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NICOLE RIFKIN

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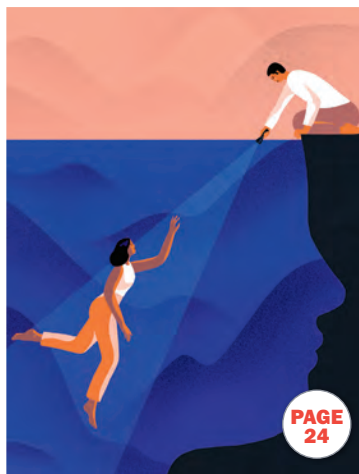
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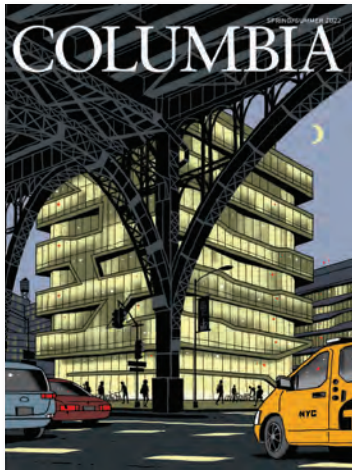
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CONNECTIONS

I'm a hard guy to impress, but I have just finished reading every word of the Spring/Summer 2022 issue of *Columbia Magazine*, and not only was I incredibly impressed, but it also made me terribly proud again to be an alumnus of Columbia College.

Thank you for creating a magazine as great as the university your thousands of readers attended.

Tod Howard Hawks '62CC
Boulder, CO

Columbia Magazine does indeed catalyze connections among alumni. This afternoon, I had a telephone call from a fellow Columbia alum with whom I have not spoken in some twenty years. He had seen my letter to the editor in the Spring/Summer 2022 issue.

Mindy C. Reiser '69JRN, '70SIPA
Washington, DC

Please send me future issues of this stimulating magazine. My wife, the former Miriam Strasburger,

whom I met at Columbia, also enjoyed this issue. We two are in our nineties.

Sidney Moss
Northampton, MA

Your Spring/Summer 2022 issue was one of your best — good mix of topics, alumni, and presentations. It was a joy to read.

Lew Miller '76BUS
New York, NY

Your Spring/Summer 2022 issue was outstanding! Thank you.

Dulaney Glen '67VPS
Pfafftown, NC

MOONSTRUCK

The cover illustration for the Spring/Summer 2022 issue dramatically contrasts the angularity of the new business school with the old arches of the subway overpass at Broadway and 125th Street. Perhaps as a legacy of my rigorous Columbia engineering training, I did notice an inaccurate detail: shouldn't the crescent moon at the latitude of 125th Street have more of an equatorial tilt? On the

other hand, the crescent's end points continue the vertical line of the business school's corner, while the crescent's cup opens directly to the left as if to devour (or nibble) the steel arch of the overpass. Art trumping astronomy?

Lane Brandenburg
'68SEAS
Scotch Plains, NJ

LIFELONG LEARNER

I read with interest your story "Second Acts" (Spring/Summer 2022), about people going back to Columbia to start new careers. I graduated from the College of Physicians and Surgeons in 1966 and earned a master's degree at the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences in 2019 — over fifty years apart. In the meantime, I obtained a law degree and a master's of public health elsewhere. Some say there are four professions: medicine, law, the military, and the clergy. I was also a major in the US Public Health Service, a lieutenant colonel in the Army Reserve, and a

3 WEB STORIES YOU SHOULD NOT MISS



The Sharks Are Back in New York



28 Famous Columbia Alumni ... Who Never Graduated



George Takei: A Star's Trek

Read more at magazine.columbia.edu

FEEDBACK

member of the Coast Guard Auxiliary. My Columbia master's is in Jewish studies. So I was involved in all four professions.

Howard H. Kaufman '66VPS, '19GSAS
Boca Raton, FL

IN THE ZONE

Your article "Take Me Out to the Brain Game" (Spring/Summer 2022) brought to mind an experience from my junior year at the College.

I was a freshman walk-on fencer who, three years later, beyond all expectations, was fencing épée at the Eastern Intercollegiate Championships at the Concourse Plaza Hotel in the Bronx. In one particular bout, late in a long fencing day, I experienced the "flow state" described in the article. We had a different name for it then: "being in the zone." I recall being so in control of the bout, so confident of victory, that I felt untouchable. My opponent's actions seemed to be happening in slow motion, allowing me to take my counter-actions with time to spare. It was like being in a state of hyper-awareness I had never felt before, nor have since. I won the bout easily and recall my opponent saying to his teammate: "I couldn't get near him; nothing I did worked."

Your article triggered my memory of that event — with the bonus of explaining how and why it happened. Thank you.

Stephen Buchman '59CC, '62LAW
New York, NY

My father, Howard M. Sonn '25CC, was a classmate of Lou Gehrig's. I recall Dad recounting that one of his professors pronounced his name "Jerig."

Edward Sonn '63SEAS
Concord, MA

strengthened many anti-democratic trends both in the US and abroad.

But I did not see any mention of one important factor: the steep decline in the quality of K-12 public education in the United

mistaken for vetted facts. No wonder the public is so confused and susceptible to rumors and propaganda.

Until the education system includes solid teaching in disciplines including history and journalism, the propaganda techniques used by would-be authoritarians will succeed.

April W. Klimley '68JRN
Delray Beach, FL



UNHEALTHY DEMOCRACY

Thank you for publishing David Craig's interview with Joel Simon ("How COVID-19 Infected Democracy," The Big Idea, Spring/Summer 2022). The book sounds as if it sheds a great deal of light on how the pandemic

States. This decline has created a public that lacks historical perspective and has very little knowledge about how information and news emerge. The Internet in particular has created a harrowing situation for many people. Loudly voiced opinions are frequently

Joel Simon includes Australia in a list of democracies that responded well to the pandemic. Although Australia arguably had much better success in its COVID-19 mortality rates, some of the draconian actions taken by the government were not compatible with Western liberal democracy.

In May 2021, as the Delta variant was becoming prevalent, Australia's health minister, Greg Hunt, unilaterally decided to ban Australian citizens in India from entering Australia under penalty of fines or imprisonment. This was in addition to border restrictions and weekly caps on returning citizens and permanent residents from other parts of the world.

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

CODE	SCHOOL	CODE	SCHOOL
BC	Barnard College	NRS	School of Nursing
BUS	Graduate School of Business	OPT	School of Optometry
CC	Columbia College	PH	Mailman School of Public Health
DM	College of Dental Medicine	PHRM	College of Pharmaceutical Sciences
GS	School of General Studies	SEAS	Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science
GSAPP	Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation	SIPA	School of International and Public Affairs
GSAS	Graduate School of Arts and Sciences	SOA	School of the Arts
HON	(Honorary degree)	SPS	School of Professional Studies
JRN	Graduate School of Journalism	SW	School of Social Work
JTS	Jewish Theological Seminary	TC	Teachers College
KC	King's College	UTS	Union Theological Seminary
LAW	School of Law	VPS	Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons
LS	School of Library Service		

BRIAN STAUFER

Such extreme and socially inequitable policies were not imposed by countries such as Singapore, Taiwan, New Zealand, and Japan, democracies with similar COVID-19 mortality rates. Although Australia has mostly lifted its restrictions, these actions deserve much greater scrutiny.

Tony Butcher '20SEAS
Sydney, Australia

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

Your article “The Trials of Solitary Confinement” (College Walk, Spring/Summer 2022) is timely, since it challenges societal norms about how we deal with the most egregious criminals, such as the hateful young man who traveled hours to Buffalo to shoot and kill grocery-store shoppers and workers simply because of the color of their skin.

When the perpetrator is convicted, he will go to prison while his victims and their families and friends will have years of depression, stress, and loss. Who are we to determine that solitary confinement is unjust in this case, for safety or other reasons? Prison itself is not a healthy environment, yet we choose to strip certain criminals of their inherent liberties and segregate them from the rest of society. Of course, segregating them from the rest of their prison community is another level of restriction that comes with an additional impact on the prisoner. The good Columbia Justice Lab study confirms this. But is the Buffalo killer

COLUMBIA MAGAZINE WINS FOUR 2022 CASE AWARDS

The Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) has once again recognized *Columbia Magazine* in its annual Circle of Excellence Awards, which received more than 4,500 entries from 636 institutions this year. Read the stories at magazine.columbia.edu.

<p>★ GRAND GOLD AWARD</p>  <p>Hanging Out at the Hungarian Pastry Shop</p>	<p>★ GOLD AWARD</p>  <p>A New Way of Looking at Cancer</p>
<p>★ SILVER AWARD</p>  <p>The Columbia Guide to the Pentagon Papers Case</p>	<p>★ SILVER AWARD</p>  <p>This Watch Entrepreneur Turns Time into Money</p>

deserving of a healthier or more humane environment when we take into consideration the awful crime and its many innocent victims? The answer is not straightforward in my opinion.

David M. Shofi '88SEAS
Ridgefield, CT

TREASURE TROVE

Great piece on the Rare Book and Manuscript Library (“Archival Revival,” College Walk, Spring/Summer 2022). Working there as a student assistant in the 1970s, I had the opportunity to explore the range of its treasures, from Buddhist scriptures written on palm leaves to papers of the Beat poets.

Most of the job was routine filing and shelving, but occasionally the librarians

took advantage of having a classics major around. One day they handed me a document written in calligraphic Latin on a large sheet of parchment. “Could you tell us what this says?” they asked. It turned out to be a piece of diplomatic correspondence drafted by John Milton in his capacity as Oliver Cromwell’s secretary for foreign tongues.

Since then, I’ve had some interesting work, but never a workplace as intriguing.

Thomas Fedorek '80GS
New York, NY

IN PRAISE OF NEURODIVERSITY

As an autistic Columbia graduate student and the cofounder and president of the Columbia Student Disability Network, I’m

shocked and saddened that *Columbia Magazine* would platform ableist and eugenicist research that seeks to eliminate future generations of students like me (“In search of autism’s roots,” Explorations, Spring/Summer 2022). I know of dozens of autistic Columbians, and we are unequivocal in not desiring a cure for our neurodivergence. Instead, we want affirmation, access, and acceptance, not to be conceptualized as broken neurotypical people.

Autistic individuals are known to be passionate and detail-oriented and have superlative attention spans, meaning we are assets to both the Columbia community and the wider society. I would not be the student, person, and advocate that I am if I were neurotypical, and neither would my autistic peers retain their wonderful qualities if their autism were excised.

Columbia Magazine ought to showcase the activism, research, and writing performed by autistic community members instead of those who speak over us. Autistic Columbians deserve better.

Leslie A. Zukor
New York, NY

QUESTIONS?
COMMENTS?

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Letters may be edited for brevity and clarity.

COLLEGE WALK

NOTES FROM
116TH STREET
AND BEYOND



A Top-Flight Makeover

The Low Library steps get their day in the sun

This summer, the Low Library steps, known as “Low Beach” for their popularity with lounging students, were closed. It wasn’t a shark scare that cleared this shore — the only waves here come from reclining students beckoning to classmates on College Walk — but the problem did involve water. Cracks in the uppermost steps had allowed rain and melting snow to penetrate the underlying concrete and drip down into the Public Safety locker room in the basement of Low. “The water was coming in at will,” says Donald Schlosser, assistant vice president of campus operations.

And so, for the first time since 1897, when the building was completed, the top tier of the staircase was dismantled. More than three hundred slabs of granite were removed, cataloged, numbered, and placed on the lawn next to Lewisohn Hall, while another hundred, too damaged to be reused, were swapped out for fresh granite. Work crews laid down waterproofing and extensive steel supports and added a drain-

age system. “The goal was to stop the leak, correct the steps, level them, make sure they’re set correctly,” Schlosser says.

“The Low steps were a crucial part of architect Charles McKim’s design,” says Andrew Dolkart ’77GSAPP, a professor of historic preservation at Columbia. “He loved the drama of architecture, so he created this incredibly dramatic entrance to the campus. You come in past either Dodge or Kent and view Low obliquely, and then suddenly the view opens up and your eyes go shooting up those flights of stairs to Low Library.”

For 125 years, the Low steps have been a central gathering spot for Columbians, host to rallies, dances, performances, protests, and processions — and, of course, a place to enjoy the simple pleasure of relaxing between classes. In a city with more than a dozen beaches, here is one, at least, where sand doesn’t get everywhere, the water drains quickly, and the sunbathers always have interesting books.

— Paul Hond



ON THE STEPS From top: King George VI and Queen Elizabeth tour Columbia with President Nicholas Murray Butler in 1939; students protest in 1968; members of Columbia College's first coed class gather in 1983; children perform at a 9/11 observance in 2002.

When Historians Make History

Columbia professor George Chauncey wins the John W. Kluge Prize

Historian George Chauncey was first summoned to court in 1993. He was thirty-nine, a little-known assistant professor at the University of Chicago, and a year away from publishing his groundbreaking book *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*. As one of a small number of scholars in the US working on gay history, Chauncey had been asked to testify in a case challenging a Colorado state constitutional amendment that banned municipalities from protecting gay people from discrimination. The US Supreme Court ultimately struck down the amendment, and Chauncey became the go-to expert witness on the history of anti-gay discrimination.

Chauncey, who is the DeWitt Clinton Professor of American History at Columbia (a chair previously held by Allan Nevins '60HON, Richard Hofstadter '42GSAS, and Eric Foner '63CC, '69GSAS), has long been a witness for justice. He grew up in the 1950s and '60s in the South, the son of a Presbyterian minister who was deeply involved in the civil-rights movement. By high school,

Chauncey was eager to see other parts of the country, and when it came time for college he went to Yale, where he came out as gay. He got his PhD in history at Yale in the 1980s, at the height of the AIDS crisis.

Since the Colorado case, Chauncey has been involved as an expert witness in more than thirty gay-rights cases. When in 2003 the Supreme Court heard *Lawrence v. Texas*, which

questioned the legality of state sodomy laws,



Chauncey organized a group of historians to submit an amicus brief explaining why the historical rationale for

the court's previous defense of those laws was wrong. The justices agreed, ruling the laws unconstitutional.

With that victory, Chauncey figured his courtroom days were over. But in 2004, the commonwealth of Massachusetts legalized same-sex marriage. Court cases exploded, sparking a legal and social battle that would again pull the polite, gentle-spoken historian into the rough currents of a sea change. Chauncey became busier than ever, writing briefs and testifying widely about the history of anti-gay bias. In a 2011 affidavit for *US v. Windsor*, which contested the federal Defense of Marriage Act of 1996 (DOMA), Chauncey

wrote that the most conspicuous legacy of twentieth-century discrimination could be found in the “numerous state statutes and constitutional amendments that brand gays and lesbians as second-class citizens by denying them the right to marry the person they love.” The court ruled that Section 3 of DOMA, which denied federal recognition, benefits, and protections to lesbian and gay couples married in states that allowed it, was unconstitutional.

The marriage issue came to a head in 2015, when the Supreme Court heard *Obergefell v. Hodges*, which challenged state bans on same-sex marriage. Chauncey — who a year earlier had married Ronald Gregg, now director of the MA program in film and media studies at the School of the Arts (they

both came to Columbia from Yale in 2017) — wrote an amicus brief for the Organization of American Historians, again delineating the history of anti-gay repression. On June 26, 2015, the court declared the marriage prohibitions unconstitutional. “It was a stunning day,” says Chauncey. “Our brief was cited in the decision, which was extraordinary.” The historian was once again helping to craft history.

This year, the Library of Congress named Chauncey, sixty-eight, the winner of the 2022 John W. Kluge Prize for Achievement in the Study of Humanity. “His work that helped transform our nation’s attitudes and laws epitomizes the Kluge Center’s mission to support research at the intersection of the humanities and public policy,” said

Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden ’22HON. Chauncey is the first recipient of the \$500,000 international prize to be honored for work in LGBTQ+ studies.

But his joy at the achievement is tempered by concerns about the fragility of the rights that have been gained, given the tilt of today’s Supreme Court. “It’s still unclear where this court will go with marriage equality, and that’s chilling,” Chauncey says. “So many issues that were struggled over for decades and that seemed settled are now open again.”

For Chauncey, that is history’s unending lesson.

“What we learn from history is that we are always in a state of struggle, we are always in a state of flux,” he says. “We cannot take anything for granted.”

— Paul Hond

Georgia on His Mind

The inaugural Bobby Kashif Cox Memorial Scholarship recipient looks homeward



Ivan Rome

It’s hard to get into film school. But it’s easy to see why Ivan Rome made the cut.

Rome, who grew up in Columbus, Georgia, is in his third year at Colum-

bia’s School of the Arts.

He is easygoing, open, and observant. Seated outside the Hungarian Pastry Shop on a balmy day, he watches the flow of people and traffic, admitting everything

into the workshop of his imagination. “Stories are everywhere,” he says, glancing around. “It’s a city full of inspiration.” But Rome, who studies screenwriting, isn’t out to capture New York, his love for Spike Lee notwithstanding. Western Georgia is his flavor. Down-home stuff. “I love going back to Georgia, because that’s the voice I write in,” he says. “There’s something about being home. There’s a different level of love in everything: in the food, in the music. It just feels right.”

This past May, Rome became the first winner of a crowdfunded scholarship started by SOA alumni in honor of Bobby Kashif Cox ’12SOA, a gifted storyteller who died of colon cancer in 2017 at age thirty-three.

Humble, humane, and funny, Cox was loved and admired by his classmates, fourteen of whom make up the scholarship committee. They include director Olivia Newman ’12SOA, whose film *Where the Crawdads Sing* was released this past summer; Shukree Tilghman ’12SOA, a writer-producer on *This Is Us* and *Animal Kingdom*; and Gina Atwater ’11SOA, a writer on *Westworld*.

“After graduation, we found out Bobby was diagnosed with stage 4,” explains committee member and author Alexandra Jamison ’13SOA. “We were devastated. We thought he could beat it. Unfortunately, he got sicker and sicker. We raised money and brought him out to LA for the first

time. His favorite thing was the Griffith Observatory.”

After Cox’s death, Jamison started making calls to set up a scholarship through Columbia. “We got some seed money together, reached out to classmates, and showed Columbia we were serious about this,” Jamison says. To date, the committee has raised some \$300,000 for a scholarship intended for an SOA screenwriting student who embodies Cox’s talent and spirit.

Rome’s path to Columbia was improbable. In high school he played football, ran track, and wrestled, but a broken fibula suffered during football practice ended his athletic ambitions. He studied journal-

ism at the University of Kentucky with an eye to becoming a sports broadcaster. Then, in his senior year, a writing teacher steered him toward film as a way to tell stories. With minimal equipment and funding, Rome made a short comic piece about a standoff between friends over the last slice of pizza.

That summer, he worked maintenance at an apartment complex during the day and made food deliveries at night to pay for his film-school applications. Having never written a screenplay, he quickly learned the basic format so that he could send writing samples. He got into Columbia and entered during the



Bobby Kashif Cox

pandemic, which gave him plenty of time to view the classic films on the syllabus. “I forced my family to watch old black-and-white movies,” he chuckles.

Rome is working on a slew of screenplay ideas — a buddy comedy, a murder

mystery — and recently traveled to Los Angeles to meet the scholarship-committee members and celebrate. Film-department chair Jack Lechner went out too, and they all had lunch on a hotel rooftop with a wraparound view of Hollywood. The next night the committee took Rome to dinner. “They’re all so welcoming,” Rome says. “It’s like family.”

Rome is already plotting his thesis script for next year — a coming-of-age story set in his hometown. “There’s a feeling you get when you go home that’s irreplaceable,” he says. “That Southern feeling. That’s the thing I can’t escape.”

— Paul Hond



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Supreme Complications

Two Columbia law professors assess the Supreme Court's momentous abortion decision

From her office in Jerome Greene Hall on the Morningside campus, Olatunde Johnson, a Columbia law professor who once clerked for Justice John Paul Stevens, surveys the legal landscape in the wake of the Supreme Court's 6-3 decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* and sees only chaos.

"There will not be an end to the legal challenges or political contestation over abortion anytime soon," says Johnson, who with other Columbia scholars has been speaking to the media, helping the public make sense of the legal earthquake in which the constitutional right to an abortion has been reversed and the matter returned to the states, which can restrict abortion in any way they see fit. "There are still many questions unanswered: Can a state with an abortion ban prevent its citizens from traveling to another state for an abortion? Can it effectively criminalize abortion in other

states? What's the role of the federal government? Is there any limit on a state's ability to prevent a woman from accessing an abortion that might impact her health? There is a lot of uncertainty at every level."

Johnson is particularly struck by the confusion at the state level over how to manage miscarriages,

"Although the word 'privacy' is not in the Constitution, the concept of privacy is ... The idea is to protect citizens from intrusion by the state."

which involve the same medications and procedures as those used to induce abortions. "This is threatening women's health," she says. The Supreme Court's decision will impact everyone who can get pregnant and can give birth."

In an office two floors above Johnson, another professor, Carol Sanger,

has also been sharing her expertise with the public. Sanger was a law student in 1973 when the conservative Burger court decided *Roe v. Wade*, ruling 7-2 that state bans on abortion were unconstitutional. Nearly fifty years later, Sanger, whose 2017 book *About Abortion: Terminating Pregnancy in Twenty-First-Century America* argues that American law and culture shame and stigmatize women who seek abortions, decries the ongoing efforts to eradicate what she considers a critical and hard-earned right.

"People should be terrified right now," she says, noting a flurry of post-*Dobbs* legislative proposals that exclude exceptions for rape or incest. "There's talk about Congress, should Republicans win in November, passing a federal law that says the fetus is a person, which would make all abortions murder." Sanger contrasts this with pre-*Roe* laws: "The thought in the early days was: if you have unwanted sex and get pregnant, we're not going to make you deliver that child. This was considered a humane gesture. But now the court and legislatures have been very clear: it's all about the fetus."

The constitutional basis for the *Roe* decision, explains Sanger, was the right to privacy, derived from the First, Fourth, Fifth, and Ninth Amendments, as well as the due-process clause of

the Fourteenth Amendment ("... nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law"). That right has been used to protect the use of contraception (1965), interracial marriage (1967), same-sex intimacy (2003), and same-sex marriage (2015). "Although the word 'privacy' is not in the Con-

stitution, the concept of privacy is,” Sanger says. “The idea is to protect citizens from intrusion by the state into their deeply personal domains.”

One critic of the “right to privacy” grounding of *Roe* was Ruth Bader Ginsburg ’59LAW, ’94HON, who was an associate justice from 1993 until her



Olatunde Johnson

death in 2020, when she was replaced by Amy Coney Barrett, who along with Justice Neil Gorsuch ’88CC voted with the *Dobbs* majority.

But Ginsburg’s misgivings were entirely different from those articulated by Justice Samuel Alito, who, writing for the majority in *Dobbs*, rejected the claim to a constitutional right to privacy. Ginsburg, fiercely pro-choice, believed in privacy rights but felt that a divided public would have better digested *Roe* had it been couched in the Fourteenth Amendment’s equal-protection clause (“... nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws”). “That would have made abortion a matter of gender equality rather than privacy,” Sanger says. “The equal-protection argument was that men and women create pregnancies together but the bulk of the

consequences fall on the woman. That’s what Ginsburg had in mind. Yet in *Dobbs*, Alito dismisses not just the privacy and liberty arguments but also the equal-protection argument.”

As Olatunde Johnson adds, the court also dismissed the question of reliance, which it was obliged to consider: have people come to rely on the right to an abortion in structuring their lives? The court said no.

“The 1992 case that reaffirmed *Roe*, called *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, spoke a lot about reliance on this right,” Johnson



Carol Sanger

says. “*Dobbs* is striking for not accepting that there has been such a reliance. The court really walked away from that.”

In the near future, Johnson says, courts will have to confront abortion-related challenges to freedom of speech (can states ban websites that give instructions on how to get an abortion?), freedom of religion (what if you don’t believe life starts at conception?), the right to travel between states, and the right to lifesaving health care.

“So legally this isn’t over,” Johnson says. “There will be questions that make it back up to the Supreme Court.”

— Paul Hond

THE SHORT LIST



LISTEN

Miller Theatre explores the pre-classical era with an **early-music series** held at the Church of Saint Mary the Virgin in Midtown, featuring performances by **Vox Luminis** on October 22, the **Orlando Consort** on November 19, and the **Tallis Scholars** on December 10. millertheatre.com/event-series

MOVE

Support life-saving cancer research with **Velocity**, a cycling event hosted by Columbia University Irving Medical Center. Ride in-person on October 2 or participate remotely with a fitness activity of your choice. velocityride.org



SEE

Sin Autorización: Contemporary Cuban Art, an exhibition at the Wallach Art Gallery on view from

October 21–January 15, looks at the vibrant independent art scene that emerged in Cuba around 2016 after the US relaxed travel restrictions. wallach.columbia.edu/exhibitions

VISIT

Learn about the planet at the **Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory Open House**, which offers lab tours and science activities for the whole family. October 8 in Palisades, New York. openhouse.ideo.columbia.edu



ROAR

The Lions return to a packed schedule, with the football season kicking off on September 17. Catch the annual **homecoming** festivities the weekend of October 22, when Columbia takes on Dartmouth at the Baker Athletics Complex. gocolumbialions.com



BEING THE MANKIEWICZES

They wrote. They raged. They gave the world *Citizen Kane* and *All About Eve*. But it took the youngest star of this four-generation Columbia family to bring them all together.

By Paul Hond

Once a month, Ben Mankiewicz '92JRN, the primetime host of Turner Classic Movies (TCM), leaves his home in Santa Monica, where he lives with his wife and ten-year-old daughter, and travels to TCM studios in Atlanta to record a series of two-minute introductions for upcoming movies. Wearing a suit and tie, with a neatly pressed handkerchief peeking from his breast pocket, Ben stands in a stage-set living room and invites viewers to pull up a chair. "Good evening, everyone, and welcome to Turner Classic Movies," he says. "I'm Ben Mankiewicz." Looking directly at the camera, he'll give the backstory of *Double Indemnity* or *Singin' in the Rain* or *Casablanca*, or perhaps a movie written by his grandfather, Herman Mankiewicz 1917CC, or made by his great-uncle, Joseph Mankiewicz '28CC. Between them, brothers Herman and Joe worked on more than two hundred movies, from silent comedies to postwar dramas to the film that some critics call the greatest ever made, *Citizen Kane*. That a present-day Mankiewicz should be flame-keeper of Hollywood's Golden Age has a thematic unity that his screenwriting forebears might have appreciated.

Ben was hired in 2003, and almost twenty years, hundreds of intros, and one isolating pandemic later, he is nothing less than America's movie therapist, a reliable, reassuring presence

who connects people to the past and to each other. Whether educating his audience, interviewing motion-picture royalty (Faye Dunaway, Steven Spielberg, Warren Beatty), or hosting film festivals, he brings a wry, intelligent, movie-loving energy to his TCM work that quickly reels you in.

"There's no channel like it," he says of the venerable pay-TV network, which is owned by Warner Bros. Discovery and shows movies from the full catalogs of Warner Bros. and MGM, as well as films licensed from other companies. "No one ever says 'I love CBS' or 'I love Showtime.' But they say 'I love TCM.' This is a network that creates a visceral feeling of community."

Despite his pedigree, Ben, fifty-five, was not raised on the movies. Politics and baseball were the kitchen-table topics. His father, Frank Mankiewicz '48JRN, was a political strategist and media insider, and Ben grew up in a suburb of Washington, far from any movieland dazzle. He knew that his grandfather had written *Citizen Kane*, but he didn't see the film until he was in his teens.

In college he began paying closer attention to Mankiewicz movies, as well as to Mankiewicz history. And when he enrolled at Columbia to study broadcast journalism in 1991, establishing the fourth generation of Columbia Mankiewiczes, he stepped foot on the soil that fostered the family saga —

a blockbuster epic of fathers and sons, brothers and booze, ribaldry and rivalry, politics and prose; a narrative where little, if anything, has gone according to script.

That script begins with the man in the portrait that hangs in a room in Ben's house: a bare-pated, mustachioed patriarch whose eyes seem to gaze out in eternal disapproval. Born in 1872 in Berlin, Franz Mankiewicz 1915GSAS, known as "Pop," was a German-Jewish immigrant who came to New York in the early 1890s, moved to Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, to edit a German-language newspaper, then returned with his family to Manhattan, where he taught German and French at Stuyvesant High School. Beloved by his students and feared at home, he was, by all accounts, a demanding, short-fused disciplinarian who imposed his will on sons Herman and Joe.

Herman took the brunt of it. If he scored 97 percent on a test, the story goes, Pop would want to know what happened to the other three points. He insisted on a total effort from his sons. Eleven years apart, the brothers were prodigies and both entered Columbia at age fifteen. Herman went first, in 1913 — and what a kick in the pants it must have been when Pop enrolled at Columbia the same year to get his master's in education. Still, Herman — "Mank"

to his pals — thrived on Morningside Heights. A philosophy major known for his sharp wit, coarse manners, nose-thumbing irreverence, hard drinking, heavy gambling, and literary aplomb, Herman was a proud member of the Boar's Head Society, a literary club founded by English professor and Great Books advocate John Erskine 1900CC, 1903GSAS, 1929HON, who would be an important mentor to both Mankiewicz brothers.



Father and sons: Herman, Franz (Pop), and Joe Mankiewicz.

Herman wrote for the *Jester* and had his own humor column in the *Spectator*, called “The Off-Hour,” in which he dished up lofty pearls of campus gossip, mischievous advice, and doggerel. He also wrote the book and lyrics for the 1916 Varsity Show, a rambunctious comedy called *The Peace Pirates*, which satirized Henry Ford’s 1915 effort to send a ship of peace activists to wartime Europe. Herman was highly popular (“People loved him,” Orson Welles would later say of the Hollywood-era Herman. “Loved him. That terrible vulnerability. That terrible wreck”), and his campus clique included Oscar Hammerstein II 1916CC, 1954HON (lyricist and librettist of *Oklahoma!* and *Carousel*), Lorenz “Larry” Hart (lyricist of “My Funny Valentine,” “Manhattan,” and “Isn’t It Romantic?”), and Howard Dietz, a lyricist who, as a publicist for Goldwyn Pictures — later MGM — adopted a lion as the studio’s symbol, inspired by Columbia’s maned mascot.

The US entered the war in April 1917, and Herman joined the Marines, arriving in France a week before the November 1918 armistice. By then he had lost many Columbia friends in combat. He got a job in Paris with the American Red Cross news service and followed the flawed peace negotiations at Versailles. In a letter home, he wrote, “When I look at the outline of the Peace Treaty and then think of Freddy Gudebrod [1915CC] and Joyce Kilmer

[1908CC] and Jeff Healy [1918CC, captain of the Columbia football team] and Herb Buermeyer [1916CC] and the hundred others that I knew and of the millions of other Freddy Gudebrods and Kilmers and Healys and Buermeyers that I didn’t know, my blood boils.”

Herman came home in 1920, married Sara Aaronson, moved for two years to Berlin (where Pop had family and where Herman was a correspondent for the *Chicago Tribune*), then returned to New York. In short order, he became a theater reporter for the *New York Times*, worked on plays with George S. Kaufman and Marc Connelly, drew blood at the Algonquin Round Table (that famed Midtown lunch club for the rapier-witted), and, in 1925, became the first regular drama critic at a new smart-set magazine called the *New Yorker*.

Brilliant, brash, “the funniest man in New York” according to Algonquin confrere Alexander Woollcott, Herman had amassed such gambling debts that

in 1926, when producer Walter Wanger at Paramount offered him a juicy two-year contract to write title cards for the (still silent) motion pictures, Herman gathered Sara and their two boys, Don and Frank, and headed to Hollywood. Franz was not pleased: he found movies frivolous and a waste of Herman’s mind — a judgment that would haunt his older son for the rest of his life.

“Pop was a tremendously industrious, brilliant, vital man,” Herman once said. “A father like that could make you very ambitious or very despairing. You could end up by saying, ‘Stick it, I’ll never live up to that and I’m not going to try.’ That’s what happened eventually with me.”

Joe Mankiewicz entered Columbia in 1925. He was, in Herman’s words, “fiercely ambitious,” and given his gifts it was natural for Joe to slide into his big brother’s outsized footsteps. Joe idolized Herman. He, too, wrote for the *Jester* and the *Spectator*. A premed major who switched to liberal arts, Joe played baseball, acted in a German-language play, worked on the yearbook, and led a campaign for more toilets in Hamilton Hall (“Columbia needs a bowl, not a stadium” was his slogan). He didn’t write a Varsity Show, but he did contribute to a campus literary magazine called *Varsity*. And — like Herman — he found a mentor in Professor John Erskine.

Along with Pop, who by then was a professor at City College, Erskine steered Joe toward a career in academia and theater. And Joe, aware of Pop’s disappointment over Herman’s surrender to the seductions of the movie business, vowed to stick to the books. He graduated at nineteen and, like his brother, he went to Berlin, where he worked as a reporter and, through Herman, got a job translating title cards for German movies.

Herman, meanwhile, was living high in Hollywood. His opinion of the place is evident in his famous 1926 telegram to Ben Hecht, then a playwright in Chicago: MILLIONS ARE TO BE GRABBED OUT HERE AND YOUR ONLY COMPETITION IS IDIOTS. DON’T LET THIS GET AROUND.

COURTESY OF BEN AND LEE MANKIEWICZ

And in 1929, when he got word that Joe, who had returned to New York, needed money, Herman sent another fateful dispatch: **FOR CHRIST SAKE COME OUT TO HOLLYWOOD.**

Though Joe had made promises to Pop and Erskine, Herman was like a giant magnet, and Joe hopped a train to California. Herman met him at the station, and that night they went to a party at the home of Jesse Lasky, head of production at Paramount.

"I stood there like a kid who had been locked into a candy store," Joe recalled in a 1986 interview. "My God, there was Clara Bow! Olga Baclanova, Kay Francis, Gary Cooper, George Bancroft ... these women, stars, they all were there. I couldn't take it, and I saw a familiar back. A familiar back, broad, tall. And it turned around. And it was Professor John Erskine. Who else in the world could have shown up and made me feel guiltier? Horror. I had given my oath to this man. And he looked at me and he said, 'Joe?' And I said, kind of sickly, 'Hello, Professor Erskine.' He said, 'Joe, what are you doing here?' I said, 'Well, what are you doing, Professor Erskine?' He said, 'I'm writing at Warner Brothers, where are you?'"

Joe could not have invented a more delicious twist. Erskine had published a best-selling novel, *The Private Life of Helen of Troy*, that he was adapting into a screenplay. Later, Joe would say of the encounter, "At the moment, an illusion shattered that I don't think I've ever recovered from."

But that didn't stop him from going all in. Soon he was writing scripts for W. C. Fields and the child star Jackie Cooper. As recounted by Herman's grandson Nick Davis in his dual biography of the brothers titled *Competing with Idiots*, Joe, the up-and-comer, was proud of Herman's big-shot stature in the town. But as Joe's own status grew, so did Herman's condescension toward him — which only intensified Joe's resolve.

Where Herman was passionate and reckless, Joe was cautious and calculating: his was the ambition of the understudy.

Herman had always been a fish out of water in Hollywood, and he diligently maintained his New York ties. A parade of clever New Yorkers passed through his house in Beverly Hills (where movie talk was verboten), and he even served as president of the Southern California chapter of Columbia's alumni club. When the Lions football team, which had gone

able, Herman settled on a cougar, which he took on a leash to the train station in Pasadena. Frank recounts the meeting: "That's a good-looking bunch of backs," my father remarked to Coach Little as the boys emerged from the train. 'Backs, hell,' the coach replied, 'that's the whole team!'" Short-handed and heavy underdogs, the Lions won, 7-0 — the biggest upset in Rose Bowl history.

It was one triumph that Herman could enjoy. Professionally, he was miserable. Despite his having scripted the 1933 hit comedy *Dinner at Eight*, directed by George Cukor and based on the play by Kaufman and Edna Ferber '31HON, Herman just couldn't take Hollywood seriously. He drank, insulted executives, got fired and hired and fired again, drank some more, and was always two steps behind the bill collector. As Davis tells it, by the fall of 1939, Herman, debt-ridden, jobless, alcoholic, and forty-two years old, decided to get a ride with a friend cross-country to New York — home of the theater, the magazines, and all he'd left behind — to salvage himself.

But in New Mexico the car crashed. Herman broke his leg and was hospitalized in Los Angeles. Among his visitors was a twenty-four-year-old director named Orson Welles, cofounder of the Mercury Theatre. Herman and Welles had lunched the year before — the year that Welles's radio play *The War of the Worlds* had persuaded many Americans that Martians had invaded New Jersey — and the two boy geniuses, current and former, had hit it off. Welles, who had just signed an extraordinary two-picture deal with RKO giving him full creative freedom, needed material. Now he offered Herman money to write a few radio scripts — uncredited — and Herman, desperate for cash, agreed. Then they started talking about a movie, and about journalism and politics and power. Herman knew the publishing



Though he shared screen credit with Orson Welles, Herman Mankiewicz claimed to be the sole writer of *Citizen Kane*.

7-1 in 1933, was invited to play Stanford in the Rose Bowl for the national championship, Herman decided that Coach Lou Little and the team should be welcomed at the train station by a real lion. And so he gathered his sons, Frank and Don, ages nine and eleven, and went to Gay's Lion Farm, a provider of exotic animals to movie studios, in hopes of renting Slats, the original MGM lion. In his 2016 memoir *So As I Was Saying ...*, Frank writes that as the lion was unavail-

titan William Randolph Hearst personally and had dined more than once at the Hearst Castle in San Simeon. An idea began taking shape, and in February 1940 the broken-down screenwriter went into seclusion in Victorville, California, and wrote his masterpiece.

That same year, Joe got his second Oscar nomination as producer of *The Philadelphia Story*, having earned

If Herman's win was a defeat for Joe in the zero-sum game of Mankiewicz achievement, Joe lost ground again the following year, when Herman was nominated for another screenwriting Oscar, this time for *The Pride of the Yankees*, a biopic about former Columbia baseball star Lou Gehrig (in which Low Library and *Alma Mater* make a cameo).

and their sons, Tom Mankiewicz and Chris Mankiewicz '63CC (both of whom would work in the movie industry), migrated to the Upper East Side. Joe started his own production company, and his remarkable run of films through the 1950s — including *No Way Out*, featuring newcomer Sidney Poitier; *Julius Caesar*, in which Joe cast Marlon Brando as Mark Antony; *The Barefoot Contessa*, for which Joe received an Oscar nomination for best original screenplay; and *Suddenly, Last Summer*, based on the Tennessee Williams play — sealed his reputation as America's most literate director and, in the words of Jean-Luc Godard, "the most intelligent man in all contemporary cinema."

Joseph L. Mankiewicz had reached the top of his profession in every way, and had certainly earned the respect of his peers. As president of the Screen Directors Guild during the height of the Red Scare, Joe, a Republican, refused to institute loyalty oaths for members, despite pressure by guild anti-communists.

He was also an outspoken advocate for civil rights. But behind the courtly Park Avenue élan there lurked another aspect of his identity: the serial philanderer who slept with several actresses. His son Chris has described Joe as a distant father and gaslighting husband whose infidelities and denials overwhelmed Rose, who suffered from mental illness exacerbated by alcoholism. In 1958, Rose committed suicide. Joe remarried in 1962. At the time, he was filming *Cleopatra*, starring Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton, a chaotic, budget-busting production that almost derailed his career. Fortunately, he went out on a high note in 1972 with his last film, *Sleuth*, which earned Oscar nods for Joe and his two-person cast of Laurence Olivier and Michael Caine.

Joe's greatest love had always been the theater, and toward the end of his life he wondered what books and plays he might have written, had he taken the more academic Erskine-Pop path. "I wish now that I had done that," he said. "I would have had something I did that stood for something." His Oscars, he said, "don't give what I call a standing."



Top: Frank Mankiewicz updates the press after the shooting of Robert F. Kennedy on June 5, 1968. Bottom: Don Mankiewicz, Frank's brother.

his first in 1931 as a screenwriter for *Skippy*. Herman, one of the highest-paid writers in Hollywood, had yet to be nominated once.

But in 1941, just when it seemed like Herman was sunk, his ship came heaving into port. *Citizen Kane* was a critical success. Though he had agreed to work uncredited (Welles's RKO contract called for Welles to be billed as writer and director), Herman reversed himself and demanded that his name appear. Welles consented, but the question of authorship remains one of Hollywood's enduring mysteries (as dramatized in David Fincher's 2020 film *Mank*). Frank contended that his father was sole author, while others see a clear collaboration. But it was Herman who got top billing, Herman whose name was read first over the radio as winner for best original screenplay of 1941. Herman didn't attend the ceremony but later claimed he had prepared a speech that said, "I am very happy to accept this award in Mr. Welles's absence, because the script was written in Mr. Welles's absence."

But Joe was just warming up. He finally directed his first picture, a period drama called *Dragonwyck*, in 1946, and just a few years later became the only person ever to win Oscars two years in a row for writing *and* directing: in 1950 for *A Letter to Three Wives* and in 1951 for *All About Eve*, the movie in which his abiding themes of ambition and usurpation were most splendidly realized.

Despite this success, Joe was not immune to the nagging sense that movies lacked the heft of theater or literature. Like Herman, he longed for New York, and in 1951 he and his wife, the Austrian-born actress Rose Stradner,

TOP: ASSOCIATED PRESS; BOTTOM: COURTESY OF BEN AND LEE MANKIEWICZ

But if Joe felt uncertain of his legacy, others affirmed his greatness. In 1986, Columbia feted him with the Alexander Hamilton Medal, the College's highest honor. The following year he received the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement at the Venice Film Festival. And in 1988, France bestowed him with one of its highest decorations, the Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur. Joe died in 1993, having outlived his brother by forty years.

Poor Herman did not live to see *Citizen Kane*, which Hearst had used his power to suppress, be rediscovered and canonized by critics twenty years after its release. He died in 1953 of kidney failure at age fifty-five.

Ben Mankiewicz never met his grandfather, but he has introduced many of his movies on TCM and often thinks about him. "The tragedy of Herman is not the drinking or the gambling or the getting fired," says Ben. "The tragedy of Herman is that he didn't recognize that what he did mattered. If I could say one thing to my grandfather, it would be 'Hey. Idiot. You're the idiot. Movies are a real art form, and you should be proud, not torturing yourself.'"

When people know that your grandfather wrote *Citizen Kane* and your great-uncle wrote and directed *All About Eve*, there is, says Ben, a certain "burden of expectation" — a presumption that if your name is Mankiewicz you are sure to be the brightest, funniest person at the table. Ben feels that the one Mankiewicz who really lived up to the name was his father, Frank.

"He was fun to hang out with, fun to watch baseball with, and the smartest person in whatever room he was in," says Ben. "He was also a great listener. My brother [*Dateline* journalist Josh Mankiewicz] and I adored him. He was ninety when he died in 2014, and I still feel we lost him too young."

Frank, having watched his father's struggles in the movie industry, studied law at UC Berkeley and journalism at Columbia, and became a Hollywood



Ben Mankiewicz

lawyer instead of a writer (Steve McQueen was a client). His life changed when he heard President John F. Kennedy's call to service during his inaugural address in 1961. Frank took a position with the newly established Peace Corps and soon became its Latin American director. He later became press secretary to Senator Robert F. Kennedy, working for him through his 1968 presidential campaign, which ended in gunfire at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles. It was Frank who, on June 6, 1968, at Good Samaritan Hospital, delivered the news on live TV that Kennedy had died.

In the 1970s, Frank became president of National Public Radio, where he greatly expanded operations and oversaw the creation of *Morning Edition*. But movies never reached him. It was only by watching Ben on TCM that he discovered the jewels of the family business.

That included work by his brother, Don Mankiewicz '42CC, who was nominated for an Oscar for his 1958 screen adaptation of *I Want to Live!*, loosely based on the true story of a woman convicted of murder and executed in California's gas chamber in 1955. At Columbia, Don wrote for the *Jester*, was on the debating team, ran for class secretary (he lost), and after graduation became a novelist (his best-known book, *Trial*, was made into a movie starring Glenn Ford). He was also a scriptwriter

and wrote the pilots for the hit television shows *Ironside* and *Marcus Welby, MD*. Some of his best work was done for the live black-and-white TV-playhouse programs of the 1950s and early '60s, with their voice-over narration, Chesterfields, and orchestral stabs. He adapted Robert Penn Warren's political novel *All the King's Men* into a two-parter for *Kraft Television Theatre*, directed by Sidney Lumet, and for *Playhouse 90* he adapted *The Last Tycoon* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, directed by John Frankenheimer.

Don died in 2015, and the portrait of Franz, which had been in his house, was eventually given to Ben. Franz had died in 1941, the year *Citizen Kane* was released. He never saw his sons win awards or be honored by nations, never saw the ways in which all the Columbia Mankiewiczes would use their love of storytelling to instruct, delight, and inspire.

Five years ago, Ben began pushing for a podcast at TCM. It was named *The Plot Thickens*, and Ben's friendship with the late director and raconteur Peter Bogdanovich became the basis for its first season. In the latest season, titled "Lucy," Ben narrates the life story of Lucille Ball. "Normally at TCM you talk for two minutes before a movie," Ben says. "This is ten forty-five-minute episodes — about seven hours. You can tell a pretty great story in seven hours."

Of course, Ben can tell a great story in two minutes, just as his grandfather and great-uncle could tell a magnificent one in two hours. But none of them, for all their narrative gifts, could have produced a plot as thick as the one that drives the tale of the Columbia Mankiewiczes — four generations of talented men separated by time and temperament, the threads of their lives woven together through the medium of that uniquely American art form, the classic Hollywood movie. And as Ben, standing before the camera, introduces the Marx Brothers' *Duck Soup* (produced and cowritten by Herman) or the musical *Guys and Dolls* (directed and scripted by Joe) — or *Citizen Kane* or *All About Eve* — he draws those threads a little closer. 🍷



RAISING MY VOICE FOR UKRAINE

When I heard the horror stories from my friends and colleagues, I felt angry, helpless, and even a little guilty. Then I found my own small way to take a stand against Russia's brutal war.

By Masha Udensiva-Brenner '21JRN

I'm sitting in my office at the Harriman Institute, Columbia's center for Russian, Eurasian, and East European studies, trying to pronounce "Kyiv." "Kayv, Kih-yeev, Kih-yeeeeooooo." I stretch my lips and position my tongue. Across from me is Yuri Shevchuk, a Ukrainian linguist and senior lecturer at Columbia. I'm interviewing him for episode six of *Voices of Ukraine*, a podcast I've created about lives upended by Russia's war.

Even here, in my community at Harriman, there's no shortage of stories that need to be told: The alumna who'd spent months in Ukraine caring for her dying mother only to return to the US two weeks before the invasion. The student in the Slavic-languages department who'd been finishing his dissertation and planning a wedding in Kyiv when Russia invaded. The former faculty member who stayed in her Kyiv apartment through the shelling because her son, who'd joined Ukraine's Territorial Defense Forces, was ill with COVID-19.

The podcast is halfway into its first season, but the correct pronunciation of the name of the Ukrainian capital still eludes me. I want to avoid pronouncing "Kyiv" the Russian way (Kee-yev or Kee-yef) at all costs. A Ukrainian-American colleague told me to say "Kayv." My interviewees, mostly Ukrainians, tend to say "Kih-yeev." Yuri, using the original, pre-Russification Ukrainian, pronounces it "Kih-yeeoo." I practice, "Kih-yeeeeooooo, Kih-yeeeeooooo." I feel like an imposter. But there's Yuri, leaning back in his chair, cheering me on: "You say it very well. I don't see anything wrong with the way you say it, other than self-doubting."

Episode six is the first time I reveal to my audience that I am from Russia. This might explain the self-doubt.

I was born in Moscow in November 1982, just four days after Leonid Brezhnev, who'd ruled the Soviet Union for nearly two decades, died of a heart attack. No one knew he was dead; the authorities, worried that the news would send shock waves across the country, hid it for days. In lieu of an announce-

ment, the state-run media broadcast Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* on repeat.

Airing *Swan Lake* would become a familiar trope during political upheavals in the Kremlin. Authorities played it after the death of Brezhnev's successor, Yuri Andropov, less than two years later and after the death of Andropov's successor, Konstantin Chernenko, almost a year after that. In 1991 it played on a loop for three days when hard-liners attempted a coup against Chernenko's successor, Mikhail Gorbachev, who had opened the Soviet Union to the world with his policies of glasnost and perestroika.

The Gorbachev years are the ones I remember. The contrast between the drab scarcity around me — peeling paint, empty grocery shelves, unsmiling passersby in muted colors — and the new influx of brightly dressed foreigners made a huge impression. My mother, a young psychologist at Moscow State University, eagerly befriended those foreigners, inviting them to our communal apartment. They brought me presents and left me longing for a faraway world of Barbie dolls and pink bubblegum.

I am an only child. My dad, who'd once served as a navigator in the Russian navy, fed my wanderlust with stories about Europe, Japan, Chile, and Peru. As a Jew, he was discriminated against and regarded with suspicion by authorities; he had little loyalty to the Soviet Union. At school I pinned a red star to my uniform and sat with my hands neatly folded, listening to narratives valorizing the Communists. At home, it was made clear to me that the Communist regime was cruel and unsuccessful.

In 1991, when I was eight, my mother applied to graduate school in New York. My dad urged her to go, even though he would have to stay behind because of visa issues. We landed at JFK on a hot and humid July morning. The city seemed chaotic, but it didn't matter: Americans smiled a lot, and there were bright toys, breakfast cereals, TV shows, and endless amounts of candy. My mother and I bounced between apartments of acquaintances, and

she worked menial jobs to pay for our expenses. We both had recurring nightmares that we were back in Russia.

That summer I learned English by watching television shows: *Full House*, *Saved by the Bell*, *Charles in Charge*. When my dad called, I sang him the theme songs, which I knew by heart. By the time I started third grade in the fall, I could speak well enough to interact with classmates. But my accent hadn't disappeared yet, and my clothes were all wrong.

A few months later, the Soviet Union dissolved overnight, and my dad joined us in the US. My parents spent their days looking for permanent work. Meanwhile, I rapidly assimilated into American life. As the years went by, I felt less and less Russian. Wanting to put our past behind us, my parents encouraged the shift. By early adolescence, I replied to their Russian in unaccented English. Yet they still cared about their birthplace and tried to get me interested in Russian politics. They felt uneasy when a former KGB officer named Vladimir Putin came to power, but I barely paid attention. In college, I majored in history and politics and studied abroad in Prague, where I learned Czech. Soon after, we were approved for US citizenship, and I swore an oath to the United States of America.

It was around this time that the color revolutions started: first the Rose Revolution in Georgia in 2003, then the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004, and then the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan in 2005. My parents followed these events closely and tried to involve me in their conversations about them. My mother even dragged me to a panel discussion about Ukrainian politics at the Harriman Institute in 2007. I daydreamed as the speakers clicked through their PowerPoints. Back then, all I knew of Ukraine were faint memories of my mom's Ukrainian aunt and her children coming to stay with us after the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, and the fact that half my mother's family — her paternal Jewish

side — was from Kyiv. My mother spent summer vacations there and always romanticized the city and its beautiful architecture. But in those times, Russia and Ukraine were portrayed by Soviet authorities as one country. The Kremlin downplayed the importance of nationality and emphasized that Russians and Ukrainians were family (a family that treated the Ukrainians as provincial, uneducated younger siblings).

When my mother took me to the panel on Ukraine, I was about to start an MFA program in creative writing and was looking for a job that could support me through grad school. Coincidentally, a friend told me that Harriman Institute director Catharine Nepomnyashchy '87GSAS was looking

Anger at Russians was high, and understandably so. Would Ukrainians want to talk to me, a Russian émigré, while Russia destroyed their country?

for a Russian-speaking assistant. I landed the job, and suddenly Russian, Eurasian, and East European politics and culture became a regular part of my life.

One of the first events I attended at Harriman commemorated Anna Politkovskaya, a Russian journalist who in 2006 had been gunned down with impunity in the lobby of her Moscow apartment building. No one really knows who wanted Politkovskaya dead or why, but she had become well-known to Kremlin loyalists for her critical reporting on Russia's war in Chechnya and the human-rights abuses there. By that point, Putin had consolidated much of the independent media that had flourished during the Yeltsin years under state control. The more I learned about my native country, the more people like Politkovskaya awed me. Instead of leaving Russia as my family had, they risked their lives to make it a better place.

In 2008, I returned to Moscow for the first time in seventeen years. I roamed the city, visited my grandmother's apartment, and caught up with family friends over elaborately prepared meals. During that trip, a queer friend took me to a gay club. Sex between men was banned in Russia until 1993, and twenty-five years later, homophobia was still rampant. We walked through a dark alleyway to a hidden entrance, where a bouncer assessed us for signs that we might be a danger to the patrons. The experience left a mark. A few years later, the Russian government passed a law that "protected" minors from LGBTQ+ "propaganda," unleashing even more homophobia.

I volunteered to interpret for a gay man who'd fled Moscow to seek asylum

in the US after thugs beat him up. I grew increasingly interested in the plight of LGBTQ+ Russians and eventually told this man's story in the magazine *Guernica*. It was the first time I had reported such an in-depth piece, and bringing to light the experiences of a vulnerable person caught in a brutal system was deeply satisfying.

In 2018, I enrolled in Columbia Journalism School's part-time MS program to study audio reporting. By that point, I was married to an American I'd met in my MFA program. I was also pregnant with our son (whom we would name Nicolai) and working full-time at Harriman. It took me three years to finish the J-school program, including a year of Zoom classes and pandemic parenting. At the post-graduation awards ceremony, I won a Pulitzer traveling fellowship to report a story abroad. I was already conducting video interviews with Maria Zholobova, a journalist and former fellow at Harriman. She'd

recently fled to Tbilisi, Georgia, after police raided her apartment in Moscow and declared the news outlet she worked for "undesirable." I decided to use the fellowship to go to Tbilisi and get a deeper understanding of the rapidly growing community of exiled Russian journalists. I scheduled the trip for early March 2022.

On February 24, 2022, Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. I didn't sleep that night or the rest of the week. I could barely breathe. Every time I looked at my three-year-old son, I thought about the mothers in Ukraine being forced to evacuate with their children, leaving behind spouses to be conscripted. At home, we have a rule: no phones at the dinner table. But after Russia invaded, my husband and I were scrolling constantly, looking up periodically to tell each other about new developments. "Did you see that a missile hit the TV tower in Kyiv?" "The power plant in Zaporizhzhia has been taken over." Sometimes we just texted Twitter threads from across the table. Nicolai demanded answers. So I told him that the country I was born in was trying to take over the country our relatives came from. "They're fighting over who's in charge." It was a script I'd cribbed from a parenting psychologist on Instagram.

A week into the war, *Swan Lake* entered my life again. The Russian government closed TV Rain, the last remaining independent TV network in Russia, for spreading "fake information" about Russia's "special military operation" (the use of the word "war" was now punishable by fifteen years in prison). I watched the journalists' impassioned and optimistic speeches, their assurances that good would prevail over evil, and sobbed uncontrollably. As the last broadcast ended, *Swan Lake* filled the screen. It was both a sign of protest and a tribute to Ukraine, where *Swan Lake* became a potent symbol after the 2014 annexation of Crimea.

By this point, it was clear that I'd have to reschedule my trip to Georgia. I felt guilty for abandoning the Russian journalists, especially since the world was

abandoning them too. The sanctions that foreign governments (and well-meaning corporations) levied against Russian citizens didn't distinguish between the Russians who supported the regime and those who opposed it. Many good Russian people were stranded, their finances frozen, their PayPal transactions denied. I also felt a deep sense of guilt for being Russian, even though I hadn't lived in Russia since 1991 and never supported the Putin regime. It was a feeling shared by many of my Russian friends.

I mentioned this guilt to my parents. But they only felt grief. "What do we have to be ashamed of?" my mother asked. "We have been anti-regime from the beginning." She told me that she'd noticed a sense of antagonism toward Ukrainians seeping into Russian society years before the annexation of Crimea. The Russian government had created this enmity, pushing YouTube videos about Russian-hating Ukrainians and amplifying narratives about the Ukrainian far right on state television. Even people who opposed Putin believed the propaganda. "I would tell them, 'The government is brainwashing you. Stop it,'" my mother said. But her friends would just shake their heads.

A Russian colleague at Columbia told me that the nineteenth-century composer Mikhail Glinka, when he emigrated from Russia, stripped his clothing at the border, wanting to cleanse his soul of Russian cruelty. "I felt similarly when I left," the colleague said. But not everyone felt this way. Some blamed NATO for provoking the invasion. One Russian-American friend asked how I could possibly feel ashamed of the war against Ukraine since it was something I had no part in. "I feel much more shame about the war in Iraq," he said.

The first week of the war felt like it lasted months. It helped to talk to

colleagues and students at Harriman. Everyone was in some version of the same hell, and after hearing their stories, I had the idea for *Voices of Ukraine*. I pitched the podcast to my bosses and started interviewing right away. Yes, I was nervous. Anger at Russians was high, and understandably so. Would Ukrainians want to talk to me, a Russian émigré, while Russia destroyed

and activist named Katia Davydenko, gave me a tour. Katia told me that when the world united to oppose Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, she didn't feel pleased or relieved. She felt bitter: where was everyone when this started, eight years ago, when there was a chance to prevent Russia from going further?

As I walked by the display cases, listening to Katia's stories about the

thousands of ordinary people who had put aside their lives, and sometimes lost them, in the fight for Ukraine, I held back tears. I thought back to what I had been doing after the annexation of Crimea and the invasion of the Donbas in 2014. I remember being angry, of course. It baffled me that Russia could seize the territory of a sovereign country and get away with it. But I didn't do anything. I was busy planning my wedding.

Now, as the war begins to recede from the headlines, I'm gathering stories for *Voices of Ukraine*, season two. Illuminating the heroism and struggles of Ukrainians is my small contribution to the fight, a way to counter

Russian propaganda and remind the world about the war.

Recently, I shared the podcast with a neighbor I met in my apartment building's laundry room. A week later, she sent me a message: "The heart-breaking first-hand accounts ... have woken me out of my haze of day-to-day 'challenges' and impelled me to want to help relieve the suffering of Ukrainians in any way I can." She asked me for the names of organizations that were accepting donations.

I'm glad the podcast is making some impact, even a tiny one, but I wish that I'd woken up from *my* haze years earlier. I can't stop thinking about what Katia said: that if only the world had paid attention, maybe none of this would have happened. ✎



Items from the Rare Book and Manuscript Library's exhibit on Ukraine.


their country? But everyone was gracious and eager to share their experiences. And I was struck by how strong, optimistic, united they were. *We will win. When we win. When we return.* I was also struck by how much Putin's plan had backfired: he had hoped to pit Russian-speaking Ukrainians against Ukrainian-speaking ones, but instead, Russian speakers who had previously been indifferent to their identity, or even ashamed of it, were starting to speak Ukrainian in an act of protest.

A week after I published the podcast's season finale, I visited Columbia's Rare Book and Manuscript Library to see an impromptu exhibit contextualizing the history of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. An archivist there, a Kyiv native

A Light in the Storm

Globally, someone dies by suicide every forty seconds. That's why experts are training ordinary people to ask a few simple questions that could save lives.

Kelly Posner Gerstenhaber, a professor of psychiatry and the founding director of the Columbia Lighthouse Project, which promotes universal suicide screening, discusses her team's latest work.

 **Suicide is an increasingly urgent public-health concern. What can you tell us about the long-term trends?**

Over the past two decades, the annual suicide rate in the US has increased by about 30 percent. In 2020, which is the most recent year for which full statistics are available, nearly forty-six thousand Americans committed suicide. That's more than the number who died in car crashes, who were killed by natural disasters like hurricanes or floods, or who were murdered. And it has been estimated that an average of 135 people are personally affected by each of these deaths.

Though suicides in the US have started to decline since peaking in 2018, the numbers are still high by historical standards, and the overall decline masks an unevenness in suicide risk across different segments of the population. While suicide rates have started to fall

among white people of all ages, they've continued to rise for the most vulnerable groups, including people of color and the LGBTQ+ community.

It seems surprising that suicides would decline during the pandemic. Haven't rates of depression climbed?

Yes, COVID-19 caused a spike in mental-health problems in this country, and in the beginning of the pandemic many experts predicted that suicides would increase. But that hasn't happened, and nobody is certain why. I think part of the explanation is that we're seeing the benefits of the work that mental-health professionals and others have done over the past decade to call attention to suicide as a public-health threat. Because so many people have been struggling during the pandemic, we've also been talking more openly about anxiety and depression, and this has helped to reduce the stigma that unfortunately still exists around these conditions. I suspect that many people who previously chose to hide their mental-health challenges now feel encouraged to seek help. It's also possible that this extraordinary cultural

moment that we've been living through has helped to hold down suicide numbers. People tend to come together in times of crisis, with families, friends, and neighbors going out of their way to reach out and express concern for one another — even if by Zoom or on FaceTime — and this can be a lifeline for people who are struggling with feelings of hopelessness and despair. This phenomenon tracks with historical research that shows that suicide rates drop during times of war, natural disasters, and public-health crises.

The Lighthouse Project's mission is to promote suicide-risk detection and prevention. How do you do that?

My colleagues and I created the Columbia Protocol, a short questionnaire that reveals if someone is at risk of dying by suicide and helps determine the level of intervention that's called for, if any. Also known as the Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale, or C-SSRS, the screening tool is widely considered the gold standard for suicide-risk screening and detection, having been endorsed by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the US Food and Drug



Administration, and the World Health Organization. Based on years of research on how to effectively communicate with people about suicidal thoughts and interpret their responses, the tool is accurate enough for clinical and research settings and yet simple enough for the layperson. It's currently used by doctors, nurses, EMTs, police officers, teachers, school counselors, clergy, social workers, military personnel, corrections officers, and others across the US and in most other countries. Our goal at the Lighthouse Project is to get the Columbia Protocol into as many hands as possible and to encourage people to use it even in informal settings, such as with friends, family members, and coworkers, because we believe that combating suicide requires a community-wide approach. We're trying to reach people where they work, live, learn, and socialize.

How does the Columbia Protocol work?

The person administering it asks a series of questions in plain and direct language, starting with "Have you ever wished you were dead, or wished you could go to sleep and not wake up?" and "Have you actually had any thoughts about killing yourself?" If the answer to

either is "yes," the person will ask additional questions to gauge the severity and immediacy of the risk, inquiring if the person has taken any concrete steps toward making a suicide attempt — such as collecting pills, getting a gun, giving valuables away, or writing a suicide note — and asking how recently they might have done so. The interviewer is then given options for helping the person, based on their answers. This can involve referring them to a suicide hotline or counseling services, or in urgent situations getting them to an emergency room. The questions might seem obvious, but their sequence and precise wording have been fine-tuned through intensive study, resulting in the most reliable, evidence-supported tool of its kind. Before the creation of the C-SSRS, we had no reliable way to determine a person's imminent risk of suicide, which was a major barrier to prevention.

How do you know when to use it?

People who use the Columbia Protocol in the course of their jobs, like health-care and emergency workers, are trained to administer it routinely, so they don't have to overthink that deci-

sion. For example, primary-care physicians across the US now ask patients if they've experienced any suicidal thoughts as part of annual checkups, treating it as a vital sign. First responders in hundreds of US cities and around the world use the tool to triage people who are in distress and identify those who actually need to be taken to the emergency room. Studies show that such efforts connect large numbers of suicidal people to urgent psychiatric care they wouldn't otherwise receive.

I encourage people to use the questionnaire at home or on the job, whenever someone is acting unusually or showing signs of depression — which can include irritability, social withdrawal, anxiety, and loss of energy, as well as sadness — or even when meeting a stranger who's obviously in despair. Once, while giving a talk to Connecticut state officials about the C-SSRS, I was told by a Veterans Affairs official about a janitor who'd used it to save the life of a veteran. And I've been told by parents — including the director of nursing at a major New York City hospital and a border-control official in Texas — that they saved the lives of their own children

with the tool. I can't tell you how many stories like that I've heard.

How do you broach the subject, exactly?

Be clear and direct. Many of us are afraid that if we ask someone if they're suicidal, we'll upset or embarrass them and somehow make the situation worse. In fact, we've found that most people who are suffering suicidal thoughts want help — they want someone to ask how they are, to listen to them, to express concern. It actually relieves their distress. We hear this over and over from people who have survived suicide attempts. Every situation is different, obviously. But as long as you approach the person gently and respectfully, and initiate the conversation in a discreet manner so that no one else overhears, there's little reason to worry about offending them.

If someone is at imminent risk, you should bring them to a hospital?

Yes, hospital emergency rooms and many other types of medical facilities are equipped to handle psychiatric crises. You can also dial 911 and wait with the person until an ambulance arrives. Just don't leave them alone. I should say that going to the hospital is necessary in only about 1 percent of instances when the Columbia Protocol is used. It's more common for the screening process to result in a recommendation to connect the person to counseling or a hotline.

What are some other common misconceptions about suicide?

I think people often assume that someone who's lost the desire to live is always going to feel that way, and that their efforts to intervene may not make a difference in the long run. But research shows that more than 90 percent of people who survive a suicide attempt will not go on to take their own lives, and most are suicidal for only a short time. The main cause of suicide, after all, is depression, which is a heritable and treatable medical condition. So by helping someone through a suicidal crisis, you are saving their life.

Another misconception is that by talking to someone about suicide you'll put the idea into their head and help bring about that outcome. People worry about this especially with children. But again, research shows it isn't true. Madelyn Gould '80PH, a Columbia psychiatry professor who helped develop the protocol, published a seminal study on this matter in 2005, demonstrating that asking teenagers about suicide does not cause them to be suicidal. Multiple studies have since backed up her findings.



Kelly Posner Gerstenhaber

You said that suicide rates are still climbing for people of color. What's behind this?

It's well-documented that people of color in the US confront a variety of stressors that put them at increased risk of anxiety and depression. Encountering prejudice on a regular basis, whether this involves unintended microaggressions at school or in the workplace or more overt acts of racism, takes an extraordinary mental toll on people. On top of this, people of color are more likely to be economically disadvantaged, which can be a source of stress and limit their access to mental-health services.

How big a problem is teen suicide?

Suicide is now the leading cause of death for adolescent girls and the second-leading cause of death among all Americans aged ten to fourteen and twenty-five to thirty-four. Thousands of teenagers kill themselves annually in the US, as do

hundreds of children under the age of fourteen. It's not unheard of now for kids as young as five, six, or seven to intentionally end their own lives.

This is one result of a much larger mental-health crisis that's been unfolding among American kids, considering that their rates of mood disorders have been rising for decades. Experts often blame social media, since it leads kids to spend less time in the company of friends and can heighten feelings of social inadequacy and loneliness while also creating new opportunities for bullying. What's clear is that our society has been slow to respond to the problem. Too little money is invested in suicide-prevention programs in schools; too few psychologists and psychiatrists specialize in treating childhood depression; and too little space is available for depressed or suicidal youths in psychiatric clinics.

Perhaps our biggest failure is that we've denied the scope of the problem. Another one of my colleagues, the Columbia psychiatrist and author Andrew Solomon, wrote a devastating *New Yorker* article about this recently, describing how clinicians and parents alike often miss signs of suicidal thinking in young people because the prospect of children killing themselves is so unfathomable to us. But it's happening. And to stop it, we have to talk to our kids about it.

Can the Columbia Protocol be used with children?

Yes, we've developed many versions of the Columbia Protocol for use with different populations, including one that's appropriate for children as young as four or five. It rewords the questions, for example asking, "Have you ever thought about how to make yourself not alive anymore?" and "Have you ever thought about how you would make that happen?" Parents are often skeptical that children so young understand the concept of suicide — but they do. Research also shows that small but significant numbers of preschoolers suffer from clinical depression, although they're rarely diagnosed and treated.

What impact have your efforts had?

The Columbia Protocol is helping to save lives. The US Armed Forces have adopted the C-SSRS, and the Marine Corps, after promoting the tool's use by service members, spouses, chaplains, attorneys, and others as part of a broad public-health initiative in 2014, reduced suicides among active-duty personnel by 22 percent in one year. The Air Force has had similar success.

My team and I also work with a lot of communities, in the US and abroad, to tailor the Columbia Protocol to specific at-risk populations. For example, we've partnered with educators and police officers in Schenectady, New York, to help them identify adolescent girls who are at risk of suicide after being recruited into gangs and then feeling trapped in their circumstances. We've also worked with government officials in Saudi Arabia who intend to bring the tool to people throughout the Arab world, with an initial focus on reducing suicide rates among women and girls.

Once someone is identified as being suicidal, what are the treatment options?

Our most powerful tools in fighting major depression, and thus suicide, are antidepressant medications such as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, or SSRIs. These drugs, which include Prozac, Celexa, and Zoloft, were once suspected to *cause* suicidal behavior in young people and in some adults. But years of careful analysis, including research that I led, has shown that this isn't true. SSRIs are safe and effective and have saved countless lives, especially when combined with cognitive-behavioral therapy or talk therapy.

For people who don't respond to standard treatments, there are new therapeutic approaches such as the use of psychoactive drugs like ketamine and psilocybin to help break negative thought patterns. Groundbreaking studies on the clinical potential of these substances have been conducted at Columbia University Irving Medical Center.

Columbia's psychiatry department is also home to the Silvio O. Conte Center

for Suicide Prevention, led by J. John Mann '88GSAS, who helped create the Columbia Protocol. At the Conte Center, researchers are investigating the genetic and neurochemical roots of suicidal behavior in order to lay the groundwork for future treatment breakthroughs, while also studying the logistics of how best to deliver care. For example, research by Columbia psychologist Barbara Stanley has demonstrated the importance of having a personalized support plan in place for patients who are discharged from a hospital or psychiatric-care facility after having been suicidal. She's shown that giving patients written reminders about the coping strategies they can use when they feel distressed and about who to call if they need help can dramatically reduce the risk of suicide in that post-discharge period.

Do you see a connection between rates of gun ownership and suicide?

Yes, of course. More than half of all gun deaths in the US are suicides. And we know that having an easy means to kill oneself makes people more likely to do it. This is why suicide-prevention programs put protective barriers on bridges and rooftops — because it's proven that by restricting access to a means of suicide, you save lives, since most suicidal urges are temporary. If millions of Americans keep guns in their homes, it stands to reason that more people will have an available means to commit suicide.

There's also a connection here to mass shootings. Studies have shown that many perpetrators of mass shootings in the US have a history of suicidal thoughts and behaviors, although their family and friends often recognize the warning signs only in hindsight. It's possible that if we implemented suicide-screening programs more widely and connected more people with the mental-health services they need, we could prevent some of these tragedies.

Adult men still account for more than half of all suicides in the US. What can be done to help them?

The biggest obstacle to lowering suicide rates is the stigma that still exists around mental illness, and the idea that you're weak if you ask for help. Men are quite susceptible to this notion. They're much less likely to seek treatment for depression and four times as likely to kill themselves. We're working with leaders in a number of male-dominated professions to encourage workers to speak with their colleagues about suicide using the Columbia Protocol. We've met with construction workers, firefighters, police officers, border-protection agents, airline pilots, and professional baseball players. Our message to them is "Some of your buddies are suffering in silence. Talk to them and let them know they're not alone." — *David J. Craig*

HOW TO USE THE COLUMBIA PROTOCOL		
Always ask questions 1 and 2.	Past Month	
1) Have you wished you were dead or wished you could go to sleep and not wake up?		
2) Have you actually had any thoughts about killing yourself?		
If YES to 2, ask questions 3, 4, 5, and 6. If NO to 2, skip to question 6.		
3) Have you been thinking about how you might do this?		
4) Have you had these thoughts and had some intention of acting on them?	High Risk	
5) Have you started to work out or worked out the details of how to kill yourself? Did you intend to carry out this plan?	High Risk	
Always ask question 6.	Lifetime	Past 3 Months
6) Have you done anything, started to do anything, or prepared to do anything to end your life? <i>Examples: Collected pills, obtained a gun, gave away valuables, wrote a will or suicide note, held a gun but changed your mind, cut yourself, tried to hang yourself, etc.</i>		High Risk
<p>Any YES indicates that someone should seek behavioral health care. However, if the answer to 4, 5, or 6 is YES, get immediate help: Call or text 988, call 911, or go to the emergency room. STAY WITH THEM until they can be evaluated.</p>		

Reporting on the Margins

Five digital-news platforms led by alumni journalists are spotlighting human-rights issues, bringing communities together, and elevating underrepresented voices

By Julia Joy



Journalists at California's San Quentin State Prison have contributed to Prison Journalism Project.

Prison Journalism Project

Publishing articles by incarcerated reporters

“OVER TWO MILLION PEOPLE in the US are behind bars — that’s as many people as live in Botswana,” says Shaheen Pasha ’00JRN, a longtime journalist who covers mass incarceration and the US justice system. “Imagine the population of an entire country with a very limited voice in the media and no real way to communicate with the outside world.” Pasha is on a mission to provide that voice through Prison Journalism Project (PJP), a nonprofit that trains incarcerated people to be journalists, then publishes their articles, essays, and poems online.

“We’re trying to create the first nationwide network of prison journalists and give them the tools to be part of the conversation around criminal-justice reform,” explains Pasha, who cofounded the organization in 2020 and serves as its co-executive director.

To date, PJP has published close to two thousand articles by incarcerated reporters at nearly two hundred correctional institutions across the United States. The stories include both hard news, such as reports on COVID rates and violence among inmates, and moving personal essays, such as reflections on the sorrow of spending holidays behind bars. Articles are submitted by mail or through closed e-mail systems, transcribed by volunteers, edited by PJP staff, and published on the organization’s website. Thanks to donations, the nonprofit recently started paying all writers between \$25 and \$75 per story. “It doesn’t sound like a lot, but \$50 pays for a month’s worth of items at the commissary, and it’s a huge, huge deal to be paid for an article as a professional writer,” Pasha says.

In addition to publishing stories, the organization offers training called PJP J-School that teaches students how to write articles. Participants are given lessons in recording personal observations, interviewing, collecting data, reporting news, and other key components of journalism. Because of the pandemic, most instruction has taken place through mailed course materials or over Zoom, although some classes are led by incarcerated instructors inside prisons. Whether or not PJP’s students use their training to become journalists, Pasha believes the lessons they learn are useful and relevant. “They can take the communication, interview, research, writing, and social skills and go into other careers,” she says.

Corey Minatani, who wrote for PJP while serving time in Washington State, says working with the organization gave him not only valuable skills but newfound confidence. “Before, I wasn’t sure I had much to offer in the field of journalism,” he says. “Once I published my first article, about my facility’s humane treatment of inmates during COVID-19, many inmates and several corrections staff thanked me for writing the piece.” He introduced PJP to several of his fellow prisoners and encouraged them to contribute. “I can’t describe the joy and sense of hope when a mentee of mine convinces himself to write and submit,” says Minatani, who since his release has volunteered with PJP while completing a doctorate in theology.

Before founding PJP, Pasha, a Brooklyn native, spent more than a decade reporting in the US and Middle East; in 2006, she led CNN Money’s coverage of the Enron trial. “I was covering law and courts, but I never really thought much about what happens to people after cases end,” says Pasha. She started to take an interest in prison journalism after a close friend received a life sentence. “The first time I went to visit



Shaheen Pasha

him, I was talking to him — this person I’d grown up with and hung out with since I was a teenager — through a dirty plexiglass window, and he said to me, ‘Shaheen, everybody has a story in here; you’ll just never hear any of them.’”

His words resonated, and years later, when Pasha joined the faculty of the University of Massachusetts Amherst, she began volunteering at the nearby Hampshire County Jail, teaching inmates writing and reporting. “That was when I realized that this should be a national initiative,” she says. Today, in addition to running PJP, Pasha is an assistant professor of journalism at Penn State University and teaches at the nearby Centre County Correctional Facility. She leads Penn State’s chapter of the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program, which brings undergraduates inside a local correctional facility to learn journalism alongside incarcerated students.

Pasha ultimately hopes that the unique perspectives of PJP participants will enrich mainstream reporting and influence public policy on criminal justice. “We want to provide the opportunity for people who have actually lived through these experiences to have room at the table and be a part of the conversation,” she says. “Right now, a lot of people who have never stepped foot inside a prison are making very big decisions about what happens in prisons.”

prisonjournalismproject.org

Documented

Capturing the lives of immigrants in New York City

LATE LAST YEAR, numerous beneficiaries of the Excluded Workers Fund, a New York State relief program designed to help undocumented workers during the pandemic, realized that money was disappearing from their bank accounts. One woman noticed that over \$6,000 had been spent at high-end online retailers, and after reporting the fraudulent charges, she sent a tip to Documented, a nonprofit digital-news site dedicated to immigrant issues in New York City.

The staff started investigating, and soon other victims came forward. “We found that a network of scammers had installed cameras and card-reading devices on ATMs around the city,” says Max Siegelbaum ’16JRN, Documented’s cofounder and co-executive director. “We were able to break the story because of the level of communication and trust we had built with our audience,” he adds.

An investigative journalist and New York City native, Siegelbaum founded Documented in 2018 with his former Columbia Journalism School peer Mazin Sidahmed ’16JRN. He says they came up with the idea largely in response to the election of Donald Trump, who at the time was shaping his presidency around tightened border security and a crackdown on illegal immigration. “There were huge changes happening in US cities that,



Documented photographer Rommel H. Ojeda captures a rally in support of the Excluded Workers Fund.

because of the decline in local news, few outlets were really covering,” explains Sidahmed, himself an immigrant from Sudan who grew up in the United Kingdom. “We decided to do something to provide sustained, local coverage around immigration.”

Sidahmed and Siegelbaum, both of whom had extensive experience reporting on immigration and human rights for traditional newspapers, began investigating everything from immigrant detentions to predatory bail bonds and published some of the resulting articles in Spanish as well as English. “We wanted to make sure that the people at the center of the stories were also reading the stories,” says Sidahmed.

After its launch, the nonprofit undertook an extensive study of the news-consumption habits of New York’s immigrants. “We learned that undocumented Spanish speakers wanted a news site that provided access to resources and that portrayed them with more agency, not just as victims and criminals. We also found that most got their news

through informal networks,” says Sidahmed. Since 2019, Documented has distributed a Spanish-language newsletter called *Documented Semanal* through the messaging platform WhatsApp. It invites readers to send tips and ask questions of immigration lawyers or other experts.

As crime, poverty, and other hardships continue to affect many immigrants and refugees in the New York area, Sidahmed and Siegelbaum are in the process of expanding coverage of the Chinese, Caribbean, and other ethnic communities. They are looking closely at issues surrounding labor and housing, as well as the effects of climate change on immigrant neighborhoods. “Last year we had this horrible storm where people drowned in their basement apartments,” says Siegelbaum. “I don’t think the city has really come to terms with that.”

Sidahmed and Siegelbaum credit the tools of digital journalism with Documented’s ability to reach and expand a niche audience. “It’s lowered the barrier to entry, since we don’t deal with printing fees and distribution,” says Siegelbaum. “We’re also able to experiment with different forms of storytelling and harness the ways people communicate, whether through smartphones, WhatsApp, audio, visuals, or Twitter.” Plus, as a nonprofit, Documented is able to help fill a void left by a decline in local reporting. “The degradation of local news impacts our democracy and affects public services,” says Sidahmed. “It’s been really exciting to not just create local news but reimagine what it can be.” documentedny.com



Max Siegelbaum and Mazin Sidahmed



TOP: ROMMEL H. OJEDA FOR DOCUMENTED; BOTTOM: FELIPE DE LA HOZ

Sahan Journal

Shedding light on ethnic minorities in the Twin Cities

AS A YOUNG REPORTER working in Minnesota, Mukhtar M. Ibrahim '17JRN was quick to notice that local journalism didn't capture the richness of his Somali community. Even though the Minneapolis–St. Paul metropolitan area is home to the largest population of Somali-Americans in the United States, they only seemed to make the news when they were involved in murders and other tragedies, says Ibrahim, who was born in Somalia, grew up in Ethiopia and Kenya, and immigrated to Minnesota in 2005. “You still don't see much on-the-ground coverage around topics like education, health, politics, and civic life — basically, how people are going about their lives.”

Ibrahim is trying to fill that gap as the founder and executive director of *Sahan Journal*, a nonprofit digital news site that reports on ethnic and racial minorities in the Twin Cities. “Our mission is to provide comprehensive coverage of how these communities are changing and defining what it means to be a Minnesotan,” says Ibrahim, who started the organization in 2019 after attending Columbia Journalism School and working for nearly a decade at local Minneapolis news outlets.

Named after a Somali word for “pioneer,” *Sahan Journal* was originally

designed to focus on immigrants and refugees but now strives to cover all the region's communities of color — including people who are Asian-American, Latino, Black, and Native American — which represent an increasing number of Minnesotans. “As more people deepen their roots in this state,” says Ibrahim, “we want to make sure we are capturing the voices and experiences of those who call Minnesota home.”

Along with articles focused on urban development, immigrants involved in government, and public education, *Sahan Journal* profiles Twin Cities residents who might not otherwise make the news. Recent examples include a Somali-born entrepreneur who created a brand of bamboo toothbrushes and a former refugee in the fashion industry.

Since the start of the pandemic, *Sahan Journal* has also published useful tips about COVID-19 prevention and has made an effort to reduce skepticism about vaccines (for example, dispelling rumors among Muslims that the shots contain pork). “When the vaccine was announced, we tried to make information as accessible as possible by publishing content in English, Hmong, Somali, and Spanish, by collaborating with local community figures, by partnering with nonprofit organizations, and by using social media to amplify our information,” says Ibrahim, who frequently joins forces with traditional



Mukhtar M. Ibrahim

news outlets like Minnesota Public Radio to bring *Sahan Journal's* stories to a wider audience.

Ibrahim says the trust *Sahan Journal* has fostered with local communities of color provides the publication with an unusual degree of access to breaking news and eyewitness accounts. After a Somali-American man named Dolal Idd died in a shootout with the police in late 2020, it was *Sahan Journal* that broke the story of how, afterward, officers raided the home of Idd's parents in the middle of the night, bound their wrists, and yelled at their younger children before informing them of their son's death. “The family invited us into their living room and told us what happened,” says Ibrahim, who co-reported and cowrote the resulting article. “In response to our coverage, the county sheriff's office took the unusual step of releasing the bodycam footage of the raid.”

Right now, Ibrahim is fundraising to expand his small staff in the hopes of covering regions outside of Minneapolis and St. Paul. “As more people move out of cities because of a lack of housing or opportunities, we want to capture life in rural areas as well,” he says.

Ibrahim emphasizes that being a nonprofit supported by grants and donations enables *Sahan Journal* to focus on bringing under-covered stories to light without having to cater to commercial tastes and depend entirely on advertising or subscription revenue. “The nonprofit model allows us to be mission-driven,” he says. “It valorizes the independence of journalism.” sahanjournal.com



BOTTOM: JANDA GREY EAGLE / SAHAN JOURNAL

Mohamed Malim, a former refugee and fashion entrepreneur, was recently profiled in *Sahan Journal*.

Economic Hardship Reporting Project

Supporting freelance journalists covering poverty

IN THE UNITED STATES, working as a freelance journalist often means dealing with unpredictable assignments, delayed payments from clients, and other challenges. Many people barely make ends meet, and the problem has only gotten worse in recent years, says Alissa Quart '97JRN, the executive director of the Economic Hardship Reporting Project (EHRP), a nonprofit that hires struggling journalists to report on economic inequality.



Alissa Quart

“Around thirty thousand newspaper reporters lost their jobs between 2008 and 2015,” explains Quart, herself a journalist and poet. “Media tends to be made by rich people, for middle-class people, about poor people. We exist in part to change that equation so more of the people writing about the working poor or struggling middle class are themselves working poor or struggling middle class.”

EHRP was founded in 2012 by the writer and activist Barbara Ehrenreich in response to the 2008 financial crisis and the recession that followed. Inspired by the Federal Writers’ Project, which created jobs for thousands of unemployed writers during the Great Depression, EHRP hires journalists and other creative professionals who are in



Xavier Garcia was featured in a 2021 *Mother Jones* article by Alissa Quart on the rise of worker cooperatives.

need of work to cover the effects of poverty in the United States. Around two-thirds of contributors are women, and almost 40 percent are people of color. “We help freelance reporters, particularly from marginalized communities, earn a living and also be read, heard, and recognized,” says Quart.

Deborah Jian Lee '08JRN, a former Columbia Journalism School instructor and an editor at EHRP, says the nonprofit’s mission resonates with some of her own experiences as a freelancer. “What appealed to me was how the organization supports independent journalists in their work, gives them a lot of freedom, and covers subject areas that are often underreported in America,” says Lee.

EHRP’s reporting takes a variety of forms, including investigative articles, personal essays, TV segments, documentaries, podcasts, illustrations, and poems. The organization partners with many established media outlets — from the *New York Times* to *Columbia Journalism Review* — to co-publish the content, in addition to featuring it on EHRP’s own website. It’s a way to reach larger audiences and “people who aren’t necessarily tuned in to poverty-related material,” explains Quart.

Last year, EHRP produced an essay that appeared on the home page of the *Washington Post*. In it, writer Bobbi Dempsey, a reporting fellow with EHRP, wrote about her hearing-impaired mother’s inability to obtain new hearing aids because the devices

were not covered by Medicaid or Medicare. Other notable EHRP work includes the podcast *Going for Broke*, which features interviews with people who have fallen on hard times, and the 2016 Emmy-winning documentary *Jackson*, about low-income women navigating abortion access in Mississippi. Many projects focus on rural communities in the Midwest and South, where local news outlets have been disappearing at a disproportionate rate.

For Quart, who joined EHRP in 2013 and, like Lee, used to teach at Columbia Journalism School, the nonprofit was a natural career fit. “I’ve always been interested in where the economy and money intersect with people’s lives,” says Quart, who has written five nonfiction books, including the forthcoming *Bootstrapped: Liberating Ourselves from the American Dream*.

Through their work with EHRP and as independent journalists, Quart and Lee strive to bring empathy and nuance to the subject of poverty. “It’s often hard for people to understand how broader systems impact inequality, so my goal is to tell human stories,” says Lee. Quart believes that giving cash-strapped journalists opportunities to report on the hardships that personally affect them can make for more enriched reporting. “This has been a terrible period in American history, and we’ve developed fatigue around suffering,” she says. “I think that in order to make stories resonant, they have to feel new and evocative and lived-in.” economichardship.org

TOP: STACY KRANTZ; BOTTOM: CHARLIE GROSS

Epicenter-NYC

Serving Queens and beyond with news it can use

AS A RESIDENT of Jackson Heights, Queens, a bustling, densely populated neighborhood known for its multiculturalism, S. Mitra Kalita '00JRN was devastated by what the pandemic did to her community. "What I love about Jackson Heights is what made it the perfect breeding ground for COVID-19," says Kalita, a veteran journalist with more than twenty-five years of newsroom experience. "At one point it was known as the epicenter of the epicenter."

In their many years of living in the neighborhood, Kalita and her husband, artist Nitin Mukul, had established themselves as trusted community members. So it was no surprise that when the pandemic struck, the couple began receiving numerous questions about where to find masks, how to apply for Paycheck Protection Program loans, and other practical matters.

Kalita, who at the time was a senior vice president at CNN overseeing the network's digital arm, says she didn't feel that the mainstream media was providing the kinds of useful, everyday tips that could genuinely help her community. "Articles would tell a story, but they wouldn't tell you the solution to a



S. Mitra Kalita

problem or where to get resources," she explains. In response to what she calls a "dearth of information and communication," Kalita and Mukul founded Epicenter-NYC, a community-focused nonprofit media platform designed to address the utilitarian concerns of a diverse body of New Yorkers.

Epicenter-NYC, whose motto is "Doing good for the hood," started as a newsletter in the spring of 2020 with an e-mail list of around fifty people, most of them Jackson Heights residents. Since then, it has added thousands of subscribers from across the city, introduced a website, launched a weekly podcast, and started a second newsletter, called *The Unmuted*, targeted at parents of public-school students. In addition to covering the evolving pandemic and other breaking news, Epicenter-NYC

spotlights local businesses, profiles area artists, and explains how new city policies and government budget decisions may affect New Yorkers.

Kalita and her staff also connect readers to vital resources such as immigration lawyers and information on filing health-insurance claims. When the COVID-19 vaccine was introduced in early 2021, Epicenter-NYC helped many Queens residents schedule their shots online and even organized transportation to vaccination sites. "The rollout was so bumpy and confusing," says Kalita. Many people "either didn't have Internet or were working several jobs and couldn't find appointments that fit into their schedules."

Last year, in an effort to reach more readers, Kalita, who is Indian-American and grew up in Long Island, Puerto Rico, and New Jersey, cofounded URL Media, a network of news outlets run by journalists of color that cross-publish each other's content and share audiences. (*Sahan Journal* and *Documented*, both featured in this article, are members.) The for-profit business also offers recruiting and coaching services for media companies seeking to develop more racially diverse workforces.

Kalita says that all URL Media members, including Epicenter-NYC, are driven by a commitment to serve their audiences in practical ways. "I think that for a long time, media outlets have felt that knowledge alone is power, meaning we'll tell you things and then you'll know," she explains. "But the actual delivery of a service hand-in-hand with information is what can transform power. You can tell people the lottery for kindergarten enrollment is open, or here's how your child can take the test for a gifted-and-talented program, but if someone doesn't read English or missed the e-mail alert from city officials, then that information isn't really empowering. What Epicenter-NYC and the rest of us are trying to do is put more information in more places and make that information actionable." 📌

epicenter-nyc.com



TOP: GREG KESSLER; BOTTOM: TAYLOR BRANDON

Epicenter-NYC has reported extensively on the evolving pandemic in New York City.



Pollen Problems

Seasonal allergies are getting worse. Columbia researchers explain why and suggest how to fight back.

By David J. Craig

If you've experienced hay fever for the first time recently or noticed your symptoms getting worse each year, you're not alone. Physicians say that the past few allergy seasons in the US have been unusually severe, with record numbers of people seeking treatment for a persistent runny nose, sneezing, and itchy eyes.

"Outdoor allergies are certainly becoming more prevalent," says David A. Gudis '03CC, an ear, nose, and throat doctor at Columbia University Irving Medical Center. And hay fever, which occurs when the body's immune system overreacts to the pollen produced by flowering plants, can be quite serious, Gudis says, "causing sleep problems, difficulties at school or work, social challenges, and even anxiety and depression. For many people, it's more than just a nuisance."

So what is behind the uptick in cases? Columbia experts say that a multitude of environmental and social factors are at play, but climate change is certainly a factor. Studies have shown that in many parts of the world, including the northeastern US, people are now being exposed to more pollen because rising temperatures and an excess of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere are causing some of nature's most prolific pollen producers, like ragweed and wild grasses, to grow more robustly, expand their habitats, and flower more months of the year.

"Weeds and grasses that generate lots of pollen tend to be physically resilient, genetically diverse, and extremely adap-

tive," says Lewis Ziska, a professor of environmental health sciences at Columbia's Mailman School of Public Health.

Last year, Ziska published a comprehensive study showing that pollen season in North America now lasts three weeks longer than it did in 1990 and generates about 20 percent more pollen. "People are breathing in pollen for longer periods of time, and they're exposed to more of it," he says, noting that pollen season in the Northeast now stretches from March to November, with the main pollen producers being trees in the spring, grasses in the summer, and ragweed in the autumn.

Climate change is also altering the physiological structure of plants in ways that can make them more allergenic. In one study, Ziska and his colleagues discovered that ragweed plants are responding to the increasing amounts of carbon in the earth's atmosphere by producing pollen grains that are covered in more of the spiky surface proteins that the human immune system mistakes for signs of danger. Other research groups have since confirmed that some tree pollens are being similarly altered.

Thicker clouds of pollen wafting over our homes, parks, and offices could have profound public-health ramifications. Besides causing hay fever, pollen has been shown to exacerbate asthma, a condition that is typically triggered by indoor allergens like dust mites and pet dander but that is sensitive to a wide range of airborne irritants. And last year, in a study

Pollen grains colored and magnified about five hundred times.

DARTMOUTH COLLEGE ELECTRON MICROSCOPE FACILITY

using medical and environmental data from thirty-one countries, Ziska and his colleagues showed that in 2020, in weeks when pollen concentrations were especially high, more COVID-19 infections were reported.

“It seems that the presence of pollen in the respiratory tract causes subtle changes to cells that can make them more susceptible to viral infection, even in people who show no signs of being allergic to pollen,” says Ziska, who notes that additional research is needed to confirm the finding.

“For the immune system to develop properly, we have to resist the temptation to interfere with it too much. We have to trust the body ...”

Ziska hopes that his team’s work will ultimately lead to the development of computer models to predict how future climate conditions may influence airborne-pollen concentrations, and thus human health, in particular regions of the world. “We know that warming temperatures are enabling ragweed and other species to expand northward into the upper Midwest, Canada, Eastern Europe, and other parts of the globe, causing longer and more intense pollen seasons,” he says. “But more research is needed to predict how people in these regions will be affected in the future.”

Ziska says there is also an urgent need to improve pollen monitoring, both by adding more collection stations and by automating the process of identifying and counting individual pollen grains, which are tasks currently done by hand. “Distinguishing between pollen species is difficult, time-consuming work, and there’s currently a single person doing this for all of New York City,” he says. “We need to create artificial-intelligence systems to handle some of it.”

Hay fever, or seasonal allergic rhinitis, as it is medically known, was first described by the tenth-century Persian physician Rhazes but did not become common until the late nineteenth

century, and then primarily among the educated and professional classes in Europe and the United States. Today it is most prevalent in industrialized nations, especially in urban and suburban settings, where it afflicts up to 40 percent of children and between 10 and 30 percent of adults. This has led many scientists to believe that the condition’s ubiquity is an unintended consequence of modern standards of sanitation and cleanliness, particularly in the context of child-rearing. According to this popular theory, known as the

hygiene hypothesis, shielding young children from bacteria, viruses, and other pathogens can backfire by depriving the immune system of crucial on-the-job training, thus hindering its development.

“For most of human history, children encountered vast amounts of microbes from a very young age, and these early exposures seem to be critical for teaching the immune system what types of substances to attack and what kinds to ignore,” says Donna Farber, a Columbia immunologist and a proponent of the theory. “When the quantity or variety of these exposures is altered, the immune system can become dysregulated and fail to function properly later on.”

Hay fever is just one manifestation of an overly sanitized upbringing, proponents of the theory say. Studies have shown that asthma and autoimmune disorders like lupus and rheumatoid arthritis, which occur when a confused immune system attacks the body’s own tissues, disproportionately strike the same well-off urban and suburban populations that are highly prone to pollen allergies.

“Children who grow up on farms or who have lots of siblings — conditions that tend to increase one’s exposure to germs — have been found to have more robust immune systems compared to

those raised in cleaner environments,” says Farber, who studies how the immune system develops over a lifetime.

None of this means that children should be licking handrails or neglecting to wash before dinner. Modern hygienic practices do protect kids from serious disease, after all. And Farber explains that there may be a limit to how much we can shield ourselves from immunological disorders through our individual lifestyle choices, since our vulnerability to such conditions is partly the result of fundamental changes that the human body has undergone over the past two centuries.

She points out, for example, that the part of our immune system that is prone to attacking pollen and other allergens evolved originally to combat parasitic worms that nearly all humans once had in their guts. “Now this part of our immune system is underutilized and reacting to other things inappropriately,” she says. “If we still had worms, it’s possible that fewer of us would develop seasonal allergies and other immunological problems. But this is the trade-off we’ve made.”

That said, there are reasonable steps that parents can take to promote their children’s immunological health. Farber recommends that parents encourage kids to spend time outdoors every day, play in the dirt, pet animals, and socialize regularly with friends in person. “You don’t want to take crazy risks, but you don’t want to prevent a child from coming into contact with common bacteria and viruses, because the immune system needs those exposures to develop,” she says. “In my own team’s research, we’ve observed that there’s a brief window of time, from infancy until about age six, when the immune system is extraordinarily dynamic and primed to form strong memories about the different kinds of microbes it’s encountering. When this process is successful, it is breathtaking to see. Yet for the immune system to develop properly, we have to resist the temptation to interfere with it too much. We have to trust the body to do what it knows how to do.”

For those condemned to months of sneezing, wheezing, and sniffing each pollen season, there are three main paths to relief, according to Gudis.

“The first is to minimize exposure to pollen, which is difficult to do but not impossible,” he says. “I recommend that allergy sufferers keep their windows closed when pollen concentrations are at their peak, use air conditioners or HEPA filters that can capture tiny particulates, and bathe or shower each night before bed. Pollen grains are minuscule and will stick to your hair, skin, and clothing, and you want to wash them off before they contaminate your bedding.” Nasal-irrigation devices, like neti pots, are helpful in washing out allergens, he says. “You also should limit your exposure to smog and other forms of air pollution, because once the immune system is primed to react to one airborne allergen, like pollen, other irritants can trigger the same inflammation. So it’s possible to expe-

rience allergic symptoms even in the absence of pollen.”

The second strategy for beating seasonal allergies, Gudis says, is to take medications like nasal steroid sprays or antihistamines such as Claritin or Allegra, which block the cascade of inflammation that your body dispatches to fight off pollen. If over-the-counter and prescription medications don’t work, the next line of defense is to get tested by an allergist to identify the specific allergens you are sensitive to and then consider receiving immunotherapy shots (or oral drops) that gradually retrain the body to respond more calmly.

“Allergy shots work by exposing the body to progressively larger doses of the exact things you’re allergic to,” Gudis says. “This teaches one part of the immune system to dispense with those allergens quickly before the rest of the system launches a full-fledged inflammatory response against them. This can significantly reduce the patient’s symptoms.”

In recent years, major improvements have been made in the accuracy of allergy tests, as well as in the efficacy and safety of immunotherapies, according to Gudis. He says that researchers are also making progress in developing new therapies for some of the most severe, treatment-resistant forms of allergic rhinitis, which can be associated with sinus problems and the formation of obstructive nasal polyps, in addition to other medical complications.

“One promising area is in the development of monoclonal antibodies that are designed to inhibit the body’s inflammatory response against allergens,” says Gudis. He notes that several such medications, part of a class of novel therapies called “biologics” that consist of natural biological entities, are currently in clinical trials for use against debilitating seasonal allergies. “So while the public-health threat posed by allergies is growing, we’re also devising more powerful and individualized therapeutic options.”

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Fossilized footprints suggest that dinosaurs roamed through snow in northern China.

Jurassic parka: How dinosaurs survived the cold

We tend to think of dinosaurs as living in tropical rainforests, and for good reason — the Triassic and Jurassic periods in which they came to rule the planet were generally hot and steamy, with jungles covering much of the landscape.

But a new study by Columbia researchers in *Science Advances* suggests that some of the earliest dinosaurs could also tolerate cold weather, which may have given them an evolutionary advantage when the earth's climate occasionally fluctuated. The evidence? Numerous dinosaur footprints recently discovered in northern China in layers of rock that also contain geological signatures of ice.

"This is the first empirical evidence that dinosaurs endured freezing temperatures for prolonged periods, which could have major implications for our understanding of their behavior and evolution," says Paul Olsen, a geologist and paleontologist at Columbia's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory and the lead author of the paper.

The newly discovered footprints are from a variety of birdlike dinosaurs and date from between 206 million and 193 million years ago. Olsen and his colleagues found them

in China's Junggar Basin desert, which at the time the dinosaurs lived was situated on the northern edge of the supercontinent Pangaea, well above the Arctic Circle. Other dinosaur fossils have been found in such northern latitudes before, but until now scientists were uncertain if any dinosaurs had ever endured truly frigid conditions, because when they roamed the earth, even the polar regions were fairly temperate. "The planet had no ice caps back then, and forests grew all the way up to the North Pole," Olsen says. "So we weren't sure if dinosaurs had ever seen snow or ice. Now we know they did. The geological evidence suggests that the climate here was probably similar to what the northeastern US now experiences."

Olsen says that his team's study adds to a growing body of research that suggests dinosaurs were more complex and adaptable than we typically imagine. Fossils unearthed in recent years show that many non-avian dinosaurs, including iconic beasts like tyrannosaurids, were covered in feathers, probably for insulation, he notes. And studies have suggested that dinosaurs were likely warm-blooded, or capable of regulating their body temperature metabolically, which would have

provided additional protection against the cold. Olsen says that these traits would have served dinosaurs well on a planet that was extraordinarily hot overall by enabling them to avoid the tropics, with their extreme and unpredictable climatic patterns, in favor of temperate zones, where despite having to contend with seasonal winters they would have found more consistent food sources.

“We can tell from the fossil record that herbivores in particular loved the higher latitudes, where they would have munched on the leaves of conifers, ferns, and ginkgo trees all year round,” he says. “Many carnivores lived there too.”

In the new study, Olsen and his coauthors, who include fellow Columbia geologists Clara Chang, Dennis Kent ’74GSAS, and Sean Kinney ’21GSAS, argue that the dinosaurs’ tolerance for chilly temperatures may have been the secret to their nearly 150-million-year reign as the planet’s dominant land animals, enabling them to survive a major extinction event that occurred at the end of the Triassic period. At that time, convulsions of volcanic activity that accompanied the breakup of Pangaea spewed enormous amounts of gas into the earth’s atmosphere, and three-quarters of the world’s land and marine species vanished soon thereafter. The dinosaurs survived, and scientists have long debated why. Traditionally, paleontologists have thought that dinosaurs were able to withstand a sudden increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide and rising temperatures because they were well-suited to tropical climes. But the Columbia scientists offer a different hypothesis: they say that a haze of highly reflective sulfate aerosols emitted into the sky may have had a temporary cooling effect, which dinosaurs, with their feathers and sophisticated metabolisms, were unusually well-prepared for.

“Volcanic eruptions may have brought freezing temperatures to the tropics, which is where many of the extinctions of big, naked, un-feathered vertebrates seem to have occurred,” says Kent. “Whereas our fine feathered friends who were acclimated to cold temperatures did OK.”

Study reveals structural racism behind dirty water

Every year, millions of Americans who rely on public utility systems for drinking water are exposed to potentially dangerous levels of arsenic, uranium, lead, pesticides, bacteria, and other contaminants, according to publicly available data from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Efforts to identify and help communities at risk have been stymied because only a few

bia’s Mailman School of Public Health has dug more deeply into this issue, analyzing US census data against a decade’s worth of EPA water-monitoring records to reveal the sociodemographic characteristics of communities routinely exposed to certain pollutants. In a forthcoming paper, Nigra and her colleagues paint a troubling picture of race-and-ethnicity-based inequalities in water access. They reveal that in regions of the country where



Communities of color are likelier to have poor water quality, according to a new study.

in-depth, nationwide assessments of drinking-water quality in the United States have been conducted. One of the first, coauthored by Columbia engineer and hydrologist Upmanu Lall in 2018, found that Americans who live in low-income rural areas are the likeliest to have tainted tap water. But that study did not explore the racial and ethnic makeup of these communities — key information sought by environmental-justice advocates.

Now a team of researchers led by Anne Nigra ’20PH of Colum-

arsenic and uranium are abundant underground, counties with large Hispanic, Native American, and Black populations are more likely to be served by public water systems that consistently fail to meet federal safety standards. At particular risk, the researchers found, are people of color who depend on water systems that draw from aquifers in California, Nevada, Oregon, Kansas, Nebraska, and Oklahoma.

“It seems apparent that structural racism is at play,” says Nigra, an assistant professor

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of environmental-health policy. She notes that the association between racial and ethnic composition and water quality in US counties holds up even when controlling for residents' average income and other socioeconomic factors.

The Columbia researchers' new paper does not address how racial and ethnic biases may translate into poor water quality, but Nigra points to several possible mechanisms. She explains that state governments are primarily responsible for ensuring water quality and allocating infrastructure spending — undertakings that can create opportunities for the preferential treatment of white communities, whether such biases are conscious or not.

"States have wide latitude to decide how to allocate money for new water-treatment technologies and how aggressively to enforce violations with warning letters, site visits, or civil and criminal penalties, which can lead to selective enforcement," she says. "White communities might be more politically connected to regulatory agencies, and individual regulators who know these communities may be more responsive to their advocacy efforts around water. As a result, communities of color can end up experiencing significant water disparities."

Many questions about Americans' vulnerability to water contaminants remain. The Columbia team's new study examines only those EPA records pertaining to

inorganic chemicals — one of six categories of water contaminants the agency regulates. While lead and copper are also inorganic, the study does not analyze these exposures, because of limitations in the agency's data. Nor does the study address the health risks faced by the estimated twenty-three million Americans who get their water from private wells, which the EPA does not regulate and which are generally considered less safe than public water supplies.

But Nigra hopes that by showcasing the health risks faced by many Hispanic, Native American, and Black residents from chronic exposure to arsenic and uranium, she and her colleagues will help put pressure on federal

and state authorities to devote more resources to improving water quality in their communities. Such efforts could save lives, since earlier research by Nigra and Ana Navas-Acien, a Columbia physician-epidemiologist and a coauthor of the forthcoming paper, has shown that even small reductions in water arsenic levels nationwide would prevent hundreds of cancer deaths annually; uranium, meanwhile, has been linked to lung cancer, heart disease, and kidney damage.

"Ongoing efforts to improve water quality in America ought to be targeting the most highly exposed communities, and race and ethnicity need to be a part of that conversation," Nigra says.

Climate change endangers every child's health

Fatal cases of heat stroke. Diseases spread by mosquitoes migrating northward. Hunger brought on by crop failures. Psychological trauma from hurricanes, floods, and other extreme weather events. The public-health effects of climate change are irrefutable, so much so that more than two hundred medical journals recently issued a joint statement declaring global warming the greatest threat to human health worldwide. And while climate change affects everyone, studies show that kids bear the brunt of the harm.

"Children's bodies and minds are exquisitely sensitive, and we're finding that exposure to extreme weather and other climate hazards can disrupt their development in surprising ways, with potentially lifelong health consequences," says Frederica Perera '81PH,



Flooding in Pakistan.

'12SW, a professor of environmental health sciences at the Mailman School of Public Health and the founder of the Columbia Center for Children's Environmental Health.

In a recent review article in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, Perera and Stanford pediatrician Kari Nadeau show that millions of children around the world are experiencing physical or mental-health challenges at least partly

attributable to fossil-fuel emissions and global warming. Some casualties of climate change are heartbreakingly obvious. Thousands of kids have died in record-breaking floods. Many more have gone hungry because of persistent droughts. But if you look closer, you see more subtle and insidious effects. "The face of global warming is also the kid in California who's suffering anxiety following a wildfire, the child in Mexico who's unable to concentrate in school after a sleepless night in the stifling heat, and the teenager in Harlem using an inhaler to treat asthma," says Perera.

Deadly heat exposure, once a concern mainly for older adults, is also a threat. Perera points to a growing number of student-athletes who have died of heat exhaustion while competing, as well as more young children being hospitalized for heat stroke.

“Parents are often unaware of the risk, because they don’t recognize that children are less capable of regulating their body temperature,” she says.

Perera’s own research focuses on the effects of air pollution on early childhood development, and in her new book *Children’s Health and the Peril of Climate Change*, she warns that climate change acts as a “threat multiplier,” exacerbating the deleterious effects of air pollution. She notes that a child exposed to high concentrations of airborne pollutants in the womb (inhaled by the mother) or in infancy is already at increased risk of asthma, cognitive delays, and behavioral problems. But if a child who lacks access to clean air has had the added misfortune of being born to a woman who lived through an intense heat wave while pregnant, that child’s chances of developing health problems increase, studies suggest. The same is true of a baby whose mother endured an extraordinarily stressful event, like a climate disaster that forced her to flee her home during pregnancy.

“The fetus is particularly sensitive to changes in the mother’s body resulting from extreme heat and psychological stress, which along with air pollution can cause inflammation,” says Perera. “And it appears that these risk factors may interact synergistically.”

Children are uniquely vulnerable to environmental threats in part because they breathe more air relative to their body weight, which increases their sensitivity to air pollution, and in part because their bodies require more nutrients and fluids, which increases their susceptibility to malnutrition and dehydration. Children are also more prone to psychological trauma following extreme weather. And when climate disasters do strike, they often impact families in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas because they’re likely to be prone to flooding, oppressive heat, pollution, and other dangers. “Those who have the fewest resources to cope and recover are often the most at risk,” Perera says. “It’s a downward spiral.”



Where tigers still roam

There are fewer than five thousand wild tigers left in the world, and more than half of them are in India, which in recent years has taken aggressive steps to protect its big cats and their habitats. But in trying to save these iconic creatures from extinction, Indian authorities are finding that the needs of tigers are coming into direct conflict with those of humans. This is because a tiger, in order to properly feed itself and avoid inbreeding, cannot be confined to a single nature preserve, of which India now has more than a dozen, but must be free to roam between them, inevitably passing through forests and grasslands that are undergoing rapid human development.

How can India support these animals while limiting the risks they pose to people?

A multi-institutional group of ecologists led by Ruth DeFries, a co-founding dean of the Columbia Climate School, recently published a study that could help Indian officials establish safer and more sustainable development policies by identifying tracts of land outside nature preserves that tigers

are likely to use for travel. The authors say that their study, which synthesizes massive amounts of ecological and geospatial data that their teams have previously published separately, will enable officials to make better-informed decisions about where to locate infrastructure like roads, railways, mines, reservoirs, and housing developments — all of which can obstruct tigers’ migratory routes and expose people to attacks.

“Tigers can roam very long distances — sometimes hundreds of miles — and many rural communities living along the cats’ routes have learned to coexist with them,” says Jay M. Schoen, a Columbia graduate student who led the data analysis along with Amrita Neelakantan ’19GSAS of the Network for Conserving Central India. “However, major infrastructure projects through landscape corridors can alter or restrict tiger movement patterns. Our maps can help wildlife managers, policymakers, and other stakeholders strike a balance between maintaining landscape connectivity and building infrastructure needed for economic development.”

Biomedical engineers can now watch our organs talk to each other

A team of Columbia biomedical engineers has developed a remarkable new “organs-on-a-chip” technology: a simulation of our most important human tissues, connected by a bloodstream, which will enable doctors to test whether a drug will be safe and effective for a given person. The engineers say the device could lead to more personalized treatments for cancer and other diseases.

In a paper published recently in *Nature Biomedical Engineering*, the researchers describe how they have managed to grow human heart, skin, bone, and liver tissues using a patient’s own stem cells and keep these organ fragments alive for weeks in a plastic

device the size of a credit card. Here the tissues communicate with each other through a shared blood supply replete with circulating immune cells, cytokines, and other bioactive molecules.

The system, which was in development for more than a decade, provides scientists and physicians with their first up-close look at how different types of human tissues interact in real time.

“This is especially important for studying diseases like cancer or viral infections that can spread throughout the body and afflict multiple organs,” says Gordana Vunjak-Novakovic, a University Professor and a specialist in biomedical engineering, medical sciences, and dental medicine, who led the research team.

Vunjak-Novakovic and her colleagues, together with a group of Columbia biologists led by Andrea Califano, are currently using their new system to study the basic biology of cancer, investigating how malignant cells that arise in one organ can hitch a ride on the bloodstream and invade others. But the technology has more immediate clinical applications, since it can also be used to predict how individual patients are likely to respond to medications before taking them.

“With our technology, researchers can determine which medications are safest for a patient, based on how their lab-grown tissues tolerate various drug options,” says Vunjak-Novakovic.

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Saudi Arabian F-15 fighter jets participate in US-led exercises in 2022.

Law-school researchers link war atrocities in Yemen to US

Since 2015, a Saudi-led air campaign to defeat Houthi rebels in Yemen's civil war has killed at least nine thousand civilians, with fighter-jet attacks destroying apartment buildings, hospitals, a school bus, a funeral hall, a prison, and other non-military targets. The US government, meanwhile, has defended its approval of tens of billions of dollars' worth of weapons sales to Saudi Arabia and its regional allies during this period in part by insisting that there is no reason to believe that American-made arms are commonly used in such strikes.

But a joint investigation by the Security Force Monitor — a project of Columbia Law School's Human Rights Institute — and the *Washington Post* recently concluded that a "substantial portion" of airstrikes that have killed civilians in Yemen have been carried out by jets developed, sold, and maintained by US companies and flown by US-trained pilots. The researchers, led by Columbia's Tony Wilson, made the discovery by analyzing thousands of publicly available news stories, photographs, and videos about the Yemen war along with US military contracts. This enabled them to show that particular Saudi,

Emirati, Kuwaiti, and Bahraini fighter squadrons that have flown sorties over the country are heavily reliant on US equipment and training. (The Security Force Monitor was founded in 2016 to conduct research that increases the accountability of police, military, and security forces around the world.)

Wilson and Priyanka Motaparthy '09LAW, a Columbia Law School associate research scholar who contributed to the research, published an essay about the investigation in the online publication *Just Security* on June 4, the same day the *Post* ran its story. They expressed hope that their revelations will put pressure on the US government to more thoroughly scrutinize its support for foreign militaries.

"It is high time for the United States to finally spend the time and resources to review whether coalition squadrons that benefited from U.S. military contracts conducted attacks in Yemen that may constitute war crimes — and to disclose their findings to Congress and the public," they write. "A continued failure to do so would ensure that the United States remains complicit in ongoing — and perhaps future — serious human rights abuses in a war that has claimed countless lives, with no accountability."

STUDY HALL RESEARCH BRIEFS

Having kids may lead to brain damage Raising three or more children increases a parent's risk of developing dementia,

with the negative impact on cognitive function equivalent to an additional 6.2 years of aging, according to a study by Vegard Skirbekk of Columbia's Mailman School of Public Health and Éric Bonsang of Paris Dauphine University.

Why Zoom squelches creativity

Virtual meetings are not conducive to creative brainstorming, according to research by Melanie S. Brucks, an assistant professor of business in the marketing division of Columbia Business School, and Jonathan Levav of Stanford. The experts say staring intently at a computer narrows our field of vision and deprives us of small moments of inspiration that often occur during in-person meetings, when we can survey the room or stare off into space.

Unequal numbers Columbia social psychologist Rebecca Ponce de Leon has found that people tend to overestimate the size of ethnic-minority groups in their communities, and that the more culturally different a minority group's members are seen as being, the more their numbers are perceived as increasing over time.



Snail-mail solution

One-quarter of adolescents and young adults who are prescribed opioids for cancer pain abuse the medications once their cancer treatment is done. Yet according to research by Dawn L. Hershman '01PH, providing patients a convenient way to return their unused pills through the mail significantly reduces this number.

Don't tell Siri A team of Columbia computer scientists led by Carl Vondrick and Mia Chiquier '22SEAS has developed a whisper-quiet ambient-noise generator that could prevent microphones in computers, smartphones, and other electronic devices from surreptitiously listening in on our private conversations.

Sleepless with child Pregnant Black women get less sleep and are awakened more frequently during the night than pregnant white women, which may increase their risk of preterm birth, preeclampsia, and other complications, according to a large multi-institutional study by Maristella Lucchini of Columbia University Irving Medical Center.

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Confessions of a TikTok Pop Star

How Maude Latour '22CC, a singer-songwriter and social-media icon, found her voice — and her audience

In the music video for her hit song “One More Weekend,” Maude Latour '22CC, wearing sneakers and a crop top, blond hair in a high ponytail, dances across Low Plaza while singing about a past romance. *Maybe I've been lying to myself since last October / 'Cause I saw you 'cross the campus, and I wished it wasn't over.* She runs toward Butler Library and collapses on the lawn. “The song is about seeing someone on College Walk and being in love,” says the indie pop artist.

When Latour released the video in the summer of 2020, the Columbia College philosophy major and promising young singer-songwriter was already on critics' radar. Known for her smooth, ethereal voice and insightful lyrics about youth and dating, her 2019 breakthrough EP, *Starsick*, drew comparisons to Lorde. Now, with college behind her, a record deal with Warner Records, and a third EP set for release this year, Latour continues to see her profile rise. On Spotify, she reaches more than eight hundred thousand listen-

ers a month, and “One More Weekend,” her biggest single, has been streamed tens of millions of times.

Latour, who was born in Sweden and grew up primarily in New York and Hong Kong, says her musical journey began when she was “forced to play violin as a child.” She switched to singing and, while attending high school on the Upper East Side, did choir and a cappella. (“Deep down, I'm still just a choir girl trying to get the solo,” she says.) Her first heartbreak inspired her to start writing her own songs.

At Columbia, Latour fine-tuned her songwriting skills and shaped her artistic identity. “A huge asset was being surrounded by really motivated, creative people,” she says. “Every one of my friends became a collaborator and contributed their art or light to my projects.” Her Columbia peer Fergus Campbell '22CC directed several of her early music videos, including “Superfruit” and “Furniture,” both filmed in dorms with casts of fellow undergrads, as well as “Walk Backwards,”

set on the streets of Morningside Heights and elsewhere on the Upper West Side.

Although Latour performed numerous shows in local venues and at other college campuses, she found her biggest audience through social media. During college she amassed tens of thousands of followers on Instagram by uploading videos of herself singing, sharing candid reflections on school and life, and posting the kind of unforced, cool-girl selfies that make for Gen Z influencer gold. When the pandemic struck during her sophomore year and forced her to cancel concerts, including a debut at South by Southwest, Latour turned to performing on TikTok. “My plans disappeared, and this TikTok creature became part of my life,” she says. Her posts cumulatively racked up millions of views and led to her signing with Warner Records in 2021.

Latour’s career blossomed from that point on, and by her senior year she was juggling a busy touring schedule with a packed course load. “The absolute Columbia nerd in me refused to miss class,” she says. “I would do two shows a weekend and come back to school feeling exhausted. I feel like I can do anything now.” Though some people in the music scene would ask her why she bothered staying in school, she says, dropping out was never in the cards. “It was such a privilege to go to Columbia, and I was eager to soak in every moment.”



Maude Latour in the music video for “One More Weekend.”

Today, Latour is settling into life as a full-time musician. She recently performed at Lollapalooza and is embarking on a month-long tour this fall. Between shows, Latour records songs and creates content for TikTok (“the only currency in the music industry at the moment,” she laments). She admits that she is still trying to figure it all out. “I want to feel older in my music, and it’s a lot of emotional work to find what I want to say now,” says Latour, who will turn twenty-three in October. “It no longer feels like the world is ending when I have my heart broken.” — *Julia Joy*

LEFT: YOUTUBE; RIGHT: PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY LEN SMALL / SHUTTERSTOCK

Healthy Prospects for Telemedicine Companies

Telehealth, which connects patients with doctors and therapists for virtual appointments by video or phone, has exploded since the start of the pandemic. A recent study from the Kaiser Family Foundation concluded that approximately 36 percent of appointments for mental health and addiction, as well as 5 percent of other outpatient visits, continued to take place virtually through 2021. Several alumni entrepreneurs are at the forefront of this booming industry that is expanding access to care.



K HEALTH

K Health delivers virtual concierge care, in which patients, whether insured or not, receive unlimited access to the company’s network of doctors through \$29 monthly plans. Cofounded in 2016 by Allon Bloch ’97BUS, the CEO, K Health specializes in urgent and primary care, including the treatment of diabetes, hypothyroidism, anxiety, and depression, as well as help with quitting smoking. khealth.com

MANTRA HEALTH

Mantra Health offers virtual mental-health services for college students. Cofounded in 2018 by Matt Kennedy ’17BUS, Ed Gausson, and Columbia psychiatrist Ravi Shah, the company partners with counseling centers at more than fifty colleges and universities across the US to supplement their services with telehealth, which is provided as a student benefit. mantrahealth.com

PARSLEY HEALTH

Founded in 2016 by New York City physician Robin Berzin ’11VPS, Parsley Health takes a holistic approach to treating complex, hard-to-diagnose conditions ranging from autoimmune disorders to digestive problems. Combining traditional and alternative treatment methods, the concierge telehealth company also specializes in mental-health issues such as insomnia and problems with focus. parsleyhealth.com

VALERA HEALTH

Valera Health, cofounded in 2015 by physician and entrepreneur Thomas Tsang ’02PH, treats patients suffering from anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and other mental disorders. The company also partners directly with doctors’ offices and insurance plans to integrate its app and videoconferencing into their services. valerahealth.com

American Seoul

Food writer Eric Kim '15GSAS draws inspiration from his Korean heritage, his Atlanta childhood, and a few literary greats



Eric Kim '15GSAS learned to cook without looking at a recipe. As a kid in suburban Atlanta, he used to tune in to the Food Network after school and then head to the kitchen to replicate what he saw. But mostly he watched his mother, Jean, an intuitive home cook, who used to conjure from “taste memory” the flavors of South Korea, her homeland. She’d add a pinch of this and a sprinkle of that, tweaking it until she made it her own.

“In Korean it’s called your *sohn mat*, or ‘hand taste,’” Kim says. “It’s everything you put into your food — your soul, your memories, your history with that dish. You can’t just write it down.”

But, curiously, Kim has made a name for himself doing exactly that: at just thirty-one years old, he is already a prolific and versatile food columnist and recipe developer. A staff writer at the *New York Times* and a regular contributor to *Savuer*, *Food & Wine*, *Food52*, and the Food Network, Kim introduces hungry readers both to dishes that celebrate his Korean heritage, like umami-rich vegetable stews and salty-sweet beef bulgogi, and to his creative versions of American classics, like root-beer-glazed ham and caramel-apple pudding. So when he decided to write his first cookbook, he knew that he wanted to focus on the

middle of his culinary Venn diagram — the hybrid cuisine that he, like many other kids in immigrant families, grew up eating. The result, the best-selling *Korean American*, is a testament to the way that cooking can knit two cultures together and a moving tribute to Kim’s family, especially Jean.

Kim, who lives in New York City, started working on the cookbook right as the pandemic hit, which turned out to be serendipitous. He had planned to move home to Atlanta for a month to work with his mother on the kimchi chapter. That month turned into a year. “Cooking together was like a big knowledge exchange,” he says.

A lot of Jean’s knowledge, Kim points out, was built over years of experimentation and improvisation. When Kim’s parents immigrated from South Korea to Georgia in the 1980s, it wasn’t easy to find soy sauce in the local supermarket, let alone things like gochujang, the chili paste essential to Korean cooking. But, as Kim writes in *Korean American*, “scarcity breeds innovation.” Kim’s mother learned to substitute ingredients with what she could find on the Publix shelves — swapping jalapeños for shishito peppers and wrapping ground beef and American cheese in seaweed for a new kind of kimbab.

Though Kim was always enthusiastic about cooking,

he never thought of it as a career option. He studied literature and creative writing as an undergraduate at NYU, then started a doctoral program in English at Columbia, where he focused on twentieth-century American novelists, like Faulkner and Steinbeck. Not ready to commit to academia, he ended up leaving the program after completing two master’s degrees. “At that point, I had really only known school,” he says. “And I couldn’t shake the feeling that there was something else out there for me.”

Kim took a job doing data entry at the Food Network, where he had interned in college. “It sounds dreadful, but it’s how I learned to write a recipe,” he says. He worked his way up, eventually heading up digital programming there, and then moved to Food52, where he wrote the popular *Table for One* column and started experimenting with more personal essays. One particularly touching article was about the fraught night Kim came out to his parents, and the kimchi fried rice that his mother lovingly made the next morning.

“It was the most intimate thing I had ever written,” Kim says. “Now I think of food as an entry point. You can use it to write about family, culture, history, politics. It’s present in everything.”

That expansive view of food writing is evident in

Korean American, which is studded not only with tempting recipes and sumptuous photos but also charming family stories, thoughtful meditations on immigration and community, and even erudite references that nod to Kim's Columbia years. While writing about his decision not to include his mother's recipe for fried rice, for example, Kim alludes to the critic Harold Bloom's concept of "anxiety of influence" — the fear of being overshadowed by your forebears while you're trying to make something original. "This is not my mother's kimchi fried rice," he writes. "This is mine, and it tastes comforting in a different way, in the way that one might feel when finally leaving the nest."

— *Rebecca Shapiro*

ERIC'S KIMCHI FRIED RICE WITH EGG YOLK

SERVES ONE

*It helps with fried-rice dishes to have a *mise en place* — meaning to have prepped and measured out all the ingredients before you start cooking. Because once you start, it all comes together very quickly. The one thing you don't want to do is burn the gochugaru (Korean chili powder or flakes) or the kimchi, which is how you lose the bright-red flavor that's characteristic of kimchi fried rice. I actually like the taste of the raw kimchi juice and all its red-peppery glory here; it's what makes this dish taste, as my dad said, "like fire."*



- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 1 large scallion, thinly sliced on the diagonal
- ½ teaspoon gochugaru (less if you don't like spicy)
- ½ medium yellow onion, diced
- 1 cup finely chopped, very ripe (like, the dankest you've got) napa-cabbage kimchi, store-bought or homemade
- 1 cup cooked white rice (fresh, day-old, or cold)
- 2 tablespoons kimchi juice
- 1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil
- ½ teaspoon fish sauce
- 1 (5-gram) packet gim (roasted seaweed)
- 1 large raw-egg yolk (one you feel confident about)

1. In a large nonstick or cast-iron skillet, melt the butter over medium-low heat. Add the scallion and gochugaru and sauté for 30 seconds to bloom the chili flakes.
2. Still over medium-low, add the onion and sauté until just beginning to sweat, about 1 minute. Stir in the kimchi and sauté for another minute. Place the rice in a mound in the center of the pan, over the other ingredients, and drizzle it with the kimchi juice, sesame oil, and fish sauce. Then stir the rice and kimchi together and cook over high heat for 3 minutes. Using the back of your spoon, gently press the rice into the pan (like you're making a big kimchi-fried-rice pancake); reduce the heat to medium and let the rice crisp for 2 minutes.
3. Serve in a bowl topped with the gim (I like to shape it into a nest) and egg yolk, which should be placed ever so gently within the gim nest. To eat, stir the egg yolk into the hot rice.

Thinking Differently

Jennifer Brunton '06GSAS advocates for the autism community from within



Jennifer Brunton '06GSAS had always excelled academically, but socially she considered herself at the bottom of the class. She found everyday interactions challenging, had difficulty understanding people and their relationships, and struggled to grasp simple social cues. She knew that her way of thinking was different, but she couldn't pinpoint how or why.

During her senior year of college, an incident happened that has stayed with her ever since. "My computer broke, and I asked a close friend — one of a friend group of five — to borrow hers. Next thing I knew, my friends didn't seem to like me anymore. It was clear I had really offended them."

Brunton struggled to figure out what she had done. "In retrospect, I believe I missed my friend's repeated hints that she needed her computer back, but I'm not sure I would get those hints today either," she admits. Brunton eventually reconnected with the group after college, "but that period was among the most painful of my life. I felt so terribly alone, and as if all my efforts to become 'normal' and be loved and trust people had failed."

It wasn't until a few years later, when Brunton was studying for her sociology PhD at Columbia, that she was finally able to attach a name and explanation to what made her different. "I read a book called *Nobody Nowhere*, a memoir written by Donna Williams, an autistic woman. For the first time in my life, I knew who I was."

After graduation, Brunton worked briefly as a professor at a community college, then as a writer and editor. She married and had two children, and since she could pass as neurotypical, her condition remained a private matter. But after Brunton's son was diagnosed with autism and started to face discrimination in school, she began to see the importance of "accepting and celebrating his unique

NETWORK

neurology.” Along the way, she says, “I became an advocate and activist in the civil-rights frontier of neurodiversity.”

Brunton created a blog, *Full Spectrum Mama*, named because “I felt like my daughter and son were at opposite ends of certain behavioral, emotional, and neurological spectrums.” The blog was a place for Brunton to process what her family was experiencing and share what was working and what wasn’t. “It was quite therapeutic for me. Over time it’s become an amazing community with hundreds of thousands of readers.”

This year, Brunton published a book with Jenna Gensic called *The #ActuallyAutistic Guide to Advocacy*, which draws on the experiences of more than a hundred autistic people to show how their minds work differently while suggesting ways to open up more opportunities for them. Some of the common mistakes that neurotypical people make when interacting with autistic people include, according to Brunton: “Privileging ‘experts’ over autistic people themselves. Assuming that autistic people need or want to be ‘cured.’ Feeling sorry for us. Treating us like children. Assuming their way of thinking is superior.”

Brunton mentions a recent article in *Columbia Magazine* as an example of this bias. A story about autism research opened with a reference to autism “prevention.” “Since autism is an integral, constitutive aspect of many autistic people’s identities, autism-prevention efforts directly threaten the personhood and fundamental worth and validity of this already-marginalized population,” Brunton says. “I would never claim to speak for all autistic people, but I do feel reasonably certain that very few of us want to be ‘prevented.’”

Given the extensive variation in autistic perspectives and experiences, Brunton encourages people to listen to those on the autism spectrum and treat each one as a unique individual. “Respect different ways of communicating and being in the world,” she urges. “We want to make space for the fact that people with neurodivergent brains are valuable human beings with strengths and weaknesses just like everyone else, and thus absolutely worthy of full inclusion.”

— Beth Weinhouse '80JRN



Title IX, passed in 1972, transformed college sports for women.

ASK AN ALUM: WHAT'S SO FEMINIST ABOUT FITNESS?

Danielle Friedman '09JRN is a journalist who writes about culture and women’s health. Her recent book *Let’s Get Physical: How Women Discovered Exercise and Reshaped the World* looks at the history of a multi-billion-dollar industry and the female entrepreneurs who have shaped, sculpted, and strengthened it.

Tell us about the history of women’s workout culture.

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, sweating and having visible muscles were considered unladylike. Physical strength was associated with masculinity and manual labor. Long seen as the “weaker sex,” women were told by the medical community that vigorous exercise could damage their reproductive organs and even make their uteruses fall out.

Starting in the 1960s, around the same time that second-wave feminism was taking off, public perceptions began changing around exercise and its health benefits, and female fitness pioneers began to proselytize about the benefits of regularly breaking a sweat. With the rise of aerobics, jogging, and strength training during the 1970s and '80s, women found commu-

nity and liberation in working out together. Fitness gurus like Jane Fonda promoted the idea that physical strength was vital for women.

It’s been fifty years since the 1972 passage of Title IX. What role did that law play in getting women to become more physically active?

The landmark law, which barred any educational program or activity that received federal funding from discriminating “on the basis of sex,” led to an explosion in high-school and college sports programs for women. This in turn offered girls and women a host of benefits that boys and men had long enjoyed — from the life lessons learned through team sports to physical strength and confidence. Consider this statistic: in 1971, around three hundred thousand girls played varsity high-school sports. Today that number is nearly 3.5 million.

How has social media affected fitness?

On the one hand, we’ve seen people with virtually no expertise become fitness influencers simply because of how they look, which is not only unfortunate but also sometimes

dangerous. On the other, Instagram and other channels have led to long-overdue body diversity and an expanded idea of what fitness looks like. Jessamyn Stanley, a self-described fat, queer, Black yogi, is just one example of a new kind of fitness personality: she has hundreds of thousands of followers and has appeared in commercials and on magazine covers. I don't think she could have achieved that level of influence without social media, where she has created a thriving community of people who previously felt unwelcome in gyms and other fitness spaces because of how they looked.

Where do you see fitness trends going next?

We're perhaps shifting to a gentler era, as simply walking

is becoming a more respected form of exercise within the fitness community. The past few years have also seen more emphasis on the connection between physical activity and mental health. Many people report that stress relief is their primary motivation for exercise, and working out is now widely considered a valuable tool in fighting anxiety and depression. Research has shown that when we move together, whether in a yoga class or a road race, neurochemicals create a feeling of collective joy that helps bond us to strangers and increase pain tolerance. I think we're moving away from the popular notion that fitness should be about pushing ourselves to our limits and toward it feeling genuinely good. — *Julia Joy*

Beach Patrol

WHEN CHRIS ALLIERI '00SIPA headed to the beach this summer, he did not go to relax and unwind. Rather, he was there to protect the piping plover, a threatened shorebird that nests and raises its tiny chicks on the Rockaway Peninsula.

Allieri, the founder and director of the NYC Plover Project, whose day job is running a communications firm for climate-focused startups, partners with the National Park Service each spring and summer to educate the public about plover protocols. He and his small army of volunteers politely approach strangers and ask that they keep their dogs in check and refrain from entering fenced-off areas. They point out nearby nests and let beachgoers know that fewer than eight thousand piping plovers remain on earth.

Allieri wants people to understand that small actions can have a significant impact on wildlife. "Follow the signs. Keep your distance. Carry out your garbage. Use less plastic," he says. "Having an awareness that beaches are living ecosystems makes for a more enriched experience. The piping plovers, they're New Yorkers too. Why wouldn't we do everything we can to protect them?"



LEFT: NYC PLOVER PROJECT; TOP RIGHT: HBO; BOTTOM RIGHT: CAMERON SMITH / WHITE HOUSE

NEWSMAKERS

● Alumni-produced TV shows garnered numerous Emmy nominations this year. These shows include *Hacks*, co-created by **Lucia Aniello '04CC**; *Yellowjackets*, co-created by **Ashley Lyle '02CC, '07SOA**; and *Succession*, executive-produced by **Scott Ferguson '90SOA**. **Cherien Dabis '04SOA** also received a nomination for her directing work on *Only Murders in the Building*.



● **Andrea Elliott '99JRN** received a Pulitzer Prize for her nonfiction book *Invisible Child*. **Anna Jean Kaiser '21JRN** was a member of the *Miami Herald* team honored for breaking-news coverage of the Champlain Towers collapse, and **Joe Holley '74JRN** and his colleagues at the *Houston Chronicle* received the prize for editorial writing for covering Texas voter suppression and conspiracy theories. *Fat Ham*, a modern retelling of Hamlet whose New York premiere was directed by **Saheem Ali '07SOA** and starred **Marcel Spears '15SOA**, won the Pulitzer for drama.

● Art historian **Roberta Bernstein '75GSAS**, known for her scholarship on Jasper Johns, was named a knight of the National Order of the Legion of Honor, France's highest order of merit for civil and military accomplishments.



● **Karine Jean-Pierre '03SIPA**, a political adviser and former lecturer at Columbia's School of International and Public Affairs, stepped into the role of White House press secretary in May.

● The Broadway show *A Strange Loop*, produced by **Barbara Whitman '05SOA**, won the 2022 Tony Award for best musical.

● Columbia virologist and pediatrician **Anne Moscona '82VPS** was elected president of the American Society for Virology.



President Bollinger addresses graduating students and their families at Columbia's Commencement in May.

Celebrating two decades of transformative leadership

When Lee C. Bollinger steps down as president at the end of this academic year, after leading Columbia University for more than two decades, he will bring to a close a historic era for the University, one that has brought extraordinary physical and intellectual transformation.

“Building knowledge, creating space for the exploration of new ideas, and examining what is needed for the betterment of future societies are just some of the themes of Lee’s tenure,” wrote University Trustee co-chairs Lisa Carnoy ’89CC and Jonathan Lavine ’88CC in a statement about Bollinger’s legacy. “But at heart he is an educator, and every new building project, academic initiative, and fundraising campaign that he undertook was in service of creating

a world-class environment for learning and teaching ... His leadership has had a profound impact on the University and will leave behind a rich foundation upon which a new era for Columbia can flourish.”

When Bollinger was inaugurated on the steps of Low Library on October 3, 2002, he shared his vision for what he called “the quintessential great urban university” and spoke of the need for Columbia to engage more deeply with the outside world while retaining its distinctive academic character. He discussed the rich and dynamic history of Upper Manhattan and the University’s plans to strengthen its ties with its neighbors. He spoke of his commitment to promoting diversity among students, faculty, and staff and announced his intention to expand

the University's physical footprint so that it had the space to grow as a hub for new knowledge and life-changing innovations. Over the next two decades, these goals would fundamentally reshape the University.

Under Bollinger's leadership, the University has built on its strengths as a research institution with a thriving liberal-arts program and expanded into new areas. Columbia has invested in the arts and sciences and its celebrated Core Curriculum while also launching ambitious cross-disciplinary programs in areas like data science, neuroscience, the arts, cancer research and care, the humanities, journalism, and precision medicine. Government funding for research at Columbia, including from the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation, has grown considerably during his tenure.

Central to Bollinger's vision for the future was his plan to address the University's space constraints. Careful deliberations early in his tenure resulted in proposals for a campus in a former industrial neighborhood of West Harlem spanning from 125th Street to 133rd Street between Broadway and 12th Avenue. The plan proceeded after Columbia committed to investing tens of millions of dollars in local affordable housing and educational, health, and other benefits, as negotiated with West Harlem residents as part of a community-benefits agreement.

In 2017, Columbia opened the first two buildings on its Manhattanville



Bollinger greets the Dalai Lama at the World Leaders Forum in 2005.

“Columbia is notably agile, creative, fresh, and experimental. I am certain that the conditions are present for an even more brilliant future in the decades ahead.”

— Lee C. Bollinger



Bollinger, with former mayors David Dinkins and Michael Nutter, welcomes Congressman John Lewis to a SIPA forum in 2017.

campus: the Jerome L. Greene Science Center, which is the home of the Zuckerman Mind Brain Behavior Institute, and the Lenfest Center for the Arts. The Forum, a multi-use venue, followed in 2018, and earlier this year the first phase of construction ended when Columbia Business School moved into Henry R. Kravis Hall and David Geffen Hall.

While the construction of the Manhattanville campus represents Columbia's most ambitious physical expansion in

more than a century, the University has also renovated or expanded 2.8 million square feet of educational space on the Morningside Heights and medical-center campuses during Bollinger's presidency.

Bollinger, a lifelong advocate for diversity in higher education, oversaw a \$185 million faculty-diversity initiative and has transformed the University's leadership through his appointment of record numbers of women to deanships and other high-level positions. He elevated Columbia's international profile through the establishment of nine overseas research hubs, called Columbia Global Centers, in Africa, Asia, Europe, and South America and underscored his commitment to deepening academia's engagement with the outside world by championing research programs that address real-world issues like climate change, sustainable development, and the protection of free speech. In 2017, the University launched Columbia World Projects to support partnerships with governments, businesses, and

other external organizations with the goal of translating the University's research and scholarship capabilities into tangible benefits for people around the world. And in 2020, the University announced the creation of the Columbia Climate School, the first school in the nation devoted to addressing the global climate crisis.

Under Bollinger, the University has also made major investments in strengthening its relationship with alumni, most notably by establish-

BULLETIN

ing the Columbia Alumni Association, a global network that links 375,000 alumni in more than one hundred countries, and by opening the Columbia Alumni Center on West 113th Street, which provides a dedicated space for graduates to meet, relax, and access University resources. Alumni and friends of the University have donated more than \$13 billion to Columbia during Bollinger's tenure, supporting undergraduate education and research, student advising, capital projects, new professorships, athletics, and financial aid across Columbia's schools. These efforts now include the Columbia Student Support Initiative, a university-wide plan announced last year to expand access and reduce student debt by raising \$1.4 billion by 2025.

In an e-mail to the Columbia community, Bollinger wrote, "I cannot begin to express what it has meant to me to serve in this role for this magnificent University for over two decades. Certainly, it has been a defining experience of my life. It has also been an especially high pleasure to do so at the beginning of the new century and in a period of rising intellectual excellence across the institution. No university in the world is more committed to the life of the mind or possessed of the will to bring knowledge and ideas to the service of humanity."

The Board of Trustees has established a search committee to oversee the process of selecting Columbia's next president.

The committee, led by Lisa Carnoy, includes Nobel laureate neuroscientist Richard Axel '67CC; professor of medicine and University Senate chair Jeanine D'Armiento; English professor and scholar of African-American studies Farah Jasmine Griffin; biomedical-engineering professor X. Edward Guo;

Brandeis University president Ronald D. Liebowitz '85GSAS; Trustee Emerita Esta Stecher '82LAW, as well as Jonathan Lavine and seven other Trustees — Rolando T. Acosta '79CC, '82LAW, Abigail Black Elbaum '92CC, '94BUS, Mark Gallogly '86BUS, Joseph A. Greenaway Jr. '78CC, David J. Greenwald '83LAW, Wanda Holland Greene '89CC, '91TC, and Claire Shipman '86CC, '94SIPA.

The search committee will manage the recruitment and assessment of candidates, presenting finalists to the full Board of Trustees, whose members will then confer with the Executive Committee of the University Senate to reach consensus on the ultimate nominee. The Trustees have also established several advisory committees representing faculty, students, alumni, and staff from across the University to solicit input on the qualities that Columbia's next president should possess.

Bollinger, who is also the first Seth Low Professor of the University, a member of the Columbia Law School faculty, and a prominent First Amendment scholar, will continue to teach at the University and pursue his research and scholarship full-time.

Looking ahead to the future, he says: "Columbia is notably agile, creative, fresh, and experimental. I am certain that the conditions are present for an even more brilliant future in the decades ahead. And I will leave confident that our potential and aspirations will be realized."



Bollinger speaks at the dedication of the Manhattanville campus in 2016.



Manhattanville's first new facilities: the Lenfest Center for the Arts, the Jerome L. Greene Science Center, and the Forum.



Lee and Jean Magnano Bollinger tour Manhattanville with Italian architect Renzo Piano, whose firm developed the campus master plan and designed several new buildings.

MEET THE FOUR NEW DEANS

President Lee C. Bollinger has appointed new deans at four of Columbia's schools and colleges, choosing widely admired scholars from within the University's own ranks to fill each of the crucial leadership positions.



Josef Sorett, Dean of Columbia College and Vice President of Undergraduate Education

Since joining Columbia's faculty in 2009, Sorett, a professor of religion and African-American and African-diaspora studies, has served as chair of the Department of Religion; founding director of the Center on African-American Religion, Sexual Politics, and Social Justice; and chair of the Inclusive Public Safety Advisory Committee, which is part of the University's ongoing efforts to address anti-Black racism.

Sorett's scholarship explores the vital and complex roles that religion has played in shaping the cultures of Black communities and social movements in the US. He is the author of *Spirit in the Dark: A Religious History of Racial Aesthetics* and the editor of *The Sexual Politics of Black Churches*.

A popular teacher and mentor, Sorett received

the Presidential Award for Outstanding Teaching at this year's Commencement. He succeeds Dean James Valentini, a professor of chemistry who led the College for more than a decade.

Shih-Fu Chang, Dean of the Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science

Chang, a professor of electrical engineering and computer science who has taught at Columbia since 1993, previously served as senior executive vice dean under engineering dean Mary C. Boyce, who last year



became University Provost. Chang was instrumental in establishing the school as a vibrant hub of University-wide data-driven multidisciplinary research in areas like climate modeling, health analytics, and pandemic response, while also overseeing diversity, equity, and inclusion programs within the school.

An expert on artificial intelligence, multimedia content analysis, and computer vision, Chang has developed new ways to extract information from images, video, and audio. His work has had important real-world applications, leading to the creation of

tools that prevent human trafficking and provide journalists with image-recognition capabilities.



Keren Yarhi-Milo '03GS, Dean of the School of International and Public Affairs

An expert in international security and conflict resolution and the Arnold A. Saltzman Professor of War and Peace Studies, Yarhi-Milo draws on insights from psychology, organizational theory, and behavioral economics to study how leaders make foreign-policy decisions regarding the use of force.

A graduate of Columbia's School of General Studies, Yarhi-Milo taught at Princeton for more than a decade before returning to Columbia as a SIPA professor in 2019. She quickly became engaged in leadership activities at the school, directing its Saltzman Institute of War and Peace Studies, working with the Columbia Global Centers and the Committee on Forced Migration to help students and scholars displaced by the crisis in Afghanistan, and earlier this year expanding that effort to include those seeking refuge from the war in Ukraine.

Yarhi-Milo replaces Thomas Christensen

'93GSAS, a professor of international relations who served as interim dean following Dean Merit Janow's decision to return to teaching international economic law.

Jelani Cobb, Dean of Columbia Journalism School

A professor of journalism and director of the Ira A. Lipman Center for Journalism and Civil and Human Rights, Cobb has been a member of the journalism



school's faculty since 2016. A distinguished reporter and scholar who writes about race, politics, history, and culture, he is a staff writer at the *New Yorker* and the author of several books.

Cobb and his colleagues at the Lipman Center have regularly convened experts and supported journalists from diverse backgrounds to ensure that stories on civil and human rights are reported with care and rigor. Among the courses that Cobb teaches is the seminar *Covering Race*, which examines the influence of race in the United States and its effects on reporting and media coverage. He takes over as dean from fellow journalism professor and *New Yorker* writer Steve Coll.

INTRODUCING

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BUSINESS, ENGINEERING LAUNCH DUAL MASTER'S FOR TECH LEADERS

Columbia Business School and Columbia Engineering have created a new master's degree program that aims to prepare business leaders for the technological demands of a rapidly changing workplace.

The Dual MBA/Executive MS in Engineering and Applied Science program, which will welcome its first class in fall 2023, is intended for students who already have some industry experience and who aspire to launch new companies or join established businesses in roles such as vice president of engineering, chief technology officer, chief information officer, chief operating officer, or senior product manager. The program will offer a broad overview of engineering, matched with advanced training in leadership, strategy, marketing, and management.

According to business-school dean Costis Maglaras, the growing use of data is transforming business models and creating new types of products and services, ushering in a new management culture. In today's business landscape, "every company is also a technology company," he says, and business leaders must often work closely with engineers and data scientists to succeed. "Engineering innovations are driving change and disruption across industries and functional roles."

Engineering dean Shih-Fu Chang says the program will emphasize four key elements: addressing societal challenges, developing breakthrough technologies, cultivating leadership qualities, and embracing human-centric design approaches. "We think of this program as something that is targeted toward solutions that people will adopt and use, so design is an important component," he says.

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CLIMATE SCHOOL ANNOUNCES FIRST FACULTY HIRE

Kristina G. Douglass, an archaeologist and anthropologist who studies the history of human-environment interactions in Madagascar, has been appointed an associate professor of climate at the Columbia Climate School.

Douglass is the first faculty member hired directly into the new climate school. She joins the ranks of Columbia faculty in other centers and departments who are already a part of the school's first-in-the-nation graduate program training the next generation of leaders to combat global warming.

"We are thrilled that Kristina will be joining the climate-school team, bring-

ing her groundbreaking and inclusive research approach on human-environment interactions, environmental justice, and conservation," says the school's founding dean, Alex Halliday. "Kristina's work aligns strongly with the climate school's priority of leveraging interdisciplinary research and education."

Douglass was recruited to Columbia from Penn State University, where she directed the Morombe Archaeological Project, which works closely with members of indigenous fishing communities in southwest Madagascar to understand how people in the region have altered and been affected by the local ecology over time.

WAFAA EL-SADR APPOINTED EVP FOR COLUMBIA GLOBAL

Wafaa El-Sadr '91PH, a University Professor and renowned infectious-disease physician and epidemiologist, has been appointed executive vice president for Columbia Global. In the newly created position, El-Sadr will oversee the Columbia Global Centers, a network of nine research hubs in Africa, Asia, Europe, and South America; Columbia World Projects, an initiative that has institutionalized the University's commitment to addressing real-world problems, and which she also directs; Columbia's Paris-based Institute for Ideas and Imagination, which supports innovative collaborations between scholars and creative artists; and other global initiatives.

El-Sadr will also continue to serve as the Dr. Mathilde Krim-amfAR Chair of Global Health and director of ICAP, a global health center based

at the Mailman School of Public Health with operations in thirty countries.

"In her new and expanded role, Wafaa will bring to the leadership of our Global Centers and other global initiatives her unmatched global perspective, institutional expertise, and vision for Columbia's positive impact in the world," said President Lee C. Bollinger in announcing her appointment.



ROSENZWEIG WINS WORLD FOOD PRIZE



Columbia climatologist and agronomist Cynthia Rosenzweig has been named the 2022 World Food Prize laureate for her pioneering work in modeling the impact of climate change on worldwide food production.

Rosenzweig, an adjunct senior research scientist at the Columbia Climate School and a senior research scientist at the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies, was awarded the \$250,000 prize for her achievements as the founder of the Agricultural Model Intercomparison and Improvement Project (AgMIP). The interdisciplinary network of climate and food-system modelers has helped agriculture officials, farmers, and other decision-makers in more than ninety countries enhance their resilience to climate change.

"With the urgent need to factor climate change into decisions ranging from crop breeding to national agricultural policies, the evidence base from Rosenzweig's work is increasingly critical for feeding humanity," says Ruth DeFries, a co-founding dean of the Columbia Climate School. She says that beginning in the early 1980s, when some scientists were asking, "What's causing climate change?" Rosenzweig was asking, "What will it mean for food?"

City of Refugees

By Susan Hartman '76SOA (Beacon Press)

Nobody loves a comeback story quite like the American public, whose soft spot for scrappy underdogs is legendary. In *City of Refugees*, by journalist Susan Hartman '76SOA, the comeback kid is the once-thriving city of Utica, located in the Rust Belt of upstate New York. On the decline since the 1970s, Utica reached its nadir in the mid-1990s, not long after General Electric, the last major employer in the area, pulled up stakes. In the aftermath, thousands of out-of-work Uticans simply vacated their homes, and an epidemic of arson — often by absentee landlords for insurance money — lay waste to buildings across the city.

Utica needed a hero, and it ended up with thousands of them: an influx of refugees from thirty-five different countries who have come to the area, thanks largely to the presence of The Center, a nonprofit that resettles people displaced by violence, persecution, war, and climate catastrophes.

Taking jobs shunned by locals, learning English, starting businesses, pooling their cash and buying and rehabbing dilapidated houses, these new residents have slowly rekindled Utica's economy and in the process effected a subtle shift toward greater pluralism in the city's culture.

Whether through luck or careful culling, Hartman, who immersed herself in the town and its people from 2013 to 2021, hit the jackpot with her choice of subjects: Sadia Ambure, a Somali Bantu girl who is fifteen when we meet her; Ali Sarhan, forty-five, a professional interpreter from Iraq who used to work for ABC News in Baghdad; and Mersiha Omeragic, forty, an ESL teacher and baker who, along with her

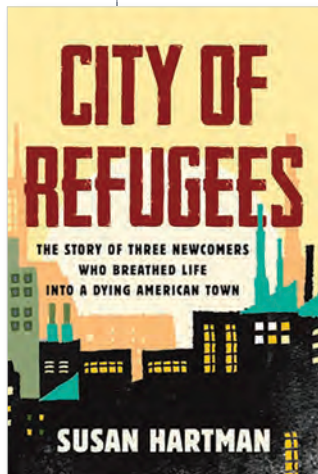
husband, Hajrudin, was part of an influx of Bosnians into Utica in the mid-1990s.

Like the city that they helped revive, Sadia, Ali, and Mersiha are easy to root for. But there is an ironic twist to this classic comeback tale: all three practice Islam, a religion that has long faced knee-jerk antipathy in America — so much so that this bigotry was enshrined in US policy (see Executive Order 13769 and its successors, collectively known as “the Muslim ban”) for four of the eight years covered by Hartman's book. It is an injustice the book wears lightly, as befits a writer of Hartman's subtlety and skill, but it nonetheless pervades her moving and inspiring narrative.

Sadia lives with eighteen family members in a grand, if rundown, thirteen-bedroom house that her grandmother bought for \$55,000 in 2011, seven years after the family's arrival in the US. Beset by the usual adolescent angst, Sadia straddles two worlds, feeling at home in neither: the American pop culture of Michael Kors bags, iPhones, and Subway sandwiches, and the traditional Bantu culture that demands she help with the housework, take care of siblings, and show absolute obedience to her strong-willed mother.

Ali is also torn between competing worlds. A warm-hearted, highly educated man, he is largely content with the life he has forged in Utica — particularly his relationship with his girlfriend, Heidi, a free-spirited local woman. But he desperately misses his mother and two sisters back in Baghdad and is haunted by memories of his brother, who was abducted and murdered by al-Qaeda in 2006, two years before Ali fled to the US. Ali also has financial problems: an interpreter who works with Arabic speakers in Utica, he sees his income plummet when the policies of Donald Trump (for whom Ali votes in 2016) take hold, halting the flow of Arabic-speaking refugees to the area.

Bosnian-born Mersiha is a dynamo whose work ethic seems at times to defy



human limitations. She is a talented baker who makes wedding and birthday cakes as a side hustle to her full-time job as an ESL teacher, but she harbors dreams of opening her own café. The unstoppable manner in which Mersiha and her equally hard-working husband, Hajrudin (a survivor of a Serbian-run concentration camp), set out to realize their American dream — meeting and defeating a host of nearly insuperable obstacles every step of the way — is not merely awe-inducing; it should be taught in MBA programs as a model of small-business perseverance and the ability to pivot in a crisis.

While this is an uplifting book animated by a spirit of can-do optimism, Hartman does not sentimentalize the lives of Utica's refugees, which tend to be complicated, exhausting, and often lonely. Nor does she spare readers

the details of the circumstances that turned them into refugees in the first place. Even in a time when war atrocities flit across our screens hourly, Hartman's vividly rendered accounts of what these refugees endured — being forced to abandon newborn twins during a frantic flight from the enemy; being enslaved on their own land by armed interlopers; being beaten, humiliated, and tortured by former compatriots — are heart-stopping in the anguish they depict.

But also deeply enlightening. Regardless of where you are on the political spectrum or what position you take in the endless debates about refugees (or their close cousins, immigrants), reading this book will likely change your perspective on those issues and much more.

— Lorraine Glennon

It's Quiet Uptown



NEARLY 250

YEARS after the American Revolution, our society is still in many ways governed by the Founding

Fathers. But who were these men, and how did they live? In his latest book, *In the Founders' Footsteps*, the author and artist Adam Van Doren '84CC, '89GSAPP explores the more personal side of these often enigmatic figures. Traveling from Maine to Georgia, Van Doren visits and paints thirty landmarks — homes, battlefields, monuments, and more — instrumental in the lives of the Founding Fathers, resulting in a contemplative and beautiful travelogue. His first stop is St. Nicholas Park in Harlem, where he captures Columbia College trustee Alexander Hamilton's country estate. Hamilton Grange is notable for its transience: the building was moved once in 1889 and again in 2008. "It seemed fitting," writes Van Doren, "that a man of such restless energy would own a house that has been re-located several times."



A watercolor of Hamilton Grange by Adam Van Doren.

The Prophet of the Andes

By **Graciela Mochkofsky '96JRN** (Alfred A. Knopf)

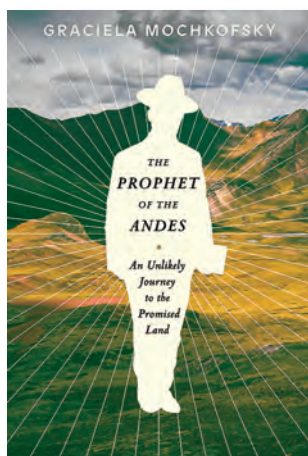
The *Prophet of the Andes* is nominally a biography, although its subject is larger and more elusive than a single man. Through the sweeping story of Zerubbabel Tzidkiya, a Jewish convert born Segundo Villanueva in the mountains of Peru, Graciela Mochkofsky '96JRN probes one of the deepest questions of human existence: whom should we trust to teach us how to live?

Her titular prophet begins life as a good Catholic in the foothills of the Andes, in a place where there is no horizon, just “mountain and more mountain,” engulfed in clouds. Villanueva, a carpenter, is Catholic because five centuries earlier, Spanish conquistadors garroted the Inca emperor Atahualpa in the walled city of Cajamarca, six hours’ walk away. They spread their dogma at the point of a sword and guarded its mysteries by preaching in Latin.

In 1944, when Villanueva is seventeen, his father is murdered by a drunk neighbor. Amid his vengeful rage, the young man unearths a forbidden Spanish-language Bible in his father’s trunk and starts — defiantly, heretically — to read and to question. So begins a remarkable odyssey of faith — and, on the part of the book’s author, of research, conducted over more than fifteen years. It is distilled here, with the help of translator Lisa Dillman, with luminous clarity and flashes of wit that remind us that the search for God is a deeply human story.

Villanueva first turns to the Protestants, whose faith was born of the determination to read and teach the Bible in the vernacular. But the Methodists, Presbyterians, Pentecostals, and the rest he seeks out are mostly unwilling to discuss his disruptive ideas — a pattern that will repeat to the end of his life. Eventually, he leads

twenty-odd families to hack their own colony of faith out of an inhospitable patch of jungle. They call it Hebron, and last there for several years before the conditions prove too harsh. Still, Villanueva has questions nobody can answer, about how to reconcile the mixed messages of the Old and New Testaments and the variations between Bible translations, about why Christians do not observe all the biblical holy days, and most of all about the status of Jesus — as messiah or mere messenger. He needs the original text. He needs Hebrew,



or someone who reads it. He needs, he finally realizes, “Of course. The Jews!”

But the Jewish colony in Lima in the late 1960s proves to be a socially elite, assimilated enclave, unwilling to admit these self-taught, tiresomely curious “cholos.” Villanueva makes do with a book of Jewish tradition aimed at students preparing for their bar mitzvahs, and back in Hebron he convinces several of his followers to join him in conversion and aliyah — emigration to the Holy Land.

Spiritual matters can never be untangled from political ones, but especially not in Israel in the 1990s and 2000s. When the first Peruvian

converts arrive in Israel, they are shuttled under armed escort to settlements in the West Bank. Amid mounting violence, they take refuge in faith, and most take the hard-line view that the settlements are a legitimate expansion of the country’s God-given borders. On arrival in 1990, Segundo Villanueva — now Zerubbabel Tzidkiya — is in his sixties and eligible for a state pension, but he does not rest. Continuing to probe ideas that most Orthodox Jews consider long-settled, he eventually comes to doubt the authority of rabbis, or any human, to interpret the word of God. By the time he dies in 2008 at the age of eighty, he has become a pariah even in his long-dreamed-of spiritual home.

Mochkofsky, a writer and professor who was recently named the dean of CUNY’s journalism school, grew up in Argentina, the daughter of a secular Jewish father and a Catholic mother. In 2003, she stumbled across a highly colored version of Villanueva’s story written by an American rabbi who had visited his followers in Peru and set out to unravel the truth of the twisting tale. In Mochkofsky’s telling, Villanueva is an unlikely “prophet,” who offers his followers endless doubt in place of certainty. Yet it’s striking that all the faiths he followed and founded were extremely conservative. Despite his openness to new ideas, and the context of massive social change across the globe during his lifetime, Villanueva seems never to have ventured beyond the traditional patriarchal values of his upbringing. One is left to wonder why a man whose religious life was defined by curiosity never found a way to question the world around him as deeply as he questioned the words in the Bible — and what might have happened if he had.

— *Joanna Scutts '10GSAS*



The Measure

By **Nikki Erlick '17GSAS**

(William Morrow)

What would you do if you knew how long you had to live? It's hardly a novel question, but in her best-selling debut, *The Measure*, Nikki Erlick '17GSAS offers a fresh perspective by examining not just the individual implications of destiny foretold but the societal ones as well.

Erlick is a graduate of Columbia's MA program in global thought, an interdisciplinary degree that challenges students to consider world problems in unconventional ways, and her training is evident in this nuanced thought experiment. In Erlick's imagined world, every adult (age twenty-two and older) wakes on an otherwise ordinary morning to find an engraved box on the doorstep containing a single string. "In San Francisco and São Paulo, in Johannesburg and Jaipur, in the Andes and the Amazon, there wasn't anywhere, or anyone, that the boxes couldn't find."

Initially, no one knows what the strings mean, but it soon becomes clear that they indicate the length of the recipient's life. There's

nothing forcing anyone to look inside the box, and some decide not to, but most bow to temptation. Quickly, society separates into factions: "long-stringers," who have the security of knowing that they will live full lives, and "short-stringers," who have a different fate.

Erlick narrates her book from alternating perspectives — some of her deftly drawn characters have long strings and some short — which gives her the space to explore the new kinds of personal decisions that people must make. When do you tell your parents that they will outlive you? How does dating work when your partner will die long before you will? Can a short-stringer decide in good conscience to have children?

But Erlick's book really shines when she tackles the bigger picture, imagining the complicated societal issues that might arise in such a scenario. Long-stringed political candidates pressure their opponents to reveal their strings as they would their taxes. The military decrees that no short-stringers will be deployed, rendering combat units essentially immortal. Mass shootings become even more commonplace, with an uptick in angry people realizing that they have nothing to lose.

Two and a half years into a pandemic that has upended the way many of us think about mortality and how we spend our time on earth, *The Measure* seems perfectly timed. It offers both an intriguing lens through which to view our complicated, often broken society and a heartfelt story about a group of people discovering that they have plenty to live for, no matter how long that life will be.

— *Rebecca Shapiro*



The Lion's Guide to Parenting

Three books from Columbia alumni promise to make raising children just a little easier.

HOW TO HAVE A KID AND A LIFE

By *Ericka Souter '02JRN*

Parenting can seem all-consuming, but according to Ericka Souter, a journalist and *Good Morning America* parenting correspondent, that hyper-focus isn't good for either parent or child. Souter encourages parents to foster their own identities, offering tips on balancing family and career, connecting with child-free friends, and keeping up with or developing hobbies.

WHEN CHILDREN FEEL PAIN

By *Rachel Rabkin Peachman '02JRN* and *Anna C. Wilson*

Pain is a universal experience from which children are certainly not exempt. But pain in children is often not taken seriously, argues science journalist and regular *New York Times* contributor Rachel Rabkin Peachman, and parents need to be taught how to treat and manage it. In her new book, cowritten with a pediatric psychologist, she gives parents the tools to help kids through everything from shots and blood draws to chronic illness.

BOOK AND BABY

By *Milda M. De Voe '01SOA*

As the founder of Pen Parentis, a nonprofit community organization dedicated to supporting writers with kids, award-winning poet and writer Milda M. De Voe knows well the challenges of balancing family with a creative career. In her first book, she draws on her own experience as well as anecdotes from other accomplished writers to offer inspiration and resources for helping parents push through the obstacles and keep writing.



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–Paul LeClerc '66GSAS, '69GSAS, and 1754 Society Chair

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READING LIST

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WE MEASURE THE EARTH WITH OUR BODIES

By Tsering Yangzom Lama '13SOA The Tibetan-Canadian writer Tsering Yangzom Lama begins her absorbing debut novel in 1960, ten years after China invaded Tibet. Two sisters — Lhamo and Tenkyi — flee their occupied homeland for a refugee camp in Nepal. Lhamo puts down roots, but Tenkyi moves on to India, then Toronto. Decades later, Lhamo's grown daughter Dolma joins Tenkyi in Canada, where she discovers a statue that she believes is a long-lost family heirloom. Inspired in part by her own family's exodus from Tibet, Lama has crafted a beautiful story about people fighting for their culture in the face of unthinkable odds.

HOTBED *By Joanna Scutts '10GSAS* On a Saturday afternoon in 1912 — nearly a decade before women's suffrage — a group of “unruly women” gathered at a Greenwich Village restaurant, eager for change. Thus began Heterodoxy, a secret social club of revolutionary women — writers, artists, scientists, activists, and socialites — that “sparked modern feminism.” In her second book, historian and literary critic Joanna Scutts paints a vivid portrait of these women and their vibrant, bohemian world — a particularly arduous task since the club deliberately kept no records of their meetings.

RAISING RAFFI *By Keith Gessen* When the novelist and Columbia Journalism School professor Keith Gessen and his wife, the writer Emily Gould, had their first child, they knew it wouldn't be easy. But their son, Raffi, pushed their patience to the absolute limit and then kept going. He was bright and hilarious but also refused to sleep, screamed all the time, and turned into a ball of wild rage at the slightest provocation. In his collection of essays — which, much like parenting itself, is both wrenching and funny — Gessen writes about Raffi's first five years and how their son upended all their expectations, for better and for worse.

THE RISE AND REIGN OF THE MAMMALS

By Steve Brusatte '13GSAS In 2018, Steve Brusatte — called “one of the stars of modern paleontology” by *National Geographic* — captivated popular-science lovers with his bestseller *The Rise and Fall of the Dinosaurs*. Now Brusatte turns his attention to our own prehistoric ancestors. Picking up after the asteroid strike some sixty-six million years ago that is believed to have killed off the dinosaurs, he tells the story of how mammals survived, thrived, and evolved. As with his first book, Brusatte shows remarkable talent for weaving hard scientific research into a riveting narrative, and for peppering his pages with fun details (the first whales



had legs! elephants were the size of miniature poodles!) that seem straight out of science fiction.

BALLADZ *By Sharon Olds '72GSAS* Since March 2020, we have lived in a state of communal angst — gripped by a pandemic that has claimed millions of lives, while also reckoning with deepening political and ideological divides. “At the time of have-not,” writes Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Sharon Olds in her latest book, “I look at myself in this mirror.” The result is a gorgeous, introspective collection. Beginning with a series of quarantine poems, she also meditates on her own white privilege, on her mother's abuse, and on aging, among other subjects. At once personal and political, the book perfectly encapsulates this confounding time.

EVERYTHING ABRIDGED

By Dennard Dayle '17SOA Nominally, Dennard Dayle's debut is a collection of short stories. But that gives short shrift to his genre-bending, deeply inventive form. Organized as a mock reference book, with entries preceding each story from abolition (“an early invasion of property rights by left-wing extremists”) to zygote (“a cell doomed to decades of empty suffering without emergency intervention”), it veers into science fiction, asking readers to imagine policing in an android society, or a copywriter tasked with advertising the weapon that could destroy the earth. Following in the tradition of writers like Columbia writing professor Paul Beatty, Dayle — a regular humor contributor to the *New Yorker* — is an exciting new voice, with deft observations and a biting, dark wit.

A Paranormal Investigation

In *The Premonitions Bureau*, *New Yorker* staff writer Sam Knight '04JRN tells the true story of a maverick psychiatrist who believed that psychic visions just might save the world



Columbia Magazine: What was the “premonitions bureau”?

Sam Knight: In October of 1966, a mountain of coal waste collapsed on the Welsh mining village of Aberfan, killing 144 people, most of them children. A psychiatrist named John Barker traveled to Aberfan and became convinced that a number of individuals had experienced supernatural warning signs before the disaster. He teamed up with Peter Fairley, a science reporter at a London newspaper, to establish the premonitions bureau, which asked the public to send in their dreams, visions, and predictions in the hope that they would prevent future tragedies.

CM: How did you learn about it, and why did it pique your interest?

SK: I’ve never had a premonition myself, but I was fascinated by the idea of them. I wanted to know what it would feel like to know that something was about to happen. So I started to do some research at the British Library. There was a treasure trove of documents from the nineteenth and early twentieth

centuries about premonitions, but I was surprised to find something so recent. At first, I assumed that the bureau was kind of hokey, like an advertising gimmick. But the more I read about John Barker, the more I realized that he was a serious doctor and scientist. Similarly, Peter Fairley was a respected journalist, known for his work covering space travel. I was intrigued by the idea of these well-credentialed collaborators pursuing this kind of investigation.

CM: The premonitions bureau collected 723 predictions, eighteen of which came true to some extent. Twelve of those eighteen came from two “human seismometers” — Kathleen Middleton and Alan Hencher — who figure prominently in your book. What do you think they had in common?

SK: I don’t want to be too glib in drawing conclusions about these two people, since I was working from old letters and documents and people’s memories. Certainly, someone might look at them and wonder if they were suffering from mental illness. Both were isolated. Both had some grandiose notions. But I was really keen to write about them as fully rounded people.

CM: The morning of the Aberfan disaster, Middleton woke up choking, convinced something bad would happen. But she had no connection to Aberfan. Why might people have premonitions about things that don’t impact them personally?

SK: Barker might bring up the Jungian idea of a collective unconscious that people are tapping into. And in that sense, I think we can see premonitions as social phenomenon. Because I have twins, I relate to the

idea that if a twin is hit by a car, the other twin might feel something even if they’re a hundred miles away. I think that many ultra-rational people might accept that idea. There’s a sympathetic projection of pain. And if people can feel that over distance, why shouldn’t they feel that over time?

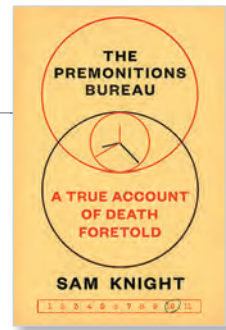
CM: Premonitions often warn about tragic events. Why don’t people have hunches about happy things?

SK: Barker’s theory was that fear is the most powerful human emotion. If you have a scary vision or emotion, you’re much more likely to remember it and act on it. Premonitions are essentially about survival; they’re about anticipating danger and avoiding it. So it’s actually advantageous to predict bad things.

CM: You write that “premonitions are impossible, and they come true all the time.” After researching this book, do you believe that premonitions are real?

SK: Without being too vague about it, it actually wasn’t my goal to decide if premonitions are real or not. I tried to write this book about a group of people from different walks of life who were united around this one idea: that they might be able to prevent something calamitous. I think, of course, that the rational explanation is that these are coincidences, just like thinking about your mother a minute before she calls, or running into a friend on the subway. But evolutionarily, our brains are trained to make connections between things. So it’s hard not to get swept up in these stories. They change us, even on a very individual level, whether we believe in them or not.

— Rebecca Shapiro



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The Strange Case of Dr. Halsted

How a cocaine-addicted surgeon changed American medicine forever

Early in his career, William Halsted 1877VPS, 1904HON removed seven gallstones from a patient. The operation, the first of its kind, was performed on a kitchen table, and the patient, a seventy-year-old woman, was Halsted's mother.

This tableau is a fair indication of Halsted's unorthodox and creative approach to medicine. Today, a hundred years after his death, this Columbia alum is remembered for his advancements in operating-room hygiene, hernia surgery, thyroidectomies, vascular aneurysms, wound healing, and, not least, techniques for the gentle handling of tissues and organs in an age that favored surgical speed.

Halsted also perfected the radical mastectomy, extending the lives of breast-cancer patients, and was a pioneer in local anesthesia. Away from the table, he developed two medical mainstays: the patient chart and the residency training program for new doctors.

Born in New York to a well-to-do family, Halsted was both a brilliant surgeon and a handsome bon vivant who loved dinner parties and entertaining. As a young man, he saved the life of not only his mother but also his sister, who hemorrhaged after childbirth and was near death when Halsted arrived at her bedside. The bold surgeon jabbed a syringe into his own arm, extracted blood, and injected it into his sister — one of the first known blood transfusions in America. His sister, like their mother, recovered.

But in 1884, everything changed. Halsted, then thirty-two, had learned of experiments out of Austria in which cocaine hydrochloride was used as a local anesthetic. "Halsted read the papers in a medical journal and realized that the doctors weren't injecting the right areas to block the nerves," says Gerald Imber, author of *Genius on the Edge: The Bizarre Double Life of Dr. William Stewart Halsted*. "So he began doing what a doctor does: he experimented on himself. Then he started using the drug on his students and colleagues at Columbia. Many became addicted; some died from overdose."

Halsted's career fell apart. Seeking treatment for cocaine addiction, he was given morphine — and got hooked on

that, too. "But he knew how to manage it," says Imber. "Using the morphine, he was able to function without the cocaine during the six to eight months he worked. The rest of the time he was injecting cocaine."

Ruined in New York, Halsted went to Baltimore, where a friend at Johns Hopkins brought him into the fold. At Hopkins, Halsted attained greatness, becoming a slower, more methodical surgeon who, while actively concealing his addictions — and earning a reputation as an enigmatic recluse — transformed the entire field.

His best-known advance, however, was accidental. In the winter of 1890, when surgery was still a barehanded, blood-soaked affair, Halsted's scrub nurse, Caroline Hampton, complained that the hand-washing solution irritated her skin. Halsted asked the Goodyear Rubber Company to make a pair of thin gloves for Hampton — which proved so effective that soon his assistants began wearing them during surgery. It was only later that the surgical gloves were found to protect patients from infection — a fact so obvious in retrospect that Halsted expressed

astonishment that "we could have been so blind as not to have perceived the necessity for wearing them invariably at the operating-table."

Halsted married Hampton, though the two lived largely separate lives, and he spent more than thirty years as chief surgeon at Hopkins. Like his mother, he suffered from gallbladder disease, and when, just shy of his seventieth birthday, he became jaundiced, he was taken to Hopkins, where doctors removed several gallstones. Halsted began bleeding internally, and so his residents tried to do for him what Halsted had done for his sister: they transfused their own blood into his veins. But they were unsuccessful. Halsted died on September 7, 1922.

William Halsted had no biological children, but in another sense, he had many. "Virtually all professors of surgery through the end of the twentieth century in America could trace their academic lineage to Halsted," Imber says. "He is, without any question, the father of modern American surgery." — *Paul Hond*



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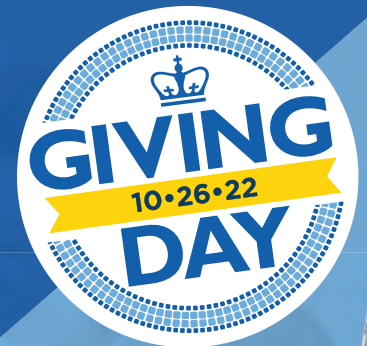
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