated that 100,000 contact tracers would be needed to adequately identify and contain COVID-19 in the US. To reach even a fraction



of that number, hiring managers have had to think outside the box: tapping both public health specialists *and* those with an excellent phone-side manner.

Reise, fresh off a COVID-rushed departure from his English teaching job in Merida, Mexico, brings an educator’s patience and understanding to contact tracing. “I wouldn’t want to get that news,” he says. “It’s being there for people when they’re concerned. It’s trying to be calming, and it’s being their lifeline and their resource.”

Jeanette Millard, SPA/MSOD ’87, watched her thriving Boston-area consulting business wither to one client in a single day in March. She still projects the warmth, calm, and persuasiveness of a team builder while cold-calling contacts.

“I’m somebody who wants to see problems solved. My livelihood was helping people communicate and understand each other, and suddenly I have no work and I’m helpless,” Millard says. “Then, I got this gift from the gods: a chance to help fight a pandemic.”

This fight is not our first. Contact tracing has existed in its most basic form since the sixteenth century when it was used to track the bubonic plague. It grew in popularity in the early twentieth century during outbreaks of sexually transmitted infections like syphilis. More recently, the HIV epidemic in the 1980s modernized partner notification processes and the development of best practices to drive testing and referrals to other health and social services.

Today, vastly improved technology and methods face a maddening foe. COVID does not behave predictably for contact tracing’s

TRACE EVIDENCE

Our national COVID-19 case total has jumped by five figures every day since March 23, according to Johns Hopkins. Despite our protracted failure to flatten the curve, tens of thousands of contact tracers remain motivated, charting and calling through the spread.

While each organization’s outreach differs slightly, most methods are built on general CDC guidelines. Below is a framework of contact tracers’ fight against the pandemic:

- A patient is tested for COVID-19.
- A positive test is reported to a state and/or local health department.
- A **CASE INVESTIGATOR** calls this “index case,” collects names of recent close contacts, and relays instructions for isolation, which lasts at least 10 days.
- A **CONTACT TRACER** calls individuals who’ve been exposed to the infected person, recommending they get tested if they haven’t already and quarantine for 14 days.
- A case investigator follows up if the contact tests positive.
- Contact tracers and case investigators refer individuals without access to resources like food to support services.
- A tracer or investigator makes a follow-up call every day (case) or every other day (contact) to monitor symptoms and general wellbeing.
- A case or contact exits isolation or quarantine unless symptoms remain.

for contact tracing, but without national training requirements, a handful of universities like UC San Francisco and Johns Hopkins and organizations like ASTHO have stepped up to develop free modules. These help states and localities more quickly onboard contact tracers, providing them with the basics of communicable diseases, information privacy and ethics, and empathy in difficult conversations.

Data management systems differ—Virginia and Pennsylvania utilize Sara Alert, while Massachusetts uses Salesforce—as do policies like texting or calling for follow-ups. But the general framework is the same. Once someone tests positive for COVID-19, a case investigator gathers the names of close contacts—those who have been within six feet of the infected person for more than 15 minutes—and a contact tracer reaches out to

them, urging them to get tested, quarantine for 14 days, and monitor their symptoms.

Ideally, the virus will be isolated to an individual, family, or friend group—but that assumes everyone follows the guidelines. It’s nearly impossible to guarantee that people will hunker down at home for two weeks—or that they will even pick up the phone. Tracers are persistent, often trying a contact’s cell two or three times in a row every day for several days. With unrelenting caseloads, though, they can only do so much.

“You have to be inquisitive, have empathy, and know when to stop,” says Dana Billings, CAS/MS ’16, a contact tracing team lead in Santa Clara County, California. “You can only chase down someone for so long before you have to move on to the next person.”

Making contact is hard enough. Getting people to then change their behavior for the greater good requires building trust, which can be a frustrating tug of war. Public health officials, who can only cross their fingers and hope that contacts stay home, know their work to stop the spread is either strengthened or stymied by each citizen’s level of faith in government and science. And COVID doesn’t just infect the cooperative.

Suvada, a graduate public health student at Emory University, spent the summer tracing myriad personalities. There was the occasional elderly contact who, happy to have someone to talk to, responded to “How are you doing today?” with a minutes-long monologue. A grateful woman told her, “You’re the most helpful person I’ve talked to,” while a less kindly man—for whom she left a voicemail—replied with a disturbing text message: *Stupid b——, you don’t know what you’re talking about.*

Nevertheless, the epidemiologist in training valued her time burning up the phone lines because it emphasized the importance of equity in her work. For every contact who stressed only about getting physically sick over a two-week quarantine, there was another who feared even more the financial ruin of 14 days without work.

“You can know all of the data—and I love data, that’s why I’m in an epidemiology program—but if you can’t contextualize the people behind the numbers, then you’re not being the best public health professional you can be,” Suvada says.

Worry can be a major deterrent to sharing information with public health officials, regardless of which disease they’re tracking. And while concerns like being scammed might be easier to shake—for Virginia contact tracer Tara Rahmani, SIS/MA ’21, sometimes it’s as easy as sharing her .gov email address or her supervisor’s name—others linger.

As a tuberculosis contact investigator in Maricopa County, Arizona, Roel Ayala Peña, CAS/BS ’20, has learned to fight the battle for trust on multiple fronts. He’ll talk with a patient three or four times to establish a rapport and text a picture of his government ID badge to prove he’s legit. Fluent in Spanish, he also uses his language skills to connect with the county’s Latinx population—one of the largest in the country. The stigma associated with being infected, however, can overshadow Ayala Peña’s careful work and the promise of free TB treatment.

“People are scared they’re going to lose friends and family members because they gave them TB. They are worried that when they return to work, people are going to look at them differently,” he says. “They’re scared of people seeing them as an ‘other,’ a sickly thing that can also get other people sick. That’s understandable, so we try to talk through it.”

Fear of illness is most palpable when it’s at our doorstep. COVID-19 has transformed our daily lives for eight months, but it can feel abstract to those who haven’t watched—or listened to—someone fight it. For contact tracers, the reminders are intense and sudden. When she began making follow-up calls, former Massachusetts contact tracer Sophia Comas, CAS/BS ’17, was initially shocked at how, seemingly overnight, sprightly contacts could begin to struggle with symptoms.

“I saw that someone could be totally fine one day and then suddenly need medical attention the next,” says Comas, a public health graduate student at Harvard. “It was kind of grim to realize that,” but it underscored the critical importance of checking in.

MEG CARR, CAS/BS ’15, was in DC visiting her college roommate in March when her employer, the Allegheny County (Pennsylvania) Health Department, announced its first COVID-19 case. She immediately raised her hand—or, rather, picked up her smartphone—to help.

Carr made her first contact tracing calls from the District and dove headfirst into the COVID-19 response while finishing up her public health master’s program at the University of Pittsburgh. While her boss established a script for calls, Carr created an Excel spreadsheet to track initial contacts, helped organize health department colleagues for calls, and hosted trainings on COVID and contact tracing basics.

As a COVID-19 epidemiologist and contact tracing lead, she compiles daily metrics, fields questions on difficult contacts and database issues, checks in with her own and other health departments, partners with local colleges to establish internal contact tracing, monitors new state and CDC guidelines (which can change daily), and even makes some of her own contact tracing calls.

Carr is inspired by her colleagues, who have poured their time and effort into an unforeseen and unprecedented health

crisis, but their work is unrelenting. Since COVID hit, health departments everywhere have been all-gloved-hands-on-deck, but that doesn’t mean pre-pandemic health concerns—everything from mental health to food safety—have receded, or that the coronavirus is behind us.

“I think the challenge is: How do we sustain this level of work for the duration?” Carr says. “Despite many peoples’ hopes, COVID isn’t going away anytime soon. Public health professionals need more support from the general public and resources to sustain this work.”

Contact tracers are buoyed, however, by the courage they hear over the phone, and by relationships that are built a few minutes at a time over two weeks.

Rahmani corresponded with a contact for a week before the woman shared her greatest fear: COVID affecting her pregnancy.

“She said, ‘I was afraid to tell you this in the beginning, I just didn’t know [how to ask]. Since I’m positive, is this OK for my baby?’” Rahmani recalls. “She wasn’t comfortable telling me at first, but she wanted me to know what was going on with her situation.”

Amid a dark time, the most rewarding endeavor is guiding someone to the light at the end of the tunnel.

Millard spent two weeks following up with a man who had grown increasingly emotional about being apart from his family. On their last call, she shared some good news: he had done his part, staying isolated while infected, and was now free to embrace his loved ones. She remained on the line and listened to the happiest of sounds: a door swinging open and a family cheering.

“What could be better than that?” she asks. “We need to remember that we’re loving and caring people. Fear obviously makes us forget that, but we can help other people by talking with a contact tracer. So, don’t worry, and don’t be afraid.”

Just pick up the phone.

In the third episode of our 30 Minutes On . . . podcast, Kara Suvada, CAS/BS ’17, recalls her summer dialing up strangers as a contact tracer with the Georgia Department of Public Health. The CDC fellow and public health grad student discusses the range of reactions from contacts and lessons learned about economic and health disparities.

AIMING *for the* TRUTH

By Mike Unger

The day after the first presidential debate, descriptions of which ranged from distasteful to disgraceful, Ayman Mohyeldin took to the air. As he has every day since he began hosting the 3 p.m. hour weekdays on MSNBC, he brought thoughtful, measured, and nuanced viewpoints into a highly charged media landscape that often lacks them.

He began his show by addressing President Trump's comments on white supremacy groups.

"There's always a 'but,'" Mohyeldin, SIS/BA '00, SIS/MA '01 said. "The sentence is never just a pure condemnation of white supremacists. . . . It's just one of those mind-boggling things."

If Mohyeldin, 41, appeared genuinely baffled, perhaps it's because throughout his nearly 20-year career as a reporter who has covered the biggest stories from the field and behind the anchor desk, he has always strived to deliver the news clearly and succinctly to viewers around the world.

"I think the role of journalism is to offer transparency into how our society is governed, how our leaders conduct themselves, and how our businesses that run so much of our society are held to account," he says. "The more we live in a transparent society, the more we live in a free society, and the healthier we will be as a democracy."

Even before Mohyeldin uttered his first words on air, he was a globetrotting correspondent of sorts. Born in Cairo to an Egyptian father and Palestinian mother, his family moved to Michigan when he was five. His parents, he says, were chasing the American dream—a better life for him and his older brother. But the family relocated once again when he was about 10, just as war was breaking out in the Persian Gulf.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MSNBC

"I was living in Jordan at the time and watching CNN and it really shaped my world view about news and journalism," he says. "I was always as a young kid very enamored by the news world and reporting. I would report to my family and friends about living in the United States and living in the Middle East as I bounced back and forth."

Another move meant Mohyeldin attended high school outside of Atlanta. When it came time to pick a college, he was drawn to AU's Washington location, its School of International Service, and myriad study abroad opportunities. He was interested in international relations as a career until a chance meeting with a producer for the *Today* show led to an entry-level position in NBC News's desk assistant program.

"The very first day I set foot into a newsroom was President Bush's first inauguration in 2001," he says. "One of the producers gave me a walkie-talkie and told

me to go out to the protests that were taking place and to call back to the newsroom. That was my first foray into journalism. I fell in love with it very quickly."

For Mohyeldin, everything changed on 9/11. Because of his background in the Middle East and his fluency in Arabic, he was yanked from the desk assistant program and began working with teams of journalists who were reporting from places like Afghanistan and Iraq.

Translating tapes of Osama bin Laden and researching international terrorist connections was eye-opening work for a green reporter, but Mohyeldin was a natural. At the tender age of 24 he was hired by CNN to be a producer in Baghdad. It was 2003 and the US invasion of Iraq was underway.

"The bonds you make with other journalists, the experience that you acquire, the skill sets that you develop reporting in such an intense environment and living there [are incredible]," he says of his three years

in the Iraqi capital. "The toughest thing you experience is the death of your friends. I had a really good friend who was killed in an attack. He was working as a translator for CNN in the bureau. We had grown very close. Anytime that you are reporting on something that impacts you directly it's very difficult. The hardest part professionally was the realization that Iraq had descended into a very bloody sectarian war and what that meant for our own personal safety and the safety of the people that we were reporting on."

In 2006 Mohyeldin was hired by Al Jazeera as a reporter and anchor for its English news channel. Originally, he was stationed in Washington, but he soon moved to the network's headquarters in Doha, Qatar.

It was at Al Jazeera that Mohyeldin covered what he considers one of his most important stories, reporting live from Tahrir Square in Cairo, where Egyptians were demanding democratic reforms during the Arab Spring in 2011.

"I'll never forget the day President Mubarak stepped down," says Mohyeldin, who was arrested twice by the Egyptian military during the course of his reporting. "That was a moment I was proud of as a reporter because we were the first news organization to be able to broadcast live images from Tahrir Square. I knew that it had an impact around the world, people being able to see the size of the crowds and how genuine and organic these protests were."

Throughout his career, Mohyeldin has reported from such places as Ukraine, Japan, and South Africa. But it's his work in the Middle East that has set him apart. He believes Americans have many misconceptions about the region.

"There tends to be a conflation of governments and people and this notion that the Arab world is monolithic," he says. "So what is happening in one part of the Arab world means that it's exactly the same in all parts of the Arab world."

Mohyeldin returned to NBC in 2011, and these days he lives in New York with his wife and their two small children. He loves to cook and watch movies when he gets free time. Not that there's ever much of that.

"He works around the clock," says Rashida Jones, senior vice president for NBC News and MSNBC. "There have been moments when I've asked him to anchor overnight coverage and then go cover breaking news all

day long and his question is, 'What's next?' He's done such a good job of bringing the heart and the life of stories to the screen. He can go out and cover the most dynamic and complicated story in any country, but he always finds a way to find the voices in that environment to help bring it to light."

In May and June he covered social justice protests in the wake of the killing of George Floyd. On August 17, *MSNBC Live with Ayman Mohyeldin* premiered.

Part of a daytime shakeup announced by the network this summer following the departure of *Hardball*'s Chris Matthews in March, the program is part of MSNBC's efforts to diversify its newsroom and examine the ways it covers stories on race—a movement taking place in media organizations across the US (see sidebar).

In July, Cesar Conde, the new head of NBCUniversal's operations, announced he would push for 50 percent of MSNBC, NBC News, and CNBC employees to be people of color and 50 percent to be women. Later that month, Joy Reid made history when she became the first woman of color to anchor a prime-time news show on MSNBC—and the only Black woman currently occupying an evening timeslot on any of the major networks.

Diversity is also among Mohyeldin's aims. "We want to widen the conversation, the expertise, and the analysis. Because of where

[the show] sits in the day, we also want to emphasize breaking news, the strong reporting that we have across our news organization, and provide people with the context that they need to make sense of the critical issues that they're dealing with on a daily basis."

The day after the September 29 presidential debate, Mohyeldin's show was a perfect illustration of what he's trying to accomplish. His last guest was Susan Bro, whose daughter, Heather Heyer, was killed while protesting a white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, in August 2017. It was after that violence that President Trump said there were "very fine people on both sides." Bro now runs the Heather Heyer Foundation, which has established a scholarship program for budding social activists.

"I wanted to, before I let you go, get your thoughts very quickly about how you [felt] when Joe Biden called President Trump a racist last night," Mohyeldin asked Bro. "Do you agree with him?"

"If it walks like a duck, if it quacks like a duck, you know," she replied.

"We'll leave it at that," Mohyeldin responded as a warm smile crept onto his bearded face. "Susan Bro, thank you so much for your time. I appreciate your insight and your wisdom. That wraps up this hour for me. I'll see you right back here tomorrow at 3 p.m. eastern."

JOURNALISTS PRESS *for* GREATER DIVERSITY

John Watson's arrival at his hometown *Jersey Journal* in 1975 came after a slew of rejections—for internships as a Rutgers journalism student, and a full-time job after he graduated.

"I was called back because the person they hired instead of me quit unexpectedly," says Watson, a journalism professor in the School of Communication. "They asked me if I could fill in until they found a replacement."

Instead, the Hudson County, New Jersey, paper's only Black journalist stuck around for 21 years. He became the first African American city editor and helped welcome dozens of journalists of color to the newsroom.

"I wasn't Superman," Watson says. "It's just that once you get someone in that door who recognizes the necessity of diversity, it's going to happen."

Three years after Watson began his professional journalism career, the American Society of News Editors pledged that by 2000, the diversity of newsrooms would reflect that of the nation. Two decades past that deadline, racial and ethnic minorities comprise 40 percent of the US population but just 17 percent of print and online journalists, according to the *Columbia Journalism Review*. Similarly, the Radio Television Digital News Association reported this fall that only about one-quarter of the TV news workforce are people of color.

The further up the masthead, the more those numbers drop. But a top-down approach to diversity is important to a news organization's credibility, says Lisa Pecot-Hébert, professor and director of the

journalism master's program at the University of Southern California.

"When you have diversity at the leadership level, you not only have diversity of bodies, but diversity of thought. Often, those are connected," Pecot-Hébert, SOC/MA '94, says. "A less diverse leadership staff might miss out on story ideas—or not even bring them to the table."

A first step, she says, is acknowledging a lack of diversity. Some news organizations, from the *New York Times* to National Public Radio, are becoming more transparent by publishing diversity and inclusion reports. This gesture demonstrates an apparent willingness to do better, Watson says, but it comes with a caveat.

"The only true indicator of a commitment to progress is progress itself."—AE



SLATED FOR STATEHOOD

BY
ANDREW
ERICKSON

Sheila Escobedo Zazueta, SPA/BA '17, is not a native Washingtonian, but she feels a kinship with her adopted hometown of six years.

As associate director for statehood under DC mayor Muriel Bowser, SPA/MPP '00, she has advocated since February for the addition of a 51st star on the American flag and full congressional representation for the District's 702,000 residents.

Campaigning for the Douglass Commonwealth—named for the abolitionist who spent the last 17 years of his life in Washington—reminds Escobedo Zazueta of her childhood in the Mexican border city of Mexicali. She was in elementary school when her family relocated to Riverside, California. But it wasn't until her junior year of high school—10 years later—that she was granted US citizenship.

"I felt a sense of, 'I'm not invisible anymore.' I thought I was never American because I looked different from my peers, but this was finally something that made me whole," Escobedo Zazueta says. Then she came to DC, "and it's kind of like [I'm] a second-class citizen again."

A first-class victory for DC taxpayers came on June 26 when H.R. 51, the Washington, DC, Admission Act, passed the House, 232-180, clearing statehood through a chamber of Congress for the first time in the District's 230-year history—and 27 years after it first failed in the House. Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC) introduced both bills. She was unable to vote on either.

Add that to Washingtonians' long list of grievances. In the March CARES Act, Congress classified DC as a territory, shortchanging its COVID-19 relief funding by \$750 million. And amid June protests, the Trump administration deployed the National Guard and reportedly toyed with the idea of assuming control of the Metropolitan Police Department. The District is also unable to participate in judicial confirmations, house felons in-state, institute a commuter tax, and exercise full financial autonomy. Washingtonians pay more federal

income tax than residents of 22 states—but have no say in how those dollars are spent.

Democracy begets democracy, says Fernando Laguarda, director of the Washington College of Law's Program on Law and Government, and states are subject to more robust policy scrutiny. DC's governance structure of 13 city council members and a mayor, established by the Home Rule Act of 1973, boasts far fewer legislative eyeballs than even the smallest states in the Union. Wyoming and Vermont have smaller populations and manage annual budgets that are a fraction of DC's \$16.8 billion, but they have bicameral legislatures that total 90 and 180 members, respectively.

"When you have functioning democracies, there are better outcomes in governance," says the longtime DC resident. "But it's difficult to convince people to take democracy seriously when we're not taken seriously as a democracy by our own democracy."

Washingtonians don't need convincing: 86 percent voted in favor of statehood in 2016. That's why Escobedo Zazueta's outreach is aimed primarily at residents and representatives outside the Beltway. A 2019 Gallup poll found that 64 percent of Americans oppose statehood, a reflection of the lack of knowledge about DC's democratic plight and a one-dimensional view of the District as center of (sometimes grimy) politics rather than a vibrant city rich in culture, where people live, learn, work, and play. Progress requires friendly neighbors.

Representative Jamie Raskin (D-MD) has long advocated democracy for DC. The WCL professor emeritus was born in the District and has pushed for statehood for decades. Raskin's even more determined now that he's a member of Congress who can do something about it, though his constitutional arguments are largely the same: a mixture of law, history, and basic arithmetic.

There are only 13 originals among the 50 states—the other 37 have been admitted by acts of Congress, with some quirky circumstances like DC's. Texas rose to statehood from republic, not territory, and West Virginia was carved



out of a seceded Virginia during the Civil War despite constitutional questions.

Opponents to DC statehood raise a few of their own. In a debate split along party lines, Republicans often zero in on the 23rd Amendment, which in 1961 granted Electoral College votes to the District. What if, some ask, by reducing the boundaries of DC to a small area of federal property surrounding the National Mall and ceding the remaining land to Douglass Commonwealth, three electoral votes belong solely to the residents of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue?

“If that were true, [Republicans] would be supporting it,” Raskin says with a laugh. He acknowledges that the path is clearer with a repealed 23rd Amendment, but the act of shrinking the District—which H.R. 51 proposes to create a new state—has precedent. In 1846, Congress retroceded Alexandria, then part of Washington, to Virginia. “If Congress can reduce the size of the federal district in the nineteenth century to protect slavery, surely they can do it in the twenty-first century to bring people up to level political equality,” he says.

For some, like President Sylvia Burwell, democracy is at the heart of DC statehood. “For more than a century, AU has promoted the values of leadership and service—principles closely aligned with the tenets of democracy and equality that built our nation—and we believe that it is wrong that the people of Washington, DC, are not currently afforded the same voting rights and representation as other citizens of our nation,” she said in June.

For others, it’s about two blue Senate seats they’d like to either add or avoid. Regardless, this summer’s vote marked a turning point: a 51st star that once seemed far off in the galaxy might not be light years away. “It’s still going to be a real struggle,” Raskin says, “but I think that having an entire political party now devoted to statehood means that it’s a question of when and not if.”

After H.R. 51 passed, Bowser quoted Frederick Douglass, the man for whom she hopes her home will soon be named: “Power concedes nothing without a demand.”

“Statehood is our demand,” said Bowser, who commissioned 51 murals around the city this summer to artfully advocate for autonomy. “I was born without representation, but I swear, I will not die without representation.”

VISIT [AMERICAN.EDU/MAGAZINE](https://american.edu/magazine) TO
SEE ALL 51 STATEHOOD MURALS



Notorious for her passionate dissents and lifelong commitment to gender equality, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg was only the second woman to serve on the US Supreme Court—and the first to lie in state in the Capitol after her death on September 18. A longtime supporter of WCL, which she last visited in September 2019, Ginsburg was also a friend to Professor Steven Wermiel, WCL/JD ’82, “encouraging, assisting with, and then celebrating” his coauthored biography of Justice William Brennan. “Her legacy will continue to be felt in the struggle for equal justice in this country and the world,” he says.

PHOTO BY PROBAL RASHID/LIGHTROCKET VIA GETTY IMAGES

CLASS NOTES

1960s

Judith Politzer, CAS/BA '60, wrote *Fractured Nursery Rhymes, Fairy Tales, and Potpourri*. She is a member of the Great Falls Writers Group and the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators.

Leon Busche, SPA/BA '67, and his wife, Alice, began their 20th year of retirement on July 1. Both taught for 34 years in Maryland's Montgomery County Public Schools. Busche taught US and comparative government and US history, receiving the *Washington Post's* Agnes Meyer Outstanding Teacher Award in 2001. The couple resides in North Potomac, Maryland.

Lucille Kirk, SIS/MA '67, wrote *The Poison Factory: Operation Kamera*, which was released in September.

Edward Goldberg, SPA/BA '68, wrote *Why Globalization Works for America: How Nationalist Trade Policies Are Destroying Our Country*, which was released in July.

William Anderson, CAS/BA '69, wrote *The Bravest Deeds of Men: A Field Guide for the Battle of Belleau Wood*, as part of the US Marine Corps's World War I

centennial commemoration in 2018. He led marines on tours of Belleau Wood in France for 10 years while working at the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe in Belgium. Anderson also volunteers with Disabled American Veterans.

1970s

David Edmonds, SIS/PhD '71, received his fourth International Latino Book Award for *Flamenco in the Time of Moonshine and Mobsters*, a novel set in a Tampa cigar factory in the 1930s. Edmonds is a former marine, returned Peace Corps volunteer (Chile), and senior Fulbright professor of economics (Mexico).

Dennis Lucey, Kogod/MBA '72, met House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) on March 11 at the National American Ireland Gala in Washington, DC. The annual event raises funds to support peace and reconciliation programs, arts and culture, education, and community development throughout Ireland.

Robert Sandler, SPA/BA '75, was selected by his peers for inclusion in *The Best Lawyers in America 2021*.

Marilyn Millstone, SOC/BA '76, is the winner of the American Association of Community Theatre's NewPlayFest 2020. Her full-length drama, *Proprioception*, will premiere in February 2021 at Rover Dramawerks in Plano, Texas, and will be published by Dramatic Publishing. Two of Millstone's monologues were also selected for *Best Women's Monologues of 2019*, and her short play, *Compos*

Mentis, was recently published by Art Age Publications. She also teaches playwriting at the Writer's Center in Bethesda, Maryland, and is a teaching artist with Arts for the Aging in Montgomery County, Maryland.

Thomas Ryan, SIS/MA '78, wrote "*Lee is Trapped and Must Be Taken*": *Eleven Fateful Days After Gettysburg*, which won the Edwin C. Bearss Scholarly Research Award and the Hugh G. Earnhart Civil War Scholarship Award. His previous book is

Spies, Scouts, and Secrets in the Gettysburg Campaign: How the Critical Role of Intelligence Impacted the Outcome of Lee's Invasion of the North, June–July 1863.

1980s

Gary Marsh, SPA/BA '82, joined Troutman Pepper as a partner in the national law firm's finance and restructuring practice in Atlanta. Marsh is a fellow in the American College of Bankruptcy.

David Snyder, Kogod/BS '83, was named CEO of the Economic Club of Chicago, which encourages dialogue about social, political, and economic issues in American society.

Douglas Birkenfeld, SPA/BA '84, retired early after a 32-year career as a trial attorney in the Boston area specializing in insurance defense litigation. He lives in the Boston area with his wife, Antje.

John Quale, SIS/BA '86, was named guest editor for *Sustainability: Science, Practice, and Policy*, an open-access journal published by Taylor and Francis. The theme of the issue is Sustainable Design on Offsite Construction.

1990s

Arlene Gaylord, SPA/BA '92, was named assistant director of the information management division at FBI headquarters in Washington, DC. She previously served as assistant director of the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity Affairs.

Judith Raine Barood, SIS/PhD '93, wrote *Casablanca Blue: Tales of Revenge, Romance and Riches*. The collection of short stories is drawn from Barood's experience as a Foreign Service officer. *Media Access and the Military*, a book based on her dissertation, is now in its fifth edition.

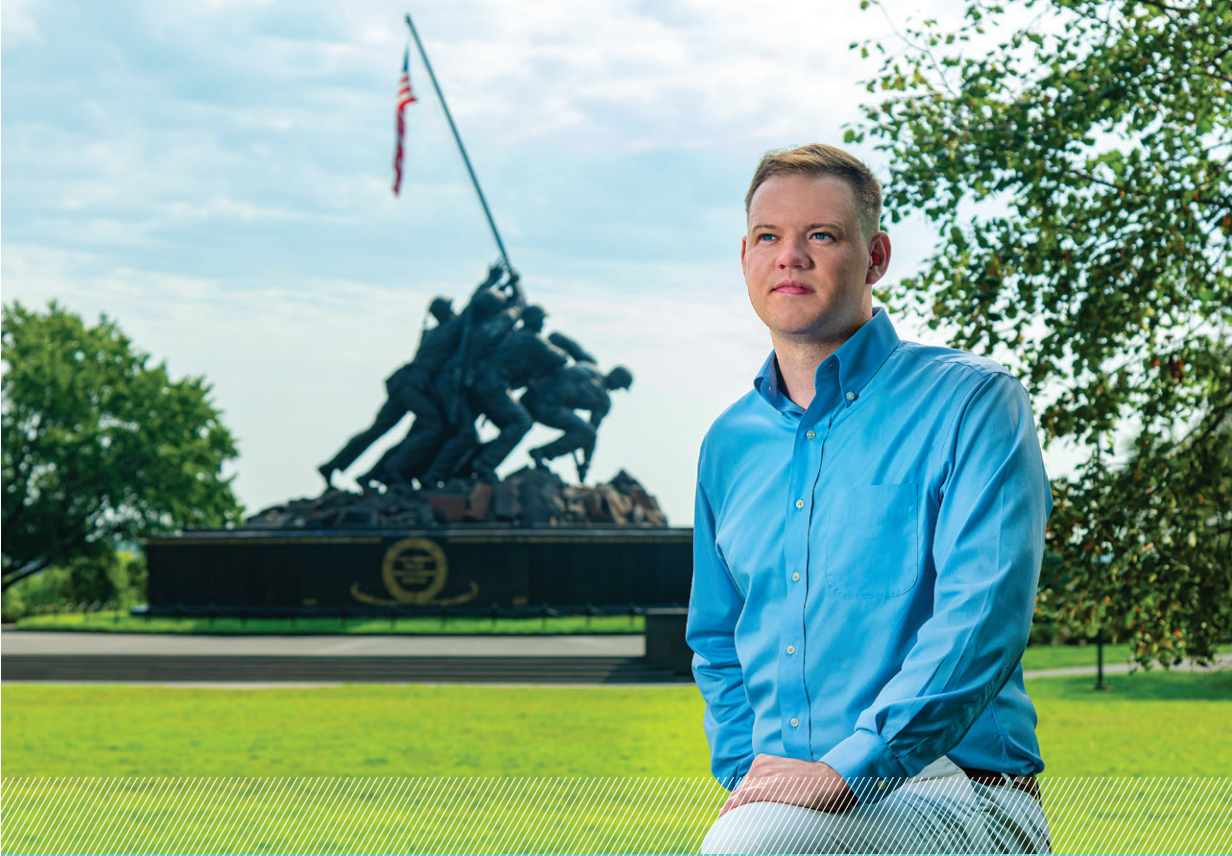
Lisa Wright McGrail, SOC/BA '93, was named volunteer of the year by Women Giving Back. The Sterling, Virginia, nonprofit provides clothing and accessories to women and children in crisis.

Sallama Shaker, SIS/PhD '93, coedited *The Middle East in the Global Era*, which features contributions from her Claremont Graduate University students. Published in spring 2020, the book adds "a human face" to a region witnessing conflicts and challenges.

Rashad Wareh, SIS/BA '93, was named a member of the International Academy of Estate and Trust Law.

Rich Rosen, Kogod/BSBA '94, is founder of Cornerstone, a talent management system and software company, named one of the top 50 executive recruiting firms in America by *Forbes* magazine.

Joshua Weiss, SIS/MA '95, wrote *The Book of Real-World Negotiations*. Released on



CORPS CURRICULUM

WILL HUBBARD, SIS/BA '11

An overseas deployment set the stage for **STUDENT VETERANS OF AMERICA (SVA) CHIEF OF STAFF** Will Hubbard's most important mission on the home front. During a six-month tour in 2016 with the US Southern Command—which took him to **GUATEMALA, HONDURAS, EL SALVADOR, AND HAITI**, after the island nation was devastated by Hurricane Matthew—Hubbard and his 300 fellow Marine Corps reservists learned that their deployments would not count toward their GI Bill benefits. "A lot of people aren't in a position to do anything about that, aside from writing a member of Congress," he says. As SVA's then head of government affairs, Hubbard **SIMPLY LOBBIED THEM. THE FOREVER GI BILL** unanimously passed through both houses in three weeks and was signed into law by President Trump in August 2017. It features more than 30 provisions that expand education benefits for 1.3 million active duty personnel and 1 million members of the National Guard and reserves. Hubbard led a coalition of more than 60 organizations that rolled out the **\$3.5 BILLION PIECE OF LEGISLATION**, which also removed the GI Bill's 15-year expiration date. "I had confidence, but at the time I felt like we were **SWINGING FOR THE FENCES,**" he says. Hubbard, the 2019 recipient of the **AU ALUMNI ASSOCIATION'S RISING STAR AWARD**, has worked since 2014 for SVA—a nonprofit composed of **1,500 CHAPTERS THAT SUPPORT 750,000 STUDENT VETERANS** nationwide—but his advocacy dates back even further. He joined the Marine Corps Reserve in 2006 to serve and study simultaneously. Two years later, the international studies major and a few friends founded **AU VETS** on campus, just as SVA began to organize over Myspace. Today, Hubbard serves on the President's Council on Diversity and Inclusion and remains committed to ensuring higher education serves veterans, both while and long after they do the same for our country. "These are largely adult students with adult obligations," he says of vets, of whom **46 PERCENT ARE PARENTS** and nearly two-thirds are first-generation college students. "Going to school affords them the opportunity to **ELEVATE THEIR FAMILIES.**"

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



A WORK-FROM-HOME WIN

I received the new edition of *American* and wanted to share just how impressed I am with this issue. The magazine has always been strong, but I was honestly kind of blown away with just how timely, relevant, and interesting the entire edition is. Proof, also, that we can all be more productive and creative working from home!

Nancy Goldsmith Zawacki, SOC/BA '96
Rochester, New York

NO. 24: SING SOMEONE ELSE'S PRAISES

As always, I enjoy reading the fine work you and the staff do. Thanks to Mario Zucca ("99 Ways to Be a Good Human") for the great illustrations. May we all be mindful and masked!

Frederick C. Bond III, CAS/MA '72
Easton, Pennsylvania

Editor's note: Look for a Ravensburger jigsaw puzzle featuring Zucca's illustration in early 2021.

my bookshelves still hold some of the gems he made us buy, including *America's Eleven Greatest Presidents*. I can't say for certain, but I suspect he would not have recommended the current occupant of the White House for inclusion in the next edition as the twelfth.

Alan Roth, SPA/BA '76
Washington, DC

Professor Roger Brown was perhaps the best college instructor I ever had. While a graduate student, I took four courses from him. As an instructor, he always went the extra mile. He did not simply assign term papers; he gave students many helpful ideas on the questions that should be addressed and the sources that might be consulted. He was very conscientious in commenting on student papers and exams, commending those that were good and tactfully suggesting how the others might be improved.

He also made important financial contributions to American University.

He loved history and kept an eye on emerging scholarly literature. And he conveyed his enthusiasm for the subject to his students. I managed to carve out a career in the field of history in an era in which it was not easy to do so. I attribute a lot of my success to Professor Brown. He will be missed.

Timothy Connelly, CAS/BA '68, CAS/MA '72
Silver Spring, Maryland

Professor Brown's reading list was long, and in some respects, even arcane, but to this day



August 25, the book explores the key strategies and techniques of negotiation.

Nilanthi Samaranayake, SIS/BA '97, directs the strategy and policy analysis program at CNA, a research organization in Arlington, Virginia. Samaranayake has recently worked on US-Indian naval cooperation, water resource competition in the Brahmaputra River basin, and Sri Lankan foreign policy.

2000s

Ken Biberaj, SPA/BA '02, created amid COVID-19 a virtual conversation series, Coffee with Ken, featuring guests like Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz and New America CEO Anne-Marie Slaughter. Biberaj returned to the DC area in 2017 and is a managing director at Savills, a global commercial real estate advisory firm.

Derek Karikari, SOC/MA '04, US east region producer for the Associated Press, was selected to join the news jury for this year's Royal Television Society Student Television Awards.

Cedric Tillman, CAS/MFA '04, published his second collection of poetry, *In My Feelings*, in November 2019 through WordTech Poetry.

Bashar Malkawi, WCL/SJD '05, was appointed Global Professor of Practice in Law at James E. Rogers College of Law, University of Arizona.

Jesseka Kadylak, SOC/MA '08, was promoted to senior manager of digital media at Taft Communications, where

she will lead the development and implementation of all digital media projects.

Lucy Gettman, SPA '09, received Women in Government Relations' highest honor, the 2020 Distinguished Member, which recognizes outstanding service, initiative, innovation, and dedication to the organization's mission, vision, and strategic goals. Gettman is an adjunct professor in the School of Public Affairs.

Jesika Steuerwalt, SPA/BA '09, and her husband, Benjamin Steuerwalt, welcomed a daughter, Grace Cathy, on May 21.

Heidi West, SIS/MA '09, was recognized for academic excellence and commitment to public health as a 2020 recipient of the Samuel J. Tibbitts Fellowship at the UCLA Fielding School of Public Health.

2010s

Viachaslau Bortnik, SPA/MPA '10, received the 2019 President's Volunteer Service Award from US Citizen and Immigration Services.

Luah Tomas, SIS/BA '10, married **Carlos Muñoz**, SIS/BA '10, amid the COVID-19 pandemic. They met at AU in 2008 and became good friends but only started dating 10 years later. They live in São Paulo, Brazil.

Gary Norman, WCL/LLM '11, was featured on the podcast *Why Do Pets Matter?* A longtime advocate in the disability community, he shared his story about how guide dogs become working partners.



ROBB COHEN AND GAIL SCHWARTZ

During their daughter's college search, Gail Schwartz and Robb Cohen suspected American University—with its DC location, myriad experiential learning opportunities, and knowledgeable, connected faculty who could nurture Alexandra's interest in national security—would be a good fit.

It turns out, "AU offers her even more than we expected," Schwartz says. Alex, a member of the School of Public Affairs' Class of 2023, frequented Embassy Row as part of her International Crisis Management seminar, worked with the Career Center to land a security-related internship this semester, and is learning from accessible professors with real-world experience.

"Alex knows she has a home at SPA," Cohen says. "The faculty and staff are her mentors and supporters."

The couple also feels at home at the nation's 13th ranked school of public affairs. SPA's leadership and expertise in health policy appeal to Schwartz, a physician, and Cohen, a health policy executive.

AU also aligns closely with the couple's charitable interests. When Cohen drove Alex from the family's Pikesville, Maryland, home to campus for a preview visit, he dropped in on the Center for Israel Studies—the first initiative of its kind at a US university, focusing on Israel's history, multiethnic society, and geopolitical challenges. He also visited with AU Hillel staff, learning about the plethora of programs that help students explore their Jewish identities. "We were impressed right off the bat with what we saw—these are things we care about," says Cohen, who now serves on the center's advisory board.

The couple gives annually to AU and has chosen to invest in the university's future by naming it in their estate plans. "We're impressed with the school's leadership and vision. AU develops future leaders, and that is something we want to support," says Cohen, a member of AU's Parent Leadership Council. "We are thankful we can help."

FOR INFORMATION ON HOW YOUR CHARITABLE ESTATE PLANNING can create a legacy at AU, contact Seth Speyer, executive director of planned giving, at 202-885-3411 or speyer@american.edu; or visit american.edu/plannedgiving.

MY FAVORITES

Plant sales have blossomed during the pandemic, but **Shannon Post’s fondness for flora** took root years ago when she got her first apartment in San Francisco. “My aunt took me to a garden store and I bought a hoya that never flowered,” she laughs. But her curiosity around climbers, creepers, and cacti did.

Today, as **coordinator of the Brooklyn Botanic Garden’s Project Green Reach**, Post, CAS/MA ’10, helps thousands of youngsters across the borough cultivate their own green thumbs. The program introduces students from 40 underserved elementary and middle schools to such topics as biodiversity and botany. The kids get their hands dirty—dissecting cacti, growing carrots, or creating terrariums—and join Post on a tour of the garden, which is home to more than 12,000 plant species.

“Some of the kids have experience with plants—their grandma has a garden, or they’ll recognize tropical or desert plants from their home countries—and others have never touched soil before,” says Post, a certified horticulturist and documentary filmmaker. “Living in the city, **it’s so important to connect with nature**, and I love getting the kids engaged with that.”

After she leaves her 52-acre office, Post returns home to her own little urban jungle: the Brooklyn apartment she shares with her partner, two dogs, and more than 40 plants. “I like to care for them, and I learn so much from them—but they don’t demand a thing from me,” she says with a smile. Talk about the perfect roommates.

HERE’S THE DIRT ON POST’S 10 FAVORITE HOUSEPLANTS:

1. PEACE LILY

This low-maintenance plant cleans the air and is easy to propagate. At first, I was nervous about cutting through the rhizomes [underground stems that grow horizontally], but then I started ripping them apart. I realized that most plants are going to be fine, you don’t have to baby them.

2. BURRO’S TAIL

I tend to knock off this succulent’s delicate leaves, but then I just throw them in a pot and grow more. I like how the burro’s tail drapes over the pot and snakes around it.

3. RUBBER TREE

I love the dark color and the hard leaves. I read that they respond well to pruning, so I’m running an experiment: growing one into a tall tree and the other into a bush.

4. JADE PLANT

I have both the round and the tubular leaf varieties. They’re easy to grow and propagate and don’t take up a lot of room, so you can keep them in a little pot. And they last for years.

5. MARBLE QUEEN POTHOS

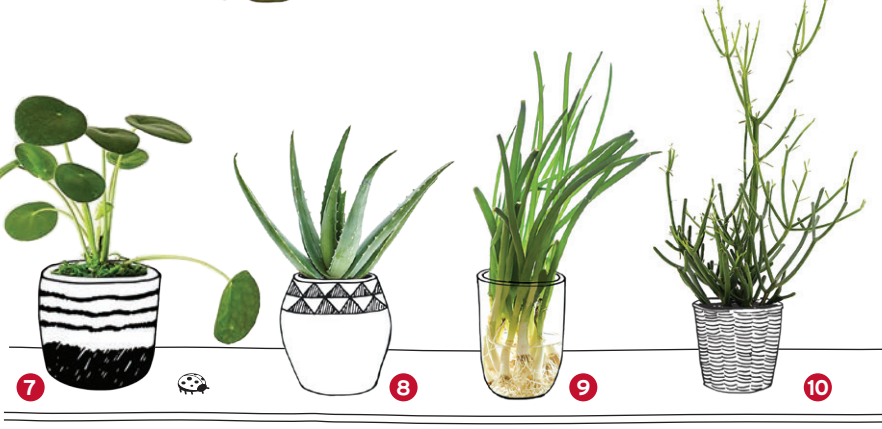
This hardy plant was one of my first. It’s growing across my mantle away from the window to find something to scale to get more sunlight—just as it would in the rainforest.

6. HAWORTHIA

I’ve tried to grow other succulents, but this one, with its dark green color, does best indoors. It has a cool little shape and fun bumpy texture.

7. PILEA

At first, I was frustrated with this one because I wanted it to grow nice and tidy and it was snaking all over the place. But I’ve learned to love it. And the offsets, which look like little lily pads, make a great gift.



8. ALOE VERA

I love teaching with aloe because a lot of kids have connections to the plant and its medicinal uses. I went on vacation once and it looked a little sad when I got home; I gave it a new pot with more room, and it gave me five offsets that I shared with friends. It refuses to die.

9. SCALLIONS

I like to take a few inches off the end of grocery store scallions and keep them in water, so I always have fresh herbs.

They’ll grow for more than a month as long as you refresh the water. I also grow a variety of herbs in the summer: basil, thyme, parsley, mint.

10. PENCIL CACTUS

This succulent is architectural and structurally very interesting. It’s tall and lanky, and new growth is bright and beautiful. I found this one on a stoop. That’s one of the great things about Brooklyn: people leave plants out for free.

Joe Kennedy, SOC/BA ’12, and **Ben Haaland**, Kogod/BA ’12, recorded a podcast episode sponsored by Nasdaq that addresses the future technological changes within the shipping and logistics industry.

Maddison McCauley, CAS/BA ’13, and her husband, Nick, welcomed their first child, Tenley Reed Hoffman, on March 5, 2020. Named after their favorite Metro stop, Tenley will hopefully follow in her mother’s footsteps as a member of AU’s Class of 2042.

John Baker, Kogod/MBA ’17, and his wife, SPA professor Claire Griggs, celebrated the birth of their son, Rafael Preston Baker, on June 25, 2020, in Washington, DC.

Josef Edmonds, CAS/BA ’19, is an editorial designer at *AARP The Magazine*.

IN MEMORIAM

ALUMNI

Robert DiChiara, CAS/BA ’50, February 29, 2020, North Palm Beach, Florida

Howard Strauch, SPA/MA ’54, April 20, 2020, Wooster, Ohio

Eric Witzig, SPA/BA ’68, February 18, 2020, Alexandria, Virginia

Ken Norwood Middleton, SOC/MA ’72, April 21, 2020, Louisville, Kentucky

John Broadbent, CAS/BA ’74, April 7, 2020, Grasonville, Maryland

Virginia McBride, CAS/BA ’92, May 5, 2020, Washington, DC

Wayne Watts, CAS/PhD ’93, July 14, 2020, Ocala, Florida

Julian Turner, Kogod/BS ’18, May 23, 2020, Milton, Massachusetts

FACULTY

Joseph Kaplan, April 22, 2020, Washington, DC

Andrea Tschemplik, August 21, 2020



A CALL TO ACTION

ELIZABETH DAIGNEAU, SOC/BA ’02

Months before the 2020 presidential race turned into the home stretch, **VOTE.ORG** COO Elizabeth Daigneau and her colleagues broke into a gallop. As the coronavirus swept across the United States this spring and kept a firm grip throughout the summer, election expectations shifted. **SIXTEEN STATES, PUERTO RICO, AND GUAM POSTPONED THEIR PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARIES**, and the three-fourths of American voters eligible for mail-in voting grappled with whether to **DITCH THE BALLOT BOX FOR THE MAILBOX** in November. Vote.org, a nonprofit founded in 2008, has a small but mighty staff of 11, and a **SIMPLE, NONPARTISAN MISSION: GETTING OUT THE VOTE**, especially among low-propensity voters. They didn’t knock on doors as deadlines to register and request a mail-in ballot neared, but they did flex the power of a digital operation that was anything but absentee, providing critical updates to more than **7 MILLION EMAIL AND 4 MILLION SMS SUBSCRIBERS**. Daigneau joined the staff in January after 15 years at *Governing* magazine, a tenure that reinforced her belief in the importance of **EXERCISING OUR CIVIC DUTY**. “I realized how much people could control policy at the local level, but oftentimes they weren’t engaged,” she says. “It’s nice to be part of something where I can help people understand how important it is to vote.” Daigneau wears many hats: paying bills, approving emails and texts, assisting with communications and fundraising, and reviewing countless partnership contracts as Vote.org amped up its rallying cry. By late July, it had launched the **#VOTEREADY** initiative with rapper-actors Jaden Smith and Common, partnered with more than 570 companies that pledged to give employees Election Day off, **REGISTERED 1.2 MILLION VOTERS, AND FACILITATED 1.1 MILLION MAIL-IN BALLOT APPLICATIONS**. Vote.org also watched its **WEB TRAFFIC CLIMB 52-FOLD** over the same period in 2018 as it fed an information-hungry electorate. “We don’t weigh in to any politics,” Daigneau says. **“WE WEIGH IN WITH FACTS.** We’re not here to tell you who to vote for. We’re here to tell you that it’s your right as an eligible voter and an American citizen.”

**THE
BIG
IDEA**

We must act now to keep AU students moving forward. Research shows lower-income students are 55 percent more likely to delay graduation due to the pandemic than their higher-income peers. COVID-19 has changed our lives in countless ways, and AU students continue to feel the impact. To help manage this unprecedented school year, AU dedicated an additional \$13 million to financial aid, on top of \$100 million already allocated—but this is only the beginning. Philanthropic support for additional financial aid will help remove financial barriers for our students, allowing them to graduate on time and keep their goals within reach.

LEADING THROUGH AND BEYOND COVID-19

The global pandemic has laid bare societal inequities and disrupted industries, including higher education. American University is addressing these challenges with a focus on access through increased financial aid, enhanced student mental health and wellness, and innovations in how we educate our students.

While COVID-19 poses a multiyear impact on life at AU, we are seizing the opportunity to address these realities to shape the university—and our world—for the better. Dedicated faculty are on the frontlines of online learning, devising creative ways to connect. Students are posing tough questions and examining real-world issues as they unfold. And alumni and donors are helping every step of the way as AU adapts, innovates, and excels. Here are just a few examples:

- COVID-19 and societal unrest have intensified demand for mental health

services. The AU Counseling Center worked quickly to provide global 24/7 crisis stabilization and urgent care. Now, with a virtual platform to expand treatment options for those in DC, Maryland, and Virginia, and new support groups to help students of color confront the impact of racial injustice and traumatic events, AU stands ready to meet the evolving needs of our students.

- Our faculty—ranked 25th in the country for undergraduate teaching by *US News and World Report*—are maximizing new technology and implementing best practices for online learning to effectively deliver curriculum now and in the future. And AU’s Center for Teaching, Research, and Learning—a resource for faculty training and development—is offering dozens of new workshops with record numbers of participants. Topics include research-based

practices for online instruction, working with first-year students, and increasing student engagement.

- AU’s commitment to conducting impactful research has not wavered. Our scholars are examining the impacts of COVID-19 through lenses of policy, health, and social justice and collaborating across disciplines to identify solutions. Recently, AU’s Center for Latin American and Latino Studies partnered with the Kogod School of Business and the Greater Washington Hispanic Chamber of Commerce to report on how local Latino businesses have been negatively affected by COVID. In addition, in-person research halted last spring has resumed in our new Hall of Science.
- Alumni are showing support for our students in the virtual environment by participating in career forums, virtual job

fairs, and more than 130 online mentoring sessions thus far. They also delivered guest lectures in more than 30 classes, joined student reading groups, and shared advice. Engagement through Alumnifire, AU’s grassroots networking platform, has doubled during the pandemic.

The state of the world has made our strategic priorities more urgent. We are committed to creating an equitable future for students and finding solutions to shared challenges. Philanthropic support from the AU community is critical to our success.

FOR INFORMATION on how to support AU during the pandemic, contact Courtney Surls, vice president of development and alumni relations, at 202-885-5900 or vpdar@american.edu.

EAGLES HELPING EAGLES

The emergence of COVID-19 threatened the health and safety of our campus community last spring, and AU acted quickly—shifting classes online, closing residence halls, and transitioning staff to telework.

AU alumni, parents, and friends reached out to help, and within three days of the move to virtual learning, the university established the Student Emergency Relief Fund (SERF). In the first days and weeks of the pandemic, gifts to SERF provided an immediate sense of stability amid extraordinary uncertainty. The fund gave AU the flexibility to help our highest-need students cover unanticipated travel costs and helped support about 60 others who remained in emergency on-campus housing.

“None of us have faced what these students are going through,” says Ritanch Hans, SIS/BA ’13, Kogod/MS ’15, president of the DC Young Alumni Chapter. “This is a time to give back and be supportive.”

Students also stepped up. The AU Student Government made a significant gift to SERF, which helped the university mail personal belongings to those who could not return to campus to retrieve them. Their contribution also supplemented shipping vouchers distributed during move-out and provided resources for the Market—AU’s campus food pantry, which has remained operational even after classes shifted online.

Now, gifts to the fund help ensure that all students have access to a remote education by providing technology tools like internet hot spots, laptops, webcams, and headsets, and supplemental resources coordinated by AU’s Student Technology Task Force. SERF continues to support students in emergency on-campus housing and helps DC-based students with local transportation costs. Most importantly, gifts to SERF provide funds that are available *immediately*, allowing AU to respond quickly as students’ needs evolve.

“The impact of this fund is felt by many,” says Fanta Aw, vice president of campus life and inclusive excellence. “The support from our community helps our students feel cared for, seen, and valued.”

As our students rise to meet unexpected challenges, we rise with them. When you give to the Student Emergency Relief Fund, you do more than help students meet a need—you demonstrate that the power of the AU community stretches far and wide, no matter the circumstances.

Visit go.american.edu/eaglesupport to make a gift.



AU DEDICATED AN ADDITIONAL \$13 MILLION TO FINANCIAL AID THIS YEAR.



THIS FALL, AU IS OFFERING 3,488 CLASSES ONLINE.



SIXTY-NINE PERCENT OF US PARENTS AND 55 PERCENT OF FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS SAY THE PANDEMIC HAS AFFECTED THEIR ABILITY TO PAY FOR COLLEGE.



AFTER THE MOVE TO ONLINE INSTRUCTION THIS FALL, AU OFFERED 45 WORKSHOPS ON E-LEARNING AND INNOVATIVE TEACHING.



ABOUT 70 FACULTY AND STUDENT RESEARCHERS RESTARTED 22 PROJECTS PAUSED DURING COVID-19 FROM THE NEW HALL OF SCIENCE.



DANIEL GADE* UNPACKED

*SPA professorial lecturer and Republican candidate for US Senate in Virginia

1. I was wounded in Iraq in 2005 and lost my entire right leg. The Purple Heart has important meaning to me: it represents the love every soldier has for his or her country and blood shed on the battlefield.
2. I served in President George W. Bush's administration, working on veterans' issues. He presented my two Purple Hearts and later painted me for *Portraits of Courage*.
3. Even during the campaign, we go to Emmanuel Bible Church in Springfield every Sunday.
4. I bought my twin sons little sailboats on Craigslist after they took lessons a couple years ago. We like to go sailing on the Potomac.
5. I spent 25 years in the Army and have always been physically active. I get up at 6 and do CrossFit workouts in the "House of Gains" at home.
6. When I started cycling upright again in June 2010, I did two miles and was exhausted. Later that year, I completed Ironman Arizona. Today, I ride my Specialized road bike twice a week.
7. I love meeting people on the campaign trail. I fundraise on the phone for several hours a day, host an event or Zoom meeting every night, and travel around the commonwealth every weekend. I'm busier than a one-legged man in a butt-kicking contest.
8. My wife, Wendy, is my rock. We got married 21 years ago when I was in the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment.
9. My mom recently gave me my late father's deer rifle. We hunted together when I was growing up on a farm in North Dakota.
10. I enlisted in the Army Reserve in 1992. Going to West Point a year later felt like going home.
11. *The Joe Rogan Experience* is one of my favorite podcasts. I don't always agree with him, but he asks great questions.
12. I'm teaching two classes this semester: a political research course and a Complex Problems seminar, *When Trumpets Fade*, that explores military service since 9/11.

ILLUSTRATION BY JAYLENE ARNOLD

WE ARE AU AND WE ARE IN THIS TOGETHER.

WHEN AMERICAN UNIVERSITY SHIFTED TO REMOTE LEARNING IN THE SPRING, our resilient students rose to the challenge. But COVID-19 poses real financial difficulties for many of them. Support the AU Student Emergency Relief Fund to help Eagles continue their education without worrying about a stable internet connection and a reliable laptop, or how to afford tuition if their families lose income. Act now to help remove financial barriers for our students and keep them moving forward.

[GO.AMERICAN.EDU/EAGLESUPPORT](https://go.american.edu/eaglesupport)





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HARD TO SWALLOW: HERE'S WHY IT'S TIME TO BAG THE PLASTIC SANDWICH BAG.

- **Plastic sandwich bags**—along with those that hold our bread, dry cleaning, newspapers, groceries, and more—aren't accepted in curbside recycling bins.
- **Their thin film** can clog the equipment at material recovery facilities, bringing operations to a grinding halt.
- **These bags** are only recyclable at grocery stores and other retailers. There are 18,000 drop-off locations in the US; visit plasticfilmrecycling.org to find the one nearest you.
- **More than 40 percent** of plastic is used just once, then tossed.
- **When it's recycled**, plastic film can be used to make composite lumber for decks, benches, and playground equipment.
- **But most of the time**, it ends up in the trash. Of the 4.8 million tons of plastic film produced each year, 90.9 percent ends up in the dump—or the ocean.
- **More than 5 trillion** pieces of plastic are floating in the ocean, according to *National Geographic*.
- **If something doesn't change**, the magazine reports that virtually every seabird species will be eating plastic by 2050.

DECONSTRUCTED

There's a great future in plastics.

That might've been true in 1967, but **Sarah Kaeck, CAS/BA '97**, has graduated to something more sustainable.

The Vermonter is the founder and CEO of Bee's Wrap, a washable, reusable, and compostable alternative to plastic wrap—enough of which is used by Americans each year to cover the Lone Star State like a Tex-Mex casserole.

Kaeck gave rise to the idea eight years ago, when she began searching for an Earth-friendly way to store homemade bread. "Caring for the environment and reducing waste have always been important to me," says the mother of three. "But I quickly discovered it was really hard to avoid single-use plastic."

According to *Plastic Wars*—the *Frontline* documentary coproduced by SOC's Investigative Reporting Workshop, which debuted on PBS this spring—when Americans see the iconic "chasing arrows" symbol on a plastic storage container they believe it's recyclable. But the truth is, the majority of plastic can't or won't be recycled, as it's simply not economical.

That's why Kaeck set out to create a reusable storage solution. The formula she cooked up in her kitchen—coating a thin strip of organic cotton with bee's wax, jojoba oil, and tree resin—is the same one that's sold online and in 3,000 stores today. The pliable wrap, which is sealed by the warmth of your hands, can last up to a year. After its stickiness has been sapped, the all-natural wrap can be composted or used as a fire starter.

Ziploc bags have been lunchbox and leftover staples since they debuted 50 years ago—but scientists estimate it could take eight times as long for them to break down in landfills. Kaeck says swapping Bee's Wrap for one plastic sandwich bag will divert 200 of them from the dump or the ocean each year.

By minding her beeswax, this eco-entrepreneur demonstrates that "even small changes can make a big difference for the health of our families and our planet."

RECYCLING WONK Correctly answer the trivia question below and you'll be entered to win a seven-piece variety pack from Bee's Wrap. Tweet your response to @AU_AmericanMag or email magazine@american.edu by March 15.

How many plastic sandwich bags are used per second in the United States?

A) 893 B) 2,261 C) 4,102 D) 5,248