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THE STRAIGHT FIRE ISSUE

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EDGE

The Straight Fire Issue

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Trinitas Regional Medical Center is now a part of RWJBarnabas Health.

Together is how we get healthy. Person by person, community by community, we commit to living better, happier, healthier. Which is why RWJBarnabas Health is looking to invest, improve and serve Union County even better than before by welcoming Trinitas Regional Medical Center into our family. Trinitas will continue to serve as a Catholic teaching hospital along side our other Union County outpatient facilities and Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Rahway. Let's experience the advantages of the state's largest academic health system together, with thousands of medical professionals and physicians, dedicated researchers and partnerships with the professional schools of Rutgers University. Learn more at rwjbh.org/trinitasinfo

Trinitas Regional Medical Center

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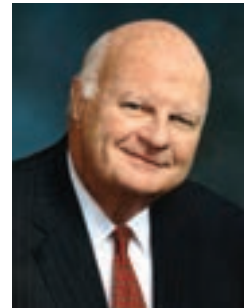


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President's Message

Would it be hyperbole to say that the interviews published in *EDGE* are absolutely unrivaled among New Jersey's many print and online magazines? I don't think so. As a case in point, this issue features conversations with Emmy-winning journalist and talk-show host **Tamron**



Hall, actress **Naomi Ackie**—who plays New Jersey's own Whitney Houston in *I Wanna Dance with Somebody*—and tennis legend **Art Carrington**, who reminisces about Elizabeth's fabled East End Club.

I credit our success in landing great interviews to doing our homework, asking good questions and creating a space where people are comfortable opening up and having thoughtful conversations. This is an outgrowth of the approach to healthcare here at Trinitas, where our medical staff has earned a reputation for taking the extra time and going the extra mile to produce the best possible patient outcomes. That culture of caring is also present in the Trinitas School of Nursing, as you'll see in **Far and Away**, an essay by one of our 2023 graduates, who put her skills to the test as a volunteer in Tanzania last year.

The theme of this issue, **Straight Fire**, is borrowed from current youth culture. Perhaps you've heard something great or amazing described as "fire." Well, *straight* fire one-ups that—and we think it describes this issue perfectly. Our Food section takes a deep dive into Mexican cuisine, our Home section offers fire-prevention tips for owners of historic homes, and our Family section features a must-read essay entitled **In Defense of Millennials**.

In other words, plenty to keep you busy as we all wait for the first warm breezes of spring!

Gary S. Horan, FACHE
President & Chief Executive Officer
Trinitas Regional Medical Center

**Trinitas Regional
Medical Center**

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HEALTH**

Genuine Mexican

It's never just the destination. It's always the journey.

By Andrea Pons

As a child growing up in León, Mexico, I often imagined what life in the United States might be like—riding yellow school buses and eating peanut butter sandwiches for lunch, just like they did in the movies. My parents were college graduates. My mother had a degree in textile design and my father owned a company that made machinery for the leather manufacturing industry. We had never struggled, never had to move.

A recession in Mexico in the early 2000s changed all of that. I sensed my parents were dealing with money troubles even though no one mentioned it. One day,

debt collectors came and removed beautiful pieces of furniture from our home. I remember my nanny yelling at them to get a job that didn't ruin people's lives.

Soon after, we boarded a flight to the Pacific Northwest, where a family friend had put down roots five years earlier. And we began a new life. My mother worked as a house cleaner and my father labored in construction to support our family while they negotiated a path through an immigration process that was so long and so complicated that their visas expired, leaving them in legal limbo. When people asked about my legal status, I would lie and say I had a green card. At school, kids



All photos courtesy of Andrea Pons and Princeton Architectural Press

threatened to call ICE on my family. I felt terrified and helpless because, one day, ICE *did* show up at the house of Mexican friends and took *their* dad away.



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Fast-forward to 2018, three months after my twenty-fourth birthday, I found myself single, divorced, and living alone. That summer, I was sicker than I'd ever been, fighting illness after illness and stomach aches from constant stress. My body and self had diverged. I no longer wanted to feel disconnected, so I started cooking at home. The food I made offered a new identity, creating a path that led me back to myself as a Mexican immigrant. With no one to tell me what I could and couldn't cook, I started to make the dishes that I missed from my childhood. It was a chance to rediscover my heritage and an opportunity to heal. Cooking these dishes was an act of self-love for the part of myself whose country said I was never enough and could never fit in.

The recipes in this story remind me of home. My childhood home and, now, my new home. They are among the many that I collected and published in a book entitled *Mamacita: Recipes Celebrating Life as a Mexican Immigrant in America*. From looking through the culinary articles and restaurant reviews in *EDGE*, I know that readers of this magazine have sophisticated and adventurous palates. They crave "authentic." I believe an important component of authenticity in any cuisine that comes to America from another place is an appreciation of the journey of the people who bring it here.

In 2018, when I started the *Mamacita* project, I had an expired green card. I received an official letter from the government stating I had two years to apply for citizenship or an extension. My path to citizenship was both unique and common. The immigration system is a labyrinth, and while many of us find ourselves in the same maze, finding our way *out* is a personal puzzle that we are often left to figure out on our own.

Applying for citizenship as a Mexican immigrant requires a level of privilege greater than most have access to or can afford. I didn't make enough money, and my family didn't either. I had to ask a family friend, Vicente, who then worked for Boeing, to be my sponsor—which was not a small request. Essentially, he signed a contract stating that he would

be financially responsible for me if I lost my job or declared bankruptcy. If Vicente had been unable to aid me financially, then the government could have sued him. Thanks to Vicente, I was able to start the application process and become a U.S. citizen. He has since passed, but I will never forget his kindness and the generosity he extended to our family.

People who believe immigration is quick and uncomplicated haven't gone through the system. It's intimidating and confusing for everyone, especially those who have to go through it. It's almost impossible to start without being financially stable. Often, people assume we aren't paying taxes. Even if we don't have status, we *still* pay taxes. The process of obtaining status can take a very long time—ultimately, it took me 15 years. Immigration laws frequently change, adding higher costs and increased complexity.

Indeed, in June 2020, I was confronted by the reality of deportation, and I've never been more scared. In a panic, I called my immigration lawyer—a privilege not everyone has—and discovered I had to start the application process *all over again*. Ten years of previous immigration paperwork no longer applied to my case! When that happens, you have no choice but to start over. For the record, there are no refunds for the applications that no longer apply. Ten thousand dollars later, I found myself on a new path toward the same goal.

Uprooting my life taught me that the only thing we can expect is everything we didn't plan to happen. Months after the initial call to my lawyer, I sat at the office of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), waiting to see whether I had passed the test. After spending two hours answering a series of life-altering questions, I did it. I achieved my parents' dream, my dream—the American dream. With a certificate in one hand and a dollar-store American flag gripped in the other, I could finally call myself a citizen of the United States.

I know it sounds dramatic, but cooking saved my life. Making these dishes helped me crawl out of a dark place of hiding and provided a space where I could

finally show up as my whole self. By immortalizing the recipes that I grew up eating as a kid in Mexico, I reconnected with the part of myself I never meant to forget. My mother, like my grandmother, has yet to use a measuring spoon. Instead, she is guided by the palms of her hands, knowing by heart how much to add. I have written these recipes down, added measurements, and simplified the process so you can make my family's recipes on your own or invite the people you love to share a meal together.

There is no greater pleasure than serving food to the people you love and seeing the delight on their faces when they taste something made just for them. When you make these recipes, I hope you feel more connected to the immigrant communities around you. I want us to keep striving to show up, help other immigrants to speak up, and listen to each other's stories. Most of all, I hope my story reminds you to trust yourself. Wherever you are now, who you are meant to be is entirely up to you.



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Recipes



Salsa Verde

Green Salsa | Makes about 3 cups

Growing up, we had various types of salsas in the fridge at all times. But there were two that never ran out: salsa verde and salsa roja. My mama would make a fresh batch every weekend for the week ahead. This salsa verde is incredibly versatile and can be used in many dishes; my favorite ones are chilaquiles verdes and pozole verde. You can additionally top a quesadilla with this salsa, mix it into your guacamole for a spicy dip, or simply eat it with tortilla chips. The options are limitless.

- 9 ounces tomatillos (about 6), divided
- 1 tablespoon avocado oil
- ½ cup chopped white onion
- 2 fresh jalapeno peppers, seeded
- 1 canned jalapeno pepper
- 1 tablespoon fresh lime juice
- ½ cup chopped cilantro leaves
- 1 teaspoon sea salt


Peel off the tomatillos' paper husks and rinse under cold running water. In a large saucepan, combine half of the tomatillos and enough water to cover them and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to medium-high and cook for 3 minutes to soften the tomatillos. Remove the tomatillos with a slotted spoon and reserve ¼ cup of the cooking liquid. Meanwhile, heat the oil over high heat. Sear the remaining tomatillos, flipping once, until brown, 1 to 2 minutes on each side. Remove from the heat. In a blender, add all of the tomatillos and the reserved ¼ cup of liquid. Blend until smooth. To the blender, add the chopped white onion, all of the jalapenos, the lime juice, cilantro, and salt. Blend until combined. Be careful not to liquify the salsa; it should be smooth with some texture. Taste and adjust the salt or lime juice as needed. Transfer the salsa to a sealed container and refrigerate.

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Carne en Salsa Verde con Papas

Pork in Green Sauce with Potatoes | Serves 4 to 6

El Dia del Padre in my household is always celebrated with a big plate of this Carne en Salsa Verde con Papas. My dad rarely likes to *enchilarse* (purposely eat spicy food to feel a burn), so he has always loved when my mama cooks dishes like this, which have all the flavor but very mild spiciness. I grew up to really love this dish, specially rolled up in a tortilla with a little bit of crema to make the salsa creamier. The green color comes from the tomatillos, but unlike their name suggests, tomatillos are not “little tomatoes,” or tomatoes at all, for that matter. Think of them rather as a cousin of the tomato. While tomatillos can turn yellow, red, or even purple with full maturity, they are only eaten unripe in Mexican dishes. When shopping for tomatillos look for ones that have dry and papery husks, avoiding those that feel moist, look shriveled, or feel damp. If buying tomatillos ahead of time, store them in a cool dry place and never place them inside the fridge.

1 pound boneless pork loin, cut into 1-inch cubes
 Sea salt and ground black pepper
 ½ teaspoon garlic powder
 1 tablespoon olive oil
 2 cups husked, rinsed, and halved tomatillos
 ¼ medium white onion
 1 garlic clove, minced
 2 jalapeno peppers, seeded
 2 tablespoons chicken bouillon powder
 2 cups halved baby potatoes
 Cooked rice for serving
 Warm tortillas for serving

Season the pork loin with salt, pepper, and garlic powder. In a deep, medium skillet, heat the oil over medium heat. Sear the pork, flipping, until browned,



2 to 3 minutes on each side. Do not cook the pork all the way through. Remove the pork from the pan and set aside. In a blender, combine the tomatillos, onion, garlic, jalapenos, chicken bouillon powder, and 4 cups of cold water. Blend well. In the same skillet, add the sauce, bring to a simmer over medium heat for 2 minutes. Add the pork and baby potatoes and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer until the potatoes are soft, about 30 minutes. Serve with a side of rice and warm tortillas.

Recipes



Crema de Elote

Cream of Corn Soup | Serves 4 to 6

This creamy corn soup comes together in less than an hour, and it's sure to be a crowd pleaser. If dairy is not your thing, I recommend using ghee for butter and cashew milk as an alternative. While most milk alternatives will work, cashew has the closest consistency and taste to dairy milk. If choosing alternative milk, stay away from coconut milk as the taste of coconut will be too strong for the soup and will overpower the true star of the dish, corn.

- 6 cups whole milk, divided
- 2 large ears corn, shucked
- 2 teaspoons chicken bouillon powder
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- Sea salt
- 2 poblano peppers, roasted, peeled, seeded, and sliced into "rajas" (strips)
- Queso panela, cubed

In a large soup pot, bring 5 cups of the milk to a simmer over medium-low heat. Continue simmering for 5 minutes. Using a sharp knife, cut the corn kernels off the cobs. In a blender, combine half of the corn kernels and the remaining 1 cup of milk and blend until smooth. Using a strainer, strain the corn mixture into the soup pot. Mix well. Add the remaining corn kernels, the chicken bouillon powder, and the butter. Simmer over medium-low heat for about 10 minutes. Do not overcook as the corn will make the soup too sweet. Season with salt. Serve hot, topped with the rajas and queso panela.



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Albondigas en Chipotle

Meatballs in Chipotle Sauce | Serves 4 to 6

In Mexico, work hours are different than in the United States. Instead of working nine-to-five with a 30-minute or hour lunch break, Mexico—a country that revolves around the next meal—has a scheduled block of two hours around three o'clock in the afternoon when people go home for comida (a midday meal that is spent with family, and the equivalent of dinner), then head back to work for another few hours before returning home around eight o'clock in the evening. This was my papa's schedule when I was a kid. On special nights, he would return home to surprise my sister and me with a rented VHS tape. I remember the night he brought home *Lady and the Tramp*. Not only did my sister Vanessa and I both love this movie, but it was also the first time we ever saw meatballs served with spaghetti instead of rice. Traditionally albondigas are served in soup, but my mama preferred to serve them dry over rice or potatoes, topped with salsa. Eating albondigas takes me back to a simpler time, sitting on the floor with Vanessa, watching two dogs kiss over a plate of meatballs and stringy noodles.

For the Meatballs...

- ¼ cup all-purpose flour, plus more as needed
- ½ pound ground beef
- ½ pound ground pork
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped onion
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 2 teaspoons finely chopped parsley leaves
- 2 teaspoons panko bread crumbs
- ½ teaspoon sea salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper
- 2 large eggs
- ¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons avocado oil

For the Salsa...

- 5 dried chipotle peppers, seeded

- 3 large tomatoes, halved
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped white onion
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 tablespoon tomato puree
- 2 tablespoons avocado oil
- Sea salt
- Cooked rice for serving (optional)
- Mashed potatoes for serving (optional)

Making the Meatballs...

Place the flour in a shallow bowl. In a large bowl, combine the remaining meatball ingredients, except the oil and mix, with your hands. Make chestnut-sized one-inch balls out of the meat mixture. Roll the meatballs in the flour and set aside. In a deep skillet, heat the 6 tablespoons of oil over medium-high heat. Briefly sear the meatballs until they turn golden brown. Set aside.

Spring is Almost Here!

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Recipes



Making the Salsa...

In a dry skillet over medium heat, lightly roast the chipotle peppers. Transfer to a soup pot, add 2 cups of water, and bring to a boil. Cook the peppers until they soften, 5 to 7 minutes. Drain the peppers, reserving 1 cup of the cooking liquid. Set aside. In a blender, combine the softened peppers, the reserved 1 cup of cooking liquid, the tomatoes, onion, garlic, and tomato puree. Blend until smooth. In a stockpot, heat the 2 tablespoons of oil over medium heat. Add the blended sauce and fry for 3 to 5 minutes. Add the meatballs and 1 ½ cups of cold water. Bring to a boil for 1 minute, then cover with a lid and simmer over medium-low heat for 15 minutes. Season with salt. Serve with rice or mashed potatoes.

Cebiche

Serves 4 to 6

Ceviche or *cebiche*? The spelling depends on the zone of Mexico in which you are eating this dish. Because I grew up knowing it as *cebiche*, I decided to keep this spelling instead of *ceviche*, which is more commonly known in the United States. Like the variation in spelling, this dish has many modifications of ingredients depending on the region and who is making it. A lot of my mama's recipes have a strong Spanish influence, which you can see in the addition of olives to many of her recipes, including this one. I like cutting my fish into cubes instead of strips. The cubes must be bite-sized—not too small and not too big—as traditionally, *cebiche* is served in a bowl and scooped up with tortilla chips to eat.

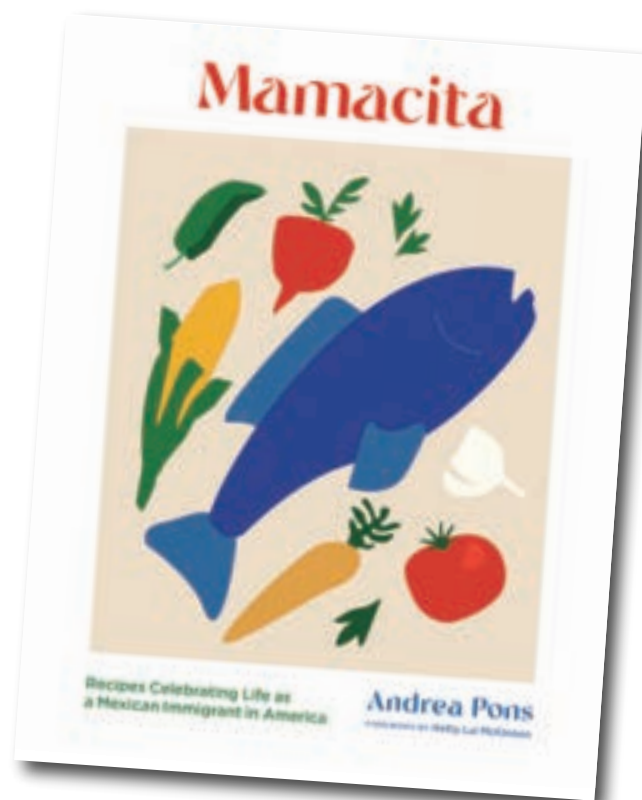
- ½ pound fresh halibut fillet (or swordfish)
- 1 lime, juiced
- 1 teaspoon sea salt
- 4 medium tomatoes
- ½ medium white onion, chopped
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 bunch cilantro leaves, chopped
- 10 green olives, pitted and halved
- 2 large jalapeno peppers, seeded and coarsely chopped
- 1 medium Hass avocado, cubed
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 2 teaspoons white wine vinegar

Rinse the halibut under cold running water and pat dry. Chop into ½-inch cubes. In a salad bowl, bathe the halibut in the lime juice, tossing so it doesn't "cook" unevenly. Season with salt and cover the bowl with plastic wrap. Place the bowl in the fridge for 1 hour. In a medium saucepan, combine the tomatoes and enough water to cover them. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat and cook until the skins begin to split, about 1 minute. Drain and rinse the tomatoes

under cold running water. Remove the skins with a paper towel. Chop the tomatoes into small cubes and set aside. Remove the halibut from the fridge, add the tomatoes, then add the onion, garlic, cilantro, olives, peppers, avocado, olive oil, and vinegar. Mix gently. Taste and season with salt as needed. Serve with crackers or tortilla chips.

Editor's Note:

Andrea Pons is a senior production manager, food stylist, and author based in Seattle, Washington. A new, expanded edition of *Mamacita: Recipes Celebrating Life as a Mexican Immigrant in America* (Princeton Architectural Press • \$29.95 at papress.com) was released in 2022.



The Chef Recommends

The EDGE Restaurant Guide

In addition to our regular food reviews, EDGE includes a selection of restaurants in each issue, taking you behind the scenes and into the kitchens of some of the area's most popular dining spots.

Do you have a "go-to" dish at a favorite restaurant?

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EDGE PEOPLE



HUMANITARIAN AWARD WINNER

Gary Horan, FACHE, President/CEO of Trinitas received the Humanitarian Award during the *Italian Tribune's* 2022 Columbus Day gala from television personality "Uncle" Floyd Vivino and Buddy Fortunato, *Tribune* publisher, at the Birchwood Manor in Whippany. In the past, celebrities like Joe DiMaggio, Frank Sinatra, Bob Hope, Connie Francis, Tommy Lasorda, Joe Pesci, and our own Vic Richel, Trinitas Chairman have been honored at this event.



ICE TIME

The New Jersey Devils visited Trinitas just in time for the 2022 holiday tree lighting. Thanks to defensemen Dougie Hamilton, John Marino and Ryan Graves—and the Devils staff—for making it a special day! RWJBarnabas Health is the official healthcare provider of the New Jersey Devils.



U NAME IT

Union County College is now Union College of Union County, New Jersey! Last fall, the College celebrated its 89th Founders Day with a celebration that included a reveal of the new logo!



If These Walls Could Talk



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New owners of old homes are learning important lessons about fire prevention.

By Mark Stewart

High demand. Low inventory. Over-ask bidding wars. Soaring prices. Roller-coaster interest rates. Whether you've participated in the New Jersey real estate market during the 2020s or just watched from afar, it has been something to see. The traditional home-buying process gave way to an out-and-out frenzy, with many purchasers ending

up owning properties they hadn't remotely considered when they first started out. In many cases, New Jerseyans found themselves moving into century-old (or older) homes without a full understanding of what they were getting into. In some cases, they were attracted by the charm and detail of historic structures. In other cases, newer (or fully updated) construction



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was financially out of reach. Sometimes, it was all that was available in their target area and in their price range.

Now they are coming to grips with the unique responsibilities involved in owning a vintage home, such as repairs, upgrades and general upkeep. Understanding the fire-safety picture is one of the most important ones and, distressingly, also one of the most overlooked.

Historic properties are full of surprises, mostly pleasant ones. Among the most significant ones is that, if fire should break out, they actually tend to give occupants much more time to exit safely than newer construction. This may seem counterintuitive at first, but think about it: Their thick plaster walls and (typically) higher-quality materials and construction, can slow the spread of a blaze—or at least take longer to burn. Many newer homes have “safety times” of five minutes or less (sometimes as little as two minutes), which means that is how long you have to safely exit in a fire before your

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odds of survival begin to plummet. Older homes have safety times of 15 minutes or more, in many cases because they feature natural materials that burn relatively slowly and do not emit toxic fumes when ignited. Also, their ceilings tend to be higher.

"Higher ceilings can help in early smoke detector activation and notification to the resident to evacuate the home," says Westfield Fire Chief Michael Duelks, CPM. "With higher ceilings it takes longer for smoke to bank down to standing height, which again helps the resident to evacuate early."

A People Problem

What causes fires in historic homes? For the most part, the same thing that causes fires in brand-new homes: people. Roughly half of the 350,000 annual house fires in the United States have to do with cooking. They start in the kitchen or somewhere else where food is being prepared or served. The next culprit is heating equipment, most notably space heaters, at 13%. Smoking, which used to be a major cause of house fires, now only accounts for 5%—not because smokers have suddenly become more careful, but because there are far fewer of them. Indeed, more than 20% of home fire fatalities occur in blazes started by smoking materials.

Electrical fires make up almost 10% of household fires, and this is where owners of older homes need to be extra vigilant. It's a catch-all category, of course, but it includes faulty and over-burdened wiring, which needs to be identified and addressed before you plug your entire entertainment system into a power strip—and then plug that power strip into a wall outlet.

An experienced house inspector is usually able to identify points of immediate concern. Some are obvious, like old-school knob and tube wiring (*above right*)—or another non-grounded system—which was fine for its time but not designed for today's appliances. This is an item, by the way, that could cause your home insurance premiums to be much higher than expected because, when inadequate wiring is overloaded, it



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Gray Area

Part of the appeal of buying an old house is the realization that, in some ways, no one truly “owns” a historic structure. You’ll just be taking care of it for the next family who will make memories there. Okay, but what if those sweet old grandparents who handed you the keys at closing haven’t taken care of their home? This is no joke—the National Fire Protection Association actually lists *Demographics* as one of the Top 5 causes of house fires.

If that sounds like a loaded term, well, it is. A Victorian home owned by a family struggling to make ends meet is far more likely to have deferred maintenance issues than an identical Victorian owned by a wealthy commuter. The same holds true for elderly homeowners, or people who have lived in the same home for more than a generation. They tend to put things off or become “nose-blind” to chronic problems that could have fire-safety implications. The NFPA isn’t judging—they’ve just picked a word and slapped it on a statistic.



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increases the chance that an arc fault will occur, which can create enough heat to start a fire inside a wall.

That charming 1920s bungalow only needed 30 or 40 amps worth of service when the first family moved in. You’ll probably use at least five times that amount. In all likelihood, previous owners upgraded the electrical capacity incrementally. That can be as much of a curse as a blessing. If some of that work was shoddy or is just wearing out, it can be really difficult to catch in an inspection. It becomes incumbent upon the new owner to be aware of some signs that this might be a problem—for instance, if the same circuit breaker keeps clicking off, or your lights are flickering. And, of course, if you detect a strange “burning” smell but can’t quite figure out where it’s coming from, that’s not good. One option for new owners of old homes is to have an electrician install circuit interrupters. Circuit interrupters detect an abnormality in how electricity is moving through your house and interrupt the circuit.

What You Can't See Can Hurt You

Something else you might ask the seller of an older home is whether it was built with balloon framing, which was a popular money-saving decision for builders from the 1860s to the 1930s. "Balloon frame construction is a wood framing method where exterior wall studs are continuous from the sill plate to the roof plate," Chief Duelks explains. "Floors are attached to ribbon board, with no fire-stopping structure within the walls."

Instead of sitting on heavy timbers and skillfully crafted connecting joints, floors basically sit on the walls; you've probably heard the term "load-bearing" and this is what it means. The outside walls are basically hollow and, in a fire, can act like chimneys, carrying a basement fire to the roof in a matter of minutes.

"Fires can be concealed and travel thru the void channels unnoticed in balloon frame construction," Duelks adds. "When smoke is visible from the attic, a team should be sent to ensure there is not an active fire in the basement. A fire in the basement can travel all the way to the attic unnoticed thru the void channels."

Since the 1930s, platform framing has addressed this issue. If you are planning to make an offer on a home with balloon framing, make sure to figure in the cost of blowing foam insulation into the exterior walls, which has the added advantage of preventing the "chimney effect."

Speaking of chimneys, in older homes a regularly used fireplace can create potentially combustible creosote deposits over time. When they ignite, the resulting chimney fire can be extremely destructive. Also, older flue linings can crack, which can increase the possibility of a fire. A pre-sale chimney inspection has become a common ask from buyers. If you didn't get one, get one.

In Westfield, where many structures date back to the mid-1800s, Chief Duelks says that it is not unheard of for



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homes to have secret rooms, tunnels, and passageways that lead to other buildings—adding to the many challenges firefighters encounter when responding to calls at what he terms "historical-built" houses.

Un-Handy Men

An overlooked fire issue in older homes is the renovation work that is sometimes undertaken in the months after purchase. Often, buyers will want to address deferred maintenance or make upgrades before they move in. Historic homes and open flames are not a good combination, which means you'll want plumbers, roofers and other contractors working with heating elements to have experience in old houses. For example, some roof repairs (flashing for instance) may involve a torch. Is there a layer of tar paper hiding beneath? Torch-down roofing on a flat roof section? It is as dangerous as it sounds in inexperienced hands. What about the plumber who sweats a joint and then packs up for the day? During cold-weather renovations, workers often bring powerful space heaters into old

More from the NFPA

A recent report by the National Fire Protection Agency looked at a period (2015 to 2019) prior to the pandemic and came up with the following numbers:

- 26% of all reported fires in the US were home structure fires
- US fire departments responded to an average of 346,800 home structure fires a year
- 69% of home structure fires occurred in one- or two-family homes, but accounted for 85% of fire deaths
- The number of home fires and home fire deaths is half what it was in 1980; most of that reduction came between 1980 and 2000



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homes. Do they know whether your electrical system can handle those heaters?

If a big renovation is in your plan, in addition to picking a contractor with a track record in similar homes, make sure that the materials the contractor plans to use are the same quality as the rest of the house. "Modern" isn't always better, even if it saves you a couple of bucks. A wood floor may cost more than vinyl flooring but, in a house fire, a wood floor may give you the few extra minutes that save your family's life.

Chief Duelks points out that the same fire-safety rules that apply to new owners of historic homes apply to owner of all homes (and vice versa).

"All homes, regardless of the age, should have smoke and carbon monoxide detectors," he says. "A fire extinguisher should also be within visual site of the kitchen in the event of a kitchen fire. Hire a reputable company to perform a home inspection as well as licensed contractors. Operating smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are extremely important, they save lives. Never hesitate to call the fire department if the alarms activate or if you may have concerns. Finally, have a plan to get out fast, designate a meeting place outside your home for all your family members and practice your safety plan at least once every six months."

As mentioned earlier, buying a wonderful old home does not increase your chances of experiencing a catastrophic fire. What it *does* is up the ante on following basic fire-safety and fire-prevention rules everyone should be following anyway. **EDGE**

Editor's Note: Mark Stewart has owned two homes built in the early 1900s, another in the mid-1800s, and recently purchased a property built in 1795. So far, no fires. Special thanks to the Westfield Fire Department and Elizabeth Fire Department for their help with this feature.

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A play list you won't see anywhere else.

There have been at least a couple of dozen films that play off the word “straight”—stretching all the way back to the silent-movie era. It’s a word with multiple definitions and uses, as well as new meanings in language and culture. We’ve picked the eight most noteworthy examples, including a couple of classics and more than a few that flew under the radar and are now worth a second look.



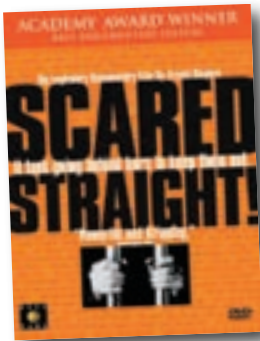
Getting Straight • 1970

If you ever wondered what an actor like Elliott Gould could do to elevate a so-so script, *Getting Straight* is a textbook example. Set in the late-1960s, this “serious comedy” follows a Vietnam vet trying to get his teaching degree on a college campus roiling with student unrest. Candice Bergen co-stars as his girlfriend, who just happens to be the leader of the escalating demonstrations. Look closely and you’ll see teenaged Harrison Ford in one of his first speaking roles.



Straight Time • 1978

In an era when many big-name stars sold out for big-budget movies, Dustin Hoffman remained true to his craft, picking scripts that challenged him and his audiences. *Straight Time* is a wonderfully gritty “neo-noir” film that profiles a disillusioned ex-con who simply isn’t wired to rejoin society...and it’s up to us to figure out why. The supporting cast—which includes Kathy Bates, Gary Busey, Theresa Russell, Harry Dean Stanton and M. Emmett Walsh—is terrific.



Scared Straight! • 1978

Filmed at Rahway State Prison—and relentlessly parodied on *Saturday Night Live*—this film was not only acclaimed in its time...it won an Academy Award for Best Documentary. *Scared Straight!* shows a riveting three-hour session between cocky juvenile offenders and hardened criminals. The film was aired on television uncensored, marking the first time that many stations allowed foul language to be broadcast. Peter Falk served as the narrator.



Straight Out of Brooklyn • 1991

More than a decade before Lawrence Gilliard Jr. earned fame as D'Angelo Barksdale on *The Wire*, he portrayed Dennis, a Brooklyn teenager desperate to break free of the cycle of poverty and domestic violence that is dragging him down. His solution is to rip off a local drug dealer and move his family out of the projects, but he and his buddies get more trouble than they bargained for. George T. Odom, who plays Dennis's father is particularly good in a movie that received glowing reviews and won a special jury prize at the Sundance Film Festival.



Straight Talk • 1992

This classic 90s Rom-Com features good performances from James Woods and Dolly Parton, along with talented supporting players John Sayles, Griffin Dunne, Teri Hatcher, Spalding Gray, Jerry Orbach and Michael Madsen. Parton fans snapped up the soundtrack, which featured 10 original songs by Dolly. The movie is a lighthearted commentary on radio therapists, as Parton's character rockets from a switchboard operator to beloved "Doctor Shirlee" shortly after moving from Arkansas to Chicago. Woods plays the journalist who discovers she is no doctor at all.

~~Honorable~~ Horrible Mention

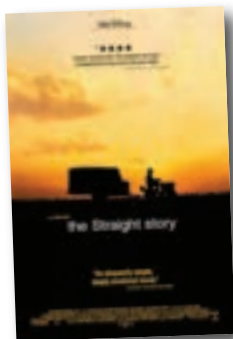
The Gang that Couldn't Shoot Straight • 1971

How bad could a mob comedy featuring the talents of Robert De Niro, Burt Young, Jerry Orbach, Joe Santos and Frank Campanella be? The words *borderline unwatchable* come to mind. The movie, based on Jimmy Breslin's book about Crazy Joe Gallo, is an unfunny mess. Al Pacino was originally going to be the star, but opted out to play Michael Corleone. Francis Ford Coppola planned to direct until producer Irwin Winkler decided he lacked the skills to make a Mafia movie so, as every film buff knows, Coppola ended up directing Pacino in a pretty good flick called *The Godfather*. *The Gang that Couldn't Shoot Straight* features the film debut of Herve Villechaize, but his voice is dubbed throughout.



Did You Know?

In the MTV cartoon series *Beavis and Butt-Head*, the boys are ordered to attend a *Scared Straight!* program...and have so much fun they try to get *back* into the prison.



The Straight Story • 1999

David Lynch has made some of the most imaginative and compelling films in recent history, including *The Elephant Man*, *Blue Velvet* and *Mulholland Drive*. Why *The Straight Story* is rarely part of this list is difficult to understand. The true story of Alvin Straight, who drove 240 miles from Iowa to Wisconsin on a riding mower to visit his ailing brother, it co-stars Richard Farnsworth, Sissy Spacek and Harry Dean Stanton. Each actor is capable of teaching a master class and, in this film, they pretty much do. Unfortunately, critical acclaim and numerous awards did not translate into big box office for this uncharacteristically sentimental Lynch oeuvre.



Straight Outta Compton • 2015

Rap video producer F. Gary Gray directed this biopic about the origins of the multi-platinum rap group N.W.A., led by Ice Cube, Eazy-E and Dr. Dre. O'Shea Jackson and Jason Mitchell do brilliant work playing Ice Cube and Eazy-E, respectively, while Paul Giamatti plays their slick manager, Jerry Heller. The movie title comes from N.W.A.'s 1988 hit of the same name. You don't have to love rap or even care about its evolution to enjoy this movie, which follows the group's rise and fall.



Straight Up • 2019

A small independent film that was partially crowd-funded and shot in under three weeks, *Straight Up* challenges the idea of what a love story is when it doesn't include sex. Todd suffers from OCD and isn't a fan of bodily fluids. He meets Rory—a struggling actress who has difficulty forming emotional connections—in the self-help section of a library. Writer-director James Sweeney plays Todd, while TV veteran Katie Findlay plays Rory.

Photo Credits

Getting Straight • Columbia Pictures
Straight Time • Warner Bros.
Straight Out of Brooklyn • The Samuel Goldwyn Co.

Straight Talk & The Straight Story • Buena Vista Pictures
The Gang That Couldn't Shoot Straight • Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer
Beavis & Butt-Head • Fleer Corp.

Scared Straight! • Golden West Television
Straight Outta Compton • Universal Pictures
Straight Up • Strand Releasing

EDGE

interview

Tamron Hall

There is no magic formula for breaking down barriers. The individuals who do so, by nature and definition, are the ones who bring unique skills and perspective to an obstacle where others have tried and failed. **Tamron Hall** began her career in broadcast journalism as a small-town reporter and outworked, outhustled and, let's face it, "out-Tamron'd" the competition until she was co-hosting the third hour of *Today*, sitting behind the anchor desk on *NBC Nightly News* and had her own primetime hour on MSNBC. In 2019, she launched *The Tamron Hall Show*, a syndicated talk show that has already won her a pair of Daytime Emmys. **Gerry Strauss** was curious how a gifted storyteller with a passion for detail could make such a splash in a format where other people do the talking. It turns out, Tamron Hall's other secret power is listening.

EDGE: Have you always been intrigued by people and their stories?

TH: I have. My grandfather, who was born in 1901, lived on a very small street in Luling, Texas called Cosi. All of the people there had either been sharecroppers or had worked in conditions that were the real challenges of black Americans. And that's putting it lightly. I was always curious about their lives. There was a woman named Mama Susie, who was a hundred years old. I think I was 10. I would go down and talk with her. She was a midwife who had outlived all of her children and her husband. So I guess, looking back, I was always honing the skillsets needed for my job. I just didn't know it.

EDGE: When did the idea of becoming a television journalist start?

TH: When I was a teenager in the '80s. I finally saw a woman doing it that looked like me. My father and I were watching television one day—I was not being the best student, we'll say—and he said, "If you get your

grades up, that could be you." He pointed at this woman, Lola Johnson. At the time, she was the first black woman to anchor the news in North Texas. I saw a black female journalist, I saw this anchorwoman who was sitting next to this white man, and she was as composed and as strong, and had this really beautiful, rich, baritone voice. Wow! There was something about it emotionally that connected in a way that nothing had prior to that. I grew up like any kid at that time, with Michael Jackson and Madonna posters on my wall. I ran out to the mall to get all the bangles and the layers that Madonna wore in her "Borderline" video. I was an MTV junkie. I loved that...but I knew I couldn't do that. Seeing Lola Johnson, there was something about her delivery of the news that I felt was my destiny. This was a job I hadn't known was possible. It was not on the list of things when you have Career Day at Carroll Peak Elementary School in Fort Worth, Texas.



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EDGE: As a black woman in your field, was it an uphill battle to earn the types of serious, high-level assignments that would help enhance your reputation as a journalist?

TH: Oh, I think it's *still* challenging for me, to be quite honest. The first and only time I've ever lost a job in my life, I was 48 years old and I'd been a journalist for 30 years. I went into interview for job opportunities after leaving the *Today Show* as the first black woman to ever *do* that show. I'd won an Edward R. Murrow Award and had been Emmy-nominated for work that I'd done as a consumer reporter and covering the election of Barack Obama with the NBC News team. I'd filled in that last week for Lester Holt. I hosted my hour of the *Today Show*. I filled in for my friend Savannah Guthrie, who was on maternity leave, and hosted my hour on MSNBC. I went into a number of news organizations who essentially were offering me kind of journeymen fill-in roles. I remember a conversation where someone said, "Oh, well, someone's going on maternity leave." I said, "Oh, Anderson Cooper's going on maternity leave? I didn't even know that he was going to have a baby! Congratulations to him." [Laughs] I say this very cautiously because every opportunity is an opportunity to shine. Some of my biggest breaks were when I got a chance to fill in for someone. That said, direct to your question, I felt my résumé—and the response from viewers when it was revealed that I was leaving—gave me some value. But it didn't. And I think that is an example of the ongoing challenges, to the question you asked, being a black woman in this industry.

EDGE: Having lived and worked all over the country, in so many different cities, do you feel the perspective you've gained makes you a more astute journalist and observer of the world?

TH: Oh, absolutely. Listen, my summers were spent in Luling, Texas after my mom—who was a 19-year-old single mom—took advantage of an opportunity in a bigger city so she could become the person that she



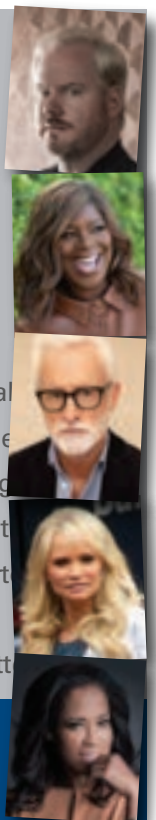
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Disney General Entertainment

wanted to be, a teacher. This was a very small, rural town. Even now, when my relatives are ill, they've got to drive 45 minutes or an hour to just see a doctor—and I'm not talking about specialists. There is one doctor

who comes in to Luling who provides medical care—I believe it's like once or twice a week—to people who cannot afford to go into Austin or Houston. That happens *right now*. I have a relative who was recently diagnosed with Alzheimer's. For her to see *anyone*, she's got to drive an hour, and she is on government healthcare. I think about that every day I walk through the streets of New York and I see a rental that's \$30,000 a month for two bedrooms. This dichotomy not only has helped my journey as a reporter, it helps my journey as a human. It reminds me I was lucky enough to be a reporter covering some of the biggest stories in a local market, because that gave me perspective on a national scale. I always tell people when someone says to me, "Oh, I hate watching local news," that you have the wrong perspective, because local news is going to tell you when that highway is closed down that you take

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every day, or when there is a disaster coming your way in your town. So I was fortunate not only to your point of having lived in all these different cities, I was a local reporter in the streets of those cities.

EDGE: Does this depth of experience make you a better talk show host?

TH: It definitely helped me and what I do right now as a talk show host. I think that when I launched this show, people wondered what it would be. And I always knew that it was going to be those steps that you just mentioned as a reporter, as a kid from a small town, as a kid who's lived in the heart of Manhattan, and in the smallest street in Luling, Texas. Those tools and those experiences were what I always planned to bring to the show, and that's why the show is the type of show that it is.

EDGE: When you signed the contract to co-anchor the third hour of the *Today Show* in 2014—which was a history-making opportunity for you—you chose to wear a jacket that was previously owned and worn by Lena Horne. What was the connection that you felt with Ms. Horne and what she brought to the world?

TH: Growing up, Lena Horne was everywhere. She was this fairy godmother. You know Glinda in the *Wizard of Oz*? That was Lena Horne for me. I always admired the elegant but strong way she floated through rooms. There was always a presence of power, of strength, of being unapologetic. I also recognized her authentic voice as a kid, in the beauty salon, with my aunt reading *Jet* magazine, reading *Ebony*, reading about Lena and Harry Belafonte. I felt that what she represented and embodied was what I wanted out of my career. And so fast-forward when I ultimately *lost* that job, I thought

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about how would she have handled it. Would she get down in the dirt and try to leak stories and get mad? Or would she elegantly learn that there are more than one set of wings available? I thought a lot about how she handled adversities that I can't even imagine—and did it in a way that made black people proud *and* also made white audiences root for her. That's something that didn't happen a lot then when you belonged to the black community. She, in so many ways, belonged to the greatness of America, and the greatness that a black woman can present as a representative of this country.

EDGE: Having rolled the dice on yourself, and now that *The Tamron Hall Show* is a such a success, do you feel you were prepared for it?

TH: I was not prepared. I'm a journalist! I'm used to working for the big network with the three letters behind it and was able to go in, do my job, and leave. Suddenly, I'm not just a journalist, I'm now a host and I'm a businessperson. It required me to make big decisions, such as changing executive producers, making sure the voice of the show was the voice that I went in and pitched. That didn't mean I wasn't open to changes, but I had to have my north star. I just read Trevor Noah's [*The Daily Show*] exit interview, and he said he never imagined having to chime in about set design, having to chime in about HR and hiring. I had no idea. I felt that I had this very open life that was right for daytime television. As Liam Neeson said, "I always felt that I had a particular set of skills." [Laughs] But I had not run a business. Disney backs my show, but they expect me to make money. They expect me to get out there and use my name and my connections to build the show. I liken it to an artist who goes on a tour that Pepsi sponsors. Pepsi sponsors it, but you've got to sell the tickets. When your name is on the show, buyers buy that, but sometimes they don't, if you know what I mean.

EDGE: How so?

TH: “Oh, great! We like Tamron Hall. We like the storytelling. We like the real people. Now...how many celebrities can you get?” Well, I didn’t pitch a celebrity-driven daytime show. We want celebrities on, but we don’t want people who come on and say, “Here’s my movie. Come see it. Bye. Oh, and don’t ask me about the reason why I was trending two days ago.” *We can’t do that.* “No, just book them, book them, book them. Have them come on and have them pitch and leave.”

EDGE: So that was the pressure early on?

TH: Yes, and I had to stay strong on my beliefs. I grew up watching Mike Douglas and Dinah Shore and Barbara Walters and Oprah Winfrey and Phil Donahue—people who got you to talk. That’s where “Let’s talk about it” came from. It started when Yoko Ono and John Lennon hosted on a daytime show. When Muhammad Ali was a regular, not on Carson, but on Mike Douglas. He came to talk about racism within America as it correlates to sports. People forget that. So that’s what we wanted to bring, that type of energy. It took some time, to be honest with you, before all parties who believed in me believed in that concept.

EDGE: What is the key to having memorable conversations with your guests?

TH: It’s curiosity. The most important trait in being able to connect with people is being curious. That helped me as a reporter, and that got the attention of the networks when I was in Chicago. I think it helped the quality of work that I was doing. I was as curious about Ryan Harris, a kid who was murdered, and what happened in this situation that turned his life into a tragic story—just as curious as I was about how did Barack Obama, a kid raised in Hawaii by his grandparents, become the president. I was lucky enough to interview him in Chicago, but my curiosity about him was not greater than my curiosity about Ryan. Or about a young girl who was murdered on the South Side of Chicago, who actually inspired my first novel.



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EDGE: What else in addition to curiosity?

TH: I went from being the youngest person in my newsroom when I started in Dallas, Fort Worth or Bryan-College Station. By the time I left MSNBC, I think I was the third-oldest woman on air. I tell my team, there are people right now who grew up where I grew up who could probably do this job better—timing, preparedness, work ethic. Not to say they didn’t, but what are you willing to sacrifice and give up? I remember being out covering an Amtrak derailment in Bourbonnais, Illinois. It was like 15 below zero, and I hadn’t layered that day. Because you’re a general assignment reporter, you don’t get to pick your assignment. And I was assigned going out the door, this derailment, dark of night, and just thinking, *This is what? I don’t want to do this. This is not what I want to do.* But these are the moments where you ask yourself, *What am I made of?* And I’m made of whatever the good stuff is that makes a reporter. I’d like to believe those are some of the things that I have within me.



Tamron Hall/Facebook

EDGE: For many years, you have dedicated yourself to educating the public about domestic violence. In what ways do you feel we have made the most progress?

TH: Oh, I think many, many ways. I remember the Ray Rice story. He was the NFL player who, in 2014, was captured on video beating his wife. He admitted to it and did the rounds, if you will, of interviews. I think he did a big one on the *Today Show*. At the time, I remember so many people asking, “Why does she stay with him? Why doesn’t she just leave?”

EDGE: Turning their attention to Ray Rice’s wife—

TH: Yes and holding her somehow responsible. Also, expecting her to suddenly leave her family and leave her husband. We don’t talk like that as much anymore. You don’t see that wagging of the finger. There is a more nuanced conversation, even when you talk about men who are guilty and who’ve been convicted of abuse. Can you rehabilitate? Can you help this person learn the skill sets that are needed to keep them from believing that a fist is the best way to resolve? Those conversations are happening now. I remember when I

started out, it was take the family and the dad goes to jail, or whatever, and blame the mom for being there. That was even in the media. Now you’re seeing people recognize that it is not black and white. It is a complex conversation, but it is one that we can have together.

EDGE: What’s a project you’d like to do purely for enjoyment?

TH: You know what? I’ve worked since I was 14 years old. I’d love to produce some shows that are fun, that are places that you can genuinely bring people together. I would love to sit around and consult on a few shows and give ideas. But honestly, I tell my team this all the time: I want to retire and I want to watch shows and see their names on the credits, and I can take credit for them. I’m a TV junkie. I was a latchkey kid. To anybody not old enough to know what that is, I was the kid who came home and unlocked the door and watched TV. I just want to sit around and enjoy good TV and laugh and smile and cry—all the things that I hope people do when they’re watching our show. But my “kids” will grow up and they’ll do it better...all our producers on *The Tamron Hall Show*, they’ll do it better. **EDGE**

Editor’s Note: During this interview, Gerry Strauss asked Tamron Hall about her work as a novelist. Needless to say, that took their conversation in an entirely different direction. To read her answer, visit edgemonline.com and scroll to the conclusion of this Q&A.

Slang is Straight Fire

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A look at our beloved and indispensable shadow language.

By Rachel Rutledge

Of all the everyday things humans use, nothing is more human than the use of slang. It is a tool wielded by every culture, subculture and sub-subculture that enables people to communicate clearly and confidently—without actually *saying* what they mean. As a bonus, slang doubles as a kind of membership card: If you don't understand it, sorry, you're not in the club. And while it can be mean-spirited, it is more likely to be funny, charming or silly. Sometimes, it's all of these.

Straight fire, the theme of this issue, is slang for what past generations might have called radical. Or crazy

good. Or, a century ago, the bee's knees.

Bee's knees, for the record, was a Prohibition cocktail made with real gin, real lemon juice and real honey. In other words, *the absolute best*. But wait. Before it was a drink, a *bee's knee* meant something really tiny. Also, during the 1920s, the most famous dancer of the Charleston was a sexpot named Bee Jackson. Were Bee's *actual* knees, exposed for all to admire, the absolute best? By the time the experts got around to answering this question, bee's knees had been replaced by other superlatives, including *cat's pajamas*.



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That's another thing about slang. It is a creature of the moment, constantly changing, often for no reason other than change itself. What might be cool today is likely to be uncool a year from now, and then quaint, nostalgic and ultimately forgotten. Consider some common slang from the 1990s, when dinosaurs roamed the earth: Crunk, Fly, Buggin' Out, Talk to the Hand—when was the last time you heard someone use any of these non-ironically? Social media has accelerated the spread of new slang and, as part of the same process, accelerated the demise of old slang. Honestly, sometimes it's hard to keep up with it all.

Dark Origins

Historically speaking, two things are almost certainly true about the use of slang: 1) the concept was invented by criminals and 2) it has always flourished in and sprung forth from cities. For countless centuries

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ESL Challenges

The misuse of slang offers an endless well of comic possibilities. Think of Steve Martin and Dan Aykroyd on the recurring *SNL* Festrunk Brothers skits from the 1970s. The two “wild and crazy guys” were hilariously confident in their tenuous grasp of American slang and it was funny because it was true. Learning American slang has long been one of the most challenging aspects of learning English as a second language, but also an absolute necessity. Master some key slang expressions, the thinking goes, and you’re likely to “blend in” sooner.



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and, until relatively recently, people communicated face-to-face in public settings. That worked well unless you didn’t want others overhearing what you had to say. In towns and cities where meeting places tended to be crowded with eavesdroppers, it would have been difficult to plot or plan or coordinate nefarious activities. However, if the folks at the next table over had no idea what you were talking about, you could enjoy a level of security. Slang was a kind of verbal encryption.

Slang was also a neat way to prevent newcomers and outsiders from integrating comfortably into the culture of a town. Cockney rhyming slang raised this to an art form. It is possible to understand every word of a conversation between two East End Londoners and have no idea what they are talking about. “Bees and Honey” means *money*, “Fisherman’s Daughter” means *water* and “Rattle and Clank” means *bank*. And so on and so forth.

Interestingly, lexicographers are somewhat at odds regarding the origin of the word *slang* itself. It shows up in English texts in the late-1700s, but its roots may

be Scandinavian. Some have traced it to the Norwegian word *slengja*, which refers to the use of abusive language. One of the tricky things about pinning down the roots of slang is that, almost by definition, it was spoken as opposed to being written down. That was true pretty much up until the advent of texting, Tweeting and social medial posts.

Staying Power

A quick Google search will turn up an endless number of lists of slang expressions that have fallen out of favor, changed meaning or blipped completely out of existence. Which makes one wonder which currently popular slang terms will have the staying power of classic words like *Cool* and which will go the way of *Wisenheimer*, *Daddy-o* and *Knuckle Sandwich*. I’m betting that *Karen*, *Ghosted*, *Basic*, *Throwing Shade* and *Low Key* will one day be dim memories.

Oh, and add *Straight Fire* to that list. If it hasn’t gone out of vogue in the two months since I turned in this story! **EDGE**

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A World Away

My hands-on nursing adventure in Dar es Salaam.


By Alexandra Redmond

Three planes. Thirty hours. Tired, nervous and excited, I collected my bags on a Saturday at Julius Nyerere Airport in Tanzania and prepared myself for my first day as an intern in the labor ward at Muhimbili University National Hospital in Dar es Salaam. I was one of 40 or so volunteer medical and

nursing students sharing a house owned by Work the World, a program specializing in healthcare internships in Africa and Asia. My goal was to gain hands-on experience and clinical hours in obstetrics between semesters at the Trinitas School of Nursing. I was starting on Monday.

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I think of myself as an adventurous person and I have done more traveling than most—to Southeast Asia twice, several countries in Europe, and Mexico several times. I am comfortable interacting with people and respectful of their cultures. I had never been to Africa, however, and was not familiar with Tanzania before I arrived. I was unsure what to expect, although I knew that the hospital where I would be working was not going to be comparable to anything we have here in the United States.

I am somewhat of a latecomer to nursing. I had been interested in the profession when I was 18, but it seemed really hard to me at the time and I questioned whether I could handle it. I went to college and earned a communications degree and then worked in the franchising industry for nine years.

When I was 29, my father was admitted to the hospital for an emergency triple-bypass. I worked remotely for several days from his hospital room and, while I was there, I talked with the nurses a lot. The whole experience with my dad (he pulled through and is doing fine) reignited my interest in pursuing nursing as a career. I started classes at Trinitas in January of 2020—great timing, yes, I know—and graduated in January of 2023.

I am the oldest sister in my family by 10 years and the oldest cousin by eight years, so I basically remember when everybody in my family was born. I found this more exciting than anything else in my life as a young girl. So as I started nursing school, I was interested in obstetrics and knew I wanted to go into labor and delivery. I conveyed this to my professors, who advised me to wait a year and keep my options open. But once we were in our semester of obstetrics, I knew that's where I wanted to be.

Siblings are typically close together in age and don't remember the experience of being in the hospital

when their younger sisters and brothers are born. But I was 10 when I met my little sister, within an hour of her being born. I wasn't in the delivery room, but I remember being there with my mom and holding her. She was so tiny. It is one of my core memories. I remember what I was wearing and what it smelled like there and the feeling of amazement of seeing this baby that just came into the world—and being amazed by my mom. Since then, I've always been interested in the birth experiences that women have.

The first time I was in the delivery room at Trinitas, I really felt like I was part of a team. It all seemed very natural to me. The baby was born after a long, 24-hour labor. It was striking how much work the mother did, how exhausted she was, and how miserable she was while going through the most physically difficult thing she'll probably do in her life—and then seeing that “switch” when she was holding her baby for the first time and how all that suddenly didn't matter. She was happy and glowing and crying. And I was crying.

I have been in the room for a lot of births and delivered several babies myself since then...and I *still* cry every time.

I came across Work the World while searching for a summer labor and delivery internship. In Europe, where the program is based, midwifery is kind of parallel to nursing. In the UK, for instance, nursing students do not typically learn about women's health. To gain that knowledge, they often volunteer for midwifery programs abroad. Here in the US, the nursing programs are more comprehensive and include obstetrics training, but students are only allowed to watch procedures, not get their “hands dirty.” Often, your first chance to put a learned skill to work may not come until your first job.

Sure enough, I received valuable clinical training working directly with patients and midwives, assisting



in deliveries on a daily basis. I was able to do things that nursing students here just don't get to do. For instance, we had to take a phlebotomy course, I learned how to start IVs there, I administered oxytocin to induce labor, and I learned how to handle all types of monitoring. I delivered four babies and scrubbed in on five c-sections. One of my deliveries was breech and another involved shoulder dystocia. Each mother of these four babies I had supported throughout her labor, from two to 10 hours. There were other mothers for whom I was there during all stages of labor. After delivery, I was constantly assessing the mothers and the babies. They were *my* patients.

The midwives ran the show in the labor ward at Muhimbili Hospital. Most were very caring and nice toward the mothers, but there were a couple who regarded their patients as being uncooperative when they were just in a lot of pain. There are no epidurals and no pain medications available for mothers there and when they yelled the midwives would sometimes yell back. Some practices I witnessed would be unheard of and unacceptable in the US, and I found them very upsetting at times. But I wasn't there to criticize how they treated their patients. I was there to learn.

Along with the learning opportunity came certain challenges for which it turned out I was unprepared.



Resources we take for granted here are scarce to non-existent. For example, we had one fetal heartrate monitor for the whole floor, no IV pumps, and there were no individual rooms for the patients. Each area was divided into bays by plastic curtains. In each bay was a bed, a stool and an empty nightstand. Patients brought their own supplies to the hospitals—including sheets, pillows and drinking water. The only thing provided was a basic Foley catheter. The different wards in the hospital were connected by outdoor walkways. There were few if any doors separating inside from outside, including in the surgical ward.

Another surprise was that I was the only American in the program. Most of the people living in the residence were from the UK or Europe. There were a couple of people from Australia and a couple from Turkey. There was a lot of change over. Every week new people were

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coming in. There were eight of us that came in my week. We stuck together and became pretty close, and we've all kept in touch.

Every morning we would travel to the hospital in little three-wheeled taxis called *tuk tuks*. The culture in Dar es Salaam (the translation of which, by the way, is *Abode of Peace*) caught me off-guard a couple of times, especially the way women are regarded. Where the hospital was located in the city wasn't a very touristy area and—as a group of independent, educated women without a man present—we were not always treated respectfully by the local people. It was the first time in all my travels that I felt that uncomfortable.

In the hospital, however, I was completely in my element. When there were issues that needed to be addressed quickly, I proved to myself time and again that the training I was receiving at Trinitas would kick in when it was needed. I could step up and do what I had to do in the moment when there was no time to think about it. When we had a post-partum hemorrhage, for instance, I knew exactly what I had to do to start IV lines and get fluids into the patient in order to get her into surgery. I jumped right in and did it like it was second nature.

In Tanzania, I gained tremendous confidence being put in situations that I had only learned about in a lecture. During my time at Muhimbili University National Hospital, I was able to apply absolutely everything I learned at the Trinitas School of Nursing to my patients in Tanzania—and I know that everything I learned in Dar es Salaam I will bring into my future nursing practice.

In nursing school, you get so much information that occasionally you wonder whether, when the task is in front of you and you need to help somebody else, *Will I be able to do it?*

When you get that chance and your instincts kick in and you do the right thing, afterwards it's a *really* good feeling. **EDGE**



Editor's Note: Alexandra Redmond will be taking her boards early this year and hopes to be working in a neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) in 2023.



Hot TOPIC

If shingles “doesn’t care,” should you take that personally?

By Mike Lane

If you watch any amount of cable news or network television, you’re probably under the impression that shingles is more than a disease. It’s an inevitability. After all, anyone who’s had chicken pox as a kid already has the virus, right? Scariest still is the seeming randomness of shingles: “Almost one in three people will develop shingles in their lifetime.” Who is

this person? Who are the other two? And is there some indicator or precondition or lifestyle choice that tilts the odds against me?

These are all reasonable questions your healthcare provider can answer on your next visit. Until then, here are a few facts to mull over.

According to the CDC, that “almost one-in-three” statistic is accurate. Older adults are far more likely to develop shingles than young adults, and shingles in children is extremely unusual. The hot-poker/electric-shock special effect in the commercials is not an overstatement of the nerve pain some people experience at the site of the shingles rash—its technical name is postherpetic neuralgia (PHN)—but fewer than 20% of shingles sufferers actually experience PHN. For most, it’s about the itch.

Although shingles is usually a one-and-done condition, it is possible to have a recurrence. Also, really bad cases can lead to hospitalization. According to the CDC that number is between 1 and 4%, and is usually a combination of old age and a suppressed or compromised immune system. Rates of shingles cases among older Americans have remained steady for 15



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years, but have increased somewhat among younger adults. No one is certain why that is.

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In most cases, shingles presents as a band-like rash on one side of the body, or on the face. You're likely to get a warning sign, such as an itch or tingling in the area where the rash is about to occur. The rash itself blisters and then scabs over and clears up in less than a month. During that time, shingles sufferers may experience fever or headaches and nausea.

Shingles respond to a number of antiviral medicines, which shorten the length and severity of the illness. The sooner treatment begins, the more effective it tends to be. Even when the pain is mild, the itch can drive you a bit mad, so doctors will typically suggest wet compresses, oatmeal baths and old reliable calamine lotion. Certain foods should also be avoided during an outbreak, including dark chocolate and soy products, which contain the amino acid Arginine. Most doctors will advise you to pump the brakes on caffeine and alcohol during recovery.

If you develop shingles, or know someone who has, rest assured that shingles cannot be directly transmitted. However, those who have never been vaccinated for chicken pox, or never had it, can develop chicken pox after coming into contact with fluid from shingles blisters.

In almost all cases, as the commercials say, the virus has been in your body since childhood (especially if you were born in the 1970s or earlier). The chicken pox virus, varicella zoster (VZV), can stay dormant in the human nervous system for decades and then suddenly reactivate.

Shingrix, the recombinant zoster vaccine (RZV) is recommended by the CDC for people over 50 and for younger adults whose immune systems have been weakened by disease or therapy.

"Adults 50 years and older should get two doses of Shingrix, separated by two to six months," says Dr. Muniba Naqi, an internal medicine specialist at Trinitas. "Younger adults 19 years and older who have—or will have—weakened immune systems should also get two doses of Shingrix. Diseases that weaken the immune system include chronic inflammatory conditions such as lupus and rheumatoid arthritis, or any underlying malignancy, as well as HIV and transplant patients."

Shingrix has proven to be more than 90% effective in preventing shingles and PHN, and provides strong immunity for at least seven years. It replaces Zostavax, an older vaccine that was far less effective.

"Some people *will* develop shingles despite vaccination," cautions Dr. Naqi. "However, the vaccine may reduce its severity and duration. It can also reduce the risk of postherpetic neuralgia, the shingles complication that causes pain to continue long after the blisters have cleared."

So who gets shingles and who doesn't? First off, you don't "catch" shingles. The best answer, unfortunately, is the vaguest. VZV appears to have the highest chance of reactivating when your immune system isn't functioning at 100%.

As we age, it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain a high-functioning immune system, which is why the older you get, the more likely you are to be one of the “nearly one in three” that develops shingles. Other contributors can include heavy use of anti-inflammatory medications, as well as the immune-suppressing meds associated with Crohn’s disease, lupus and rheumatoid arthritis—which are in line with the disease Dr. Naqi lists.

Finally, there’s our old friend, stress. Stress can do a number on your immune system, sometimes without your even knowing it. Not only can it open the door enough to reactivate VZV, it can also make the symptoms of shingles much worse once you have it. **EDGE**



Editor’s Note:

Dr. Muniba Naqi is an internal medicine specialist and Medical Director of Hospitalist Medicine at Trinitas. Dr. Naqi has been the founding Medical

Director for the Trinitas Hospitalist Department for the past seven years.



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The One The Only

*The Cooperman Barnabas Burn Center team
makes the state's toughest cases its business.*

By Mark Stewart

The relationship between humans and fire is an old and complicated one. Controlling fire and fearing it are both baked into our DNA. Few thoughts are more terrifying than the prospect of being trapped by flames; the pain generated by a

severe burn is unimaginable to all but the unfortunate few who have experienced it. How firefighters and people who work near intense heat do what they do is incomprehensible to most of us. That being said, roughly 1 in 700 Americans will have to be admitted to

an emergency room to treat a burn injury in 2023. One in 10 of them will be admitted to the hospital—often with life-threatening third- or fourth-degree burns.

In New Jersey, the most severe cases end up in the hands of the doctors and medical staff at the Cooperman Barnabas Burn Center in Livingston—New Jersey’s only state-certified burn treatment center. The Burn Center has 12 beds in its intensive care unit and another 18 beds for non-ICU cases. As three-quarters of serious burns are accidental, there is no “typical” patient at the Cooperman Barnabas Burn Center. Which is why the facility is ready and able to treat anyone from an infant to a geriatric admission.

About 400 to 500 patients are treated annually at the Burn Center, which is recognized by the American Burn Association and American College of Surgeons for the optimal care provided by the dedicated team of multidisciplinary medical professionals. The team is headed by two accomplished surgeons: Medical Director Michael Marano, MD, and Associate Medical Director Robin Lee, MD.

The Burn Center has been in operation for 45 years, but it gained national attention in 2008 with the publication of Pulitzer-nominated *After the Fire: A True Story of Friendship and Survival* by Robin Gaby Fisher. The book chronicled the recovery of two teenage students who were badly burned in the deadly fire that swept through a freshman dorm at Seton Hall in 2000. Their cases still rank as two of the worst the Cooperman Burn Center had ever treated.

Understanding Severity

Have you ever wondered, when reading that someone has suffered burns over, say, 20% of his or her body, how that number is determined? There is actually a chart that assigns numbers to different areas of the body for adults, obese adults, children and infants.



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Aftercare

The increased survival rate of badly burned people has brought about a new set of issues that are being addressed at Cooperman Barnabas and other burn units around the country. Once wounds have healed and a patient is out of physical danger, for many the work has just begun.

The anxiety and depression that frequently accompanies physical recovery can lead to crippling PTSD and feelings of low self-esteem and social isolation that come as a result of visible disfigurement (especially to the head, face and neck).

Studies have shown that non-resolution of these issues can lead to chronic psychiatric problems; one study conducted through the National Institutes of Health in 2017 reported that 100% of burn victims experienced significant anxiety during their recovery and a “vast majority” demonstrated depressive symptoms. The study underscored the importance of sensitizing burn-ward staff members to the psychological needs of their patients.



Doctors note the affected regions and start adding up the numbers. The anterior and posterior torso take up the most real estate—18% each in adults and 24% each in obese individuals.

Burn severity is measured in “degrees”—from first-degree to fourth. First-degree burns are superficial and the least serious. They can be caused by any heat source, including the sun. Though painful, they only affect the outer layer of skin (the epidermis). Second-degree burns involve the lower layer of skin (the dermis) and often cause blistering or swelling.

Third-degree burns reach deep down to subcutaneous tissue and destroy the epidermis and dermis, leaving charred or white skin. Fourth-degree burns are obviously the worse. They can affect muscle and bone and destroy the nerve endings in the burn area. Third-degree and above are considered “severe” and potentially life-threatening burns; often they call for skin

grafts—one of the specialties of the Cooperman Barnabas Burn Center surgeons.

According to the American Burn Association, severe burns are credited with taking 3,400 lives in the US each year, with residential fires accounting for about 75% of fatalities. Inside that number, the ABA does not distinguish between deaths from burning and smoke inhalation. Vehicle fires, usually caused by a crash, claim around 300 lives a year. The remaining 500-plus burn deaths include everything from scalding to electrical burns to people who perish in wildfires.

Physical Response

The human body is capable of miraculous feats of healing. However, it is not built to respond to severe burns. Burn injuries trigger the body’s inflammatory response—the reaction that fights off “invaders” ranging from viruses and bacteria to toxins and cancer

cells. In the case of a deep or extensive burn, the inflammatory response can trigger a sudden drop in blood pressure, sending a victim into shock. It can also trap fluid inside the body. In either case, if vital organs (heart, lungs, kidneys, brain) do not receive the oxygen they need, they can go into failure and a burn victim can die.

Even when a burn patient is stabilized, the damage done to the skin—which is the body’s first line of defense against bacteria—can lead to infection and sepsis at a time when the immune system has been significantly compromised. A generation ago, the outlook for patients suffering burns over more than 50% of their body was bleak. Now it is not unheard of for people with burns covering 80% or more to pull through. Much of the progress can be credited to the myriad ways skin grafts are done, as well as a better understanding of the healing process for third- and



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Fear of Fire

The very natural and healthy human fear of being burned is different from pyrophobia, a debilitating fear of fire. Pyrophobia sufferers experience severe stress or panic attacks at the sight of a small flame or even the smell of something burning. They have been known to get dizzy at backyard barbecues and can become anxious when they overhear others *talking* about a fire.

Only a very small percentage of individuals suffering from pyrophobia have had a life-threatening or even dangerous experience with fire. Like many people who suffer from phobias, they acknowledge their fear is untenable, but that doesn't make it any easier to overcome. Some studies suggest that pyrophobia runs in families—either it is learned or inherited. The most effective treatment strategy involves exposure therapy or cognitive behavioral therapy, or sometimes both.



fourth-degree burn victims—including the roles played by nutrition, pain management, wound treatment and the battle against infection.

Of course, preventing burns and increasing awareness of how and when they are most likely to occur, are significant parts of keeping the public safe. To that end, the Cooperman Barnabas Burn Foundation supports a wide range of educational programs aimed at different constituencies, ranging from firefighters to healthcare professionals to schoolchildren.

Editor's Note: The Cooperman Barnabas Burn Center is located at 94 Old Short Hills Road in Livingston. Like Trinitas Regional Medical Center, it is part of the RWJBarnabas Health System. The Burn Center offers a Firefighter Health & Safety Education course, a Standard Operating Guide, free lung cancer screenings and other resources to give firefighters the resources they need to manage their health.

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Pledges for

Universal Peace

Artists often create works reflecting their strong objections to profoundly troubling world events. Iconic case in point: Picasso's *Guernica*, painted in 1937, blatantly revealed his anger and sorrow for Hitler's unprovoked bombing that destroyed the politically inconsequential town of Guernica in Spain. Today, much artwork speaks to Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, the rejection of *Roe v. Wade* by many states, and the storming of the Capitol building on January 6th. Art can be powerful enough to move viewers' concepts of the destruction perpetrated by people about whom Jesus reportedly said, "They know not what they do." The art of **Julia Rivera** offers her viewers an intellectual and undeniable plea for the bad to stop trying to ruin the good.



We The People • 40" x 36" • Mixed Media



Be The Exception • 40" x 36" • Mixed Media



Our Breathing Is A Fragile Vessel
24" diameter • Mixed Media on Wood



Just Breathe • 24" diameter • Mixed Media on Wood



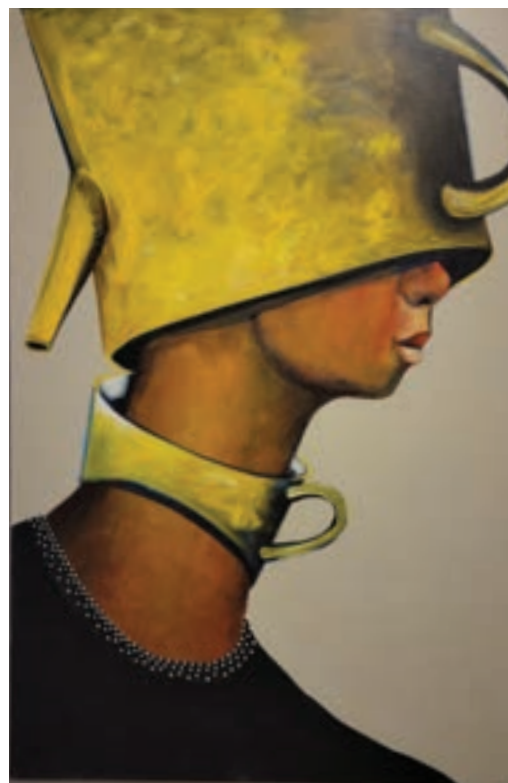
Green Country • 28" x 18" • Mixed Media on Canvas



Defeated on Principle • 24" x 18" • Mixed Media on Canvas



Don't Tell People Your Plans
36" x 40" • Mixed Media on Canvas



Always Make Them Wonder
20" x 30" • Oil on Canvas



Basquiat • 11" x 10" • Oil on Canvas



It Is Not Our Difference
41" x 22" • Mixed Media on Wood

About the Artist



Born a Puerto Rican in the Bronx in 1965 and now a resident of Freehold, Julia Rivera says, "I have become a political artist... Our democracy is designed to speak the truth." Through her staunch desire to portray endangered people, particularly women and children, Rivera's heady message is balance, peace, and survival. Also an art restorer, she attended Escuela de Artes Plasticas in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and the Studio Arts College International in Florence, Italy, where she earned a master's degree in 17th-century painting and restoration. One of her recent solo exhibitions, titled *Intersectional*, was featured at the DETOUR Gallery in Red Bank. Her paintings and sculptures are in numerous permanent collections, including in the United States, China, France, and Puerto Rico. Piece by piece, Rivera's exceptionally riveting works inspire and combine beauty, perspective, and hope for important change.

—Tova Navarra

FOUNDATION PEOPLE



Journalist Jack Ford with Emmy Award-winning news anchor and mental health advocate, Cindy Hsu of CBS News New York.

Trinitas Foundation Presents Cindy Hsu at Fifth Annual 'Peace of Mind' Event

Journalist Jack Ford led a critical discussion around easing the behavioral health stigma during the Trinitas Foundation's 5th Annual Peace of Mind event on October 25th, which featured a fireside interview with Emmy-winning CBS New York news anchor and mental health advocate Cindy Hsu. The event—which returned to its popular in-person format—raised \$100,000 earmarked for expansion of the hospital's inpatient unit for adults dually diagnosed with intellectual/developmental disabilities and severe mental illness (DDMI). A silent auction featured paintings and poetry from Trinitas' adolescent inpatient behavioral health programs, New Point Specialty & New Day, and the Brother Bonaventure extended care unit.

Hsu courageously shared her mental health journey with a captivated audience of supporters, patients' families, and Trinitas clinicians, who were educated and inspired by her insight and candor.

"Awareness around behavioral health and the need for philanthropic support has increased drastically over the years," says Laura Ciraco, Vice President and Chief Development Officer of the Trinitas Foundation. "Patients can wait anywhere from one or two days to a month for treatment on our DDMI unit. That situation worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic, when we had to limit the number of patients we could treat to prevent contagion."

"The goal of this annual event is to ease the stigma around behavioral health and mental illness," adds Trinitas President and CEO Gary S. Horan, FACHE. "We are proud to be a state leader in behavioral health programming. With enlightened events like this, we are leading the discussion on the importance of changing the public's perception of mental health."

The Peace of Mind campaign has previously enjoyed the support of mental health advocates Patrick Kennedy, Mariel Hemingway, Zak Williams, and Jessie Close, and has raised more than \$5.3 million for the renovation of the behavioral health facilities at Trinitas—which operates one of the most highly respected and comprehensive departments of Behavioral Health & Psychiatry in New Jersey. Services are offered along a full continuum of care, with specialized services available for adults, children, adolescents and their families, as well as services for those with various substance use disorders. In addition to operating a 98-bed inpatient facility, the medical center provides almost 200,000 outpatient behavioral health visits annually.

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EDGE PEOPLE



LOOKING & FEELING GOOD AT NEW DAY

When Trinitas Auxiliary member Hilda Artesona met Grace Blay, a salesperson at the Clark location of Ulta, little did she know she was meeting a philanthropic entrepreneur who chooses to spend much of her time helping others look and feel their best.

Artesona was simply shopping for holiday gifts for the teenage residents of New Day, an inpatient pilot program of Trinitas Regional Medical Center for young women with behavioral health needs. In order to identify the best products for the girls, Blay asked some probing questions and offered to bring a group of other likeminded women to do their hair and make-up.

When Blay put out the word on Instagram, this is who responded: Gold Oleka, of Hillside, who ships wigs internationally, Kamsi Egesionu, who has done make-up for the past seven years, and attends nursing school at Muhlenberg in Plainfield, Kinza Andrew, of Mt. Vernon, NY, a nursing student at the University of Pittsburgh, and Shannon Mitchel, Paterson, professional hair-braider. All answered the call and showed up to donate their time and skills.

Blay, an Elizabeth resident, who is in the process of starting a nonprofit offering beauty services to those in need, brought gifts of samples as well as products to use to perform the services. "It was a good way to give back around the holidays. The girls absolutely loved their hair and make-up and were modeling after and even slept in it for the next day," says Blay.

(Left to right) Hilda Artesona, Kamsi Egesionu, Kinza Andrew, Grace Blay, Shannon Mitchel and Gold Oleka.



EARLY START HELPED WINTER COAT DRIVE MEET INCREASED NEED

In 2015, the Youth Campaign for the Children was founded on the fundamental belief that no child can truly learn arriving at school with numb hands, frozen ears and a runny nose. In the years that followed, the program—which was created through the Trinitas Foundation—partnered with regional businesses and a small army of volunteers to provide thousands of heavyweight winter coats to children in underserved communities.

According to foundation board member Al Lopez, in the Spring of 2022, doctors, nurses and other staff members in the Trinitas Emergency Department began noticing a dramatic uptick in the number of kids who clearly came from homes that were struggling to keep the heat on. That triggered a doubling-down of the fundraising, corporate support and grant-writing efforts of the Youth Campaign for Children, which began distributing winter wear in the run-up to the Thanksgiving holiday. Thanks to its early start, by Christmas the program had reached a record number of disadvantaged and needy children. Their work is still going strong in 2023.

The program started by Lopez's grandsons, Joe and Matt Galgano, originally set a target of helping 1,500 area children last year. By the close of 2022, the Youth Campaign for Children had distributed coats, hats, gloves, sweatshirts and sweatpants to more than 2,500. In addition, they gave out backpacks, art supplies, musical instruments and toys—which are also part of the program's original mission.

"The support received from our friends at Rene Plessner Associates, Peerless Beverages, Unitex, Walmart (Union), Lowe's (Union), Home Depot, Costco (North Plainfield and Union), Lioni Latticini and Seabra's, as well as restaurants like Valenca, Ristorante di Benito, Casa Vasca, Parador Rojo and the extraordinary team at Casa del Pan, truly showed what real community involvement and commitment is all about," says Joe.

"The clear understanding of the needs we are trying to address and the amazing level of cooperation over the past several months—led by Gabe Diaz at Walmart in Union—went beyond all our expectations," adds Matt.



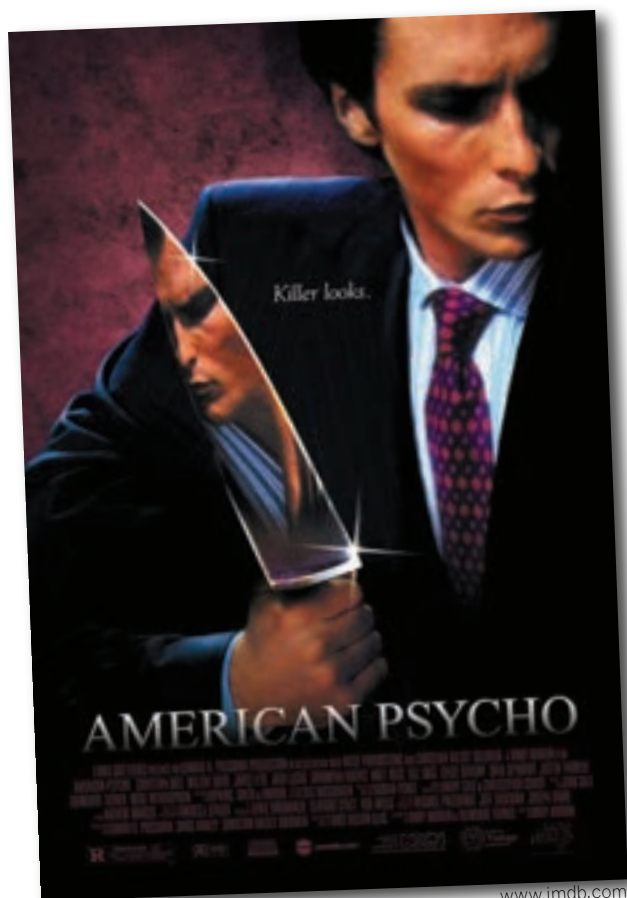
In Defense of Millennials

A Most Maligned Generation Makes its Case

By Kevin Zebroski

EDGE asked me to defend millennials. They didn't say from whom, but our detractors are many and apparent enough that a shotgun approach makes sense. I'll start with Gen X, who think they've flown under the Boomer monolith well-disguised. Millennials, in their opinion, are narcs who rise from bed each morning to champ at carrots on

strings. Digital carrots mainly. We are Yuppie 2. We are Patrick Bateman, Brett Easton Ellis' *American Psycho*, whose struggles with cognitive dissonance in the white-collar workspace led to a barely discriminate murderous rage. In the dead eyes of millennials, the same sickly id that burned through Bateman's moisturizing face mask.



We missed the point. Patrick Bateman is “literally me,” we say. And while investment banking as an industry has fallen in prestige and relevance, perhaps because the Boomers got too excited and overdid it with everyone’s money, we unironically align ourselves with the values of that zombie industry: a cut-throat imperative to optimize at the expense of peace, health, and comfort.

Millennials are, on the whole, more like bad guys from Gen X media. We are not the soulful slackers embodied most totally by Julie Delpy and Ethan Hawke in those Linklater movies about having sex with someone from the bus. We could never be. Millennials haven’t the patience to sustain that kind of drifting conversation (it’s been done to death) and we don’t make eye contact on public transit. We don’t slack because Gen X already overdid that. Gen X moved through slacking like a hatch of locust, consuming all idle time in anticipation of the millennium, when things

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were expected to pop off, either via the second coming or a computer glitch that was going to ruin the way we calculate time.

In retrospect, Jesus II or Y2K would've been better than what we got. Not to be a wet blanket (some would say self-pity is inextricable from the basic millennial makeup) but most millennial children grew up in the shadow of domestic paranoia instigated by 9/11. Somehow, maybe illogically, most children in my elementary school were afraid of being abducted and beaten with a shovel on our morning bike rides to school (we pedaled very quickly) perhaps because our Gen X and Boomer parents instilled the idea, perhaps because they thought hairline cracks of ill will radiated out from that singular evil. Also Columbine and its tenuous connection to video games. We grew up in a weaker Western world with an oozing wound no one wanted to look at too closely.

We were made to think, on the heels of these travesties, that threats to our lives were omnipresent, both within and without the domicile. This has more or less proven true, a seeming result of the social contract's disintegration, more loneliness, an increase in parasocial relationships with video game streamers, and the total invasion of the internet, that recirculator of incomplete ideas. In a failed effort to prevent this reality, participation trophies were created for children's soccer. In revenge for their own stupid idea, the Boomers bullied us, five-years-old at the time, for receiving them. Were we supposed to decline them like Marlon Brando at the Oscars? We didn't know about causes yet. We might've said something about the climate.

Climate discourse is irritating, even for those who believe in and understand it. Its self-congratulatory and fatalistic tone makes engagement difficult. Climate zealots, like most people, are strapped to the planet earth. Their constant ponderance of its destruction is creepy, like most morbid fixations. I'd generalize that most millennials would enjoy the luxury of burning all of their garbage on the front lawn. It seems like



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something we'd be into. But there was always an understanding, perhaps more pronounced in households with composting pots, that millennials could be the last generation to reach old age on an intact Earth. And by old age we mean sixty, maybe. These same climate types view Gen Z, the Zoomers, most of whom were born after the millennium, with the same pity farmers reserve for sheep who come out with three eyeballs and no skin. Misbegotten in a land after time, the Zoomer rides this burning world to its final destination—and also thinks millennials are losers.

I asked my students about my generation. I am an English instructor (adjunct) who teaches sixty Gen Z students, some of whom show up to class, and many of whom don't wear airpods while I'm talking. They're personable. I don't get the impression many of them are driven to accomplish anything, but I do teach an 8:00 a.m. class. In response to a brief, informal survey, my students concluded that the worst thing about millennials is their solipsism, followed next by our precocity, which has aged very badly. How can so many of us be precocious? The numbers don't add up. They're fascinated by the fact that any of us can marry, let alone reproduce. (We do so later and less often.) Also we are cringe, they say, and cite AOC. But she is a politician. She is supposed to be cringe.

As with all generational archetypes, the insidious puppeteer at play is advertising. Millennials were the



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first group to be sold on total self-sufficiency with banner ads about cocktail sets, chefs' knives, paracord, titanium camping stoves, kettlebells, and the Peloton. The cohesive idea, if there is one, is that millennials could purchase enough clutter to replace bars, gymnasiums, and even the outdoors of planet Earth, with all its winding bike trails.

These products and their market strength preceded the pandemic. Their strategic sense is predicated on social anxiety and the prohibitive cost of leaving one's apartment. The self-reliance these devices promise to enable is obviously a fantasy. Millennials are as ingrained as any other Americans into the tapestry of this country. We think, directionally, in terms of the streets and landmarks that Boomers built. Stylistically, we've reverted to the oversized, bodily disguise of Gen X. Musically and entertainment-wise, we've been

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outpaced by curly, dangly, hive-minded Gen Z, who have unified their image more rapidly and comprehensively than millennials. The legacy of millennial culture—through music, movies, academics and fiction—will be of ceaseless infighting and gatekeeping, a desire to stratify, delineate, and say precisely what things were so that we might retire, satisfied with our explications, to an overpriced two bed with pillows that say “pillow” on them.

I’m not upset, exactly, with how millennials are portrayed and understood. I’m only woozy from the dissonance. Greta Gerwig is cusp, born in ‘83, and Diablo Cody, who wrote *Juno*, and who was born in ‘78, is squarely Gen X. The guy who wrote *Scott Pilgrim* is also Gen X, ‘79. Our stories were conveyed to us, and with an unprecedented degree of gullibility and receptivity, we incorporated them directly into our image and ethic. We deserve scorn for that, derision. Also, we turned country music into guys who wear high-vis vests and flat brims. We financially enabled Logic, the corniest rapper of all time, to develop a positive self-esteem. Neil Young was on when some of our Canadian parents reproduced, ergo Arcade Fire, a band with an unprecedented reach into its own colon. For these reasons and others, we hate ourselves and do not resemble ourselves, at least anecdotally. None of my friends like this stuff, maybe excepting Arcade Fire, who toggled something chemical in us when we were the right age.

My theory is that Gen X cooked up some millennials in a petri dish to satisfy their own vision for the future human, a sort of *ubermensch* of prevarication and ennui. By a similar token, we’ve created the e-girls and e-boys of Instagram through collective will and approval, probably to satisfy a more embarrassing desire. In other words, the most visible flagbearers of a generation satisfy the tastes of the monied, landed, enfranchised cohort preceding them. For a long time, this was only the Boomers, and for a long time every station was classic rock, but the emergence of a more cohesive



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Gen X in the media, and the absorption of the elder millennial cohort by this same bolder Gen X, is probably to blame for the millennial image. That stuff, the participation trophies, and the ice caps.

It’s not a defense, is it? It’s disavowal with some redirection mixed in. Some of my points have the tone of conspiracy. But the media machine is intentional, insidious, and directed. It generated the typical millennial, who is either Michael Cera or Emma Stone, both ‘88. We have to ask why, I guess. Who wanted them? Their parents? Their parents. Their children will want them. Their friends and so on. We’ll never have the consensus approval of the Boomers, who awarded it to themselves. And until there’s another world war and another housing boom...

Both of these things are possible. China is poised to invade Taiwan and the older Boomers, presently 77, are less than a year away from the national life expectancy. It could all line up in a bath of nuclear fire and heart disease, and our children (given the older-adjusted age of marriage and reproduction in America) might end up in possession of America’s next monoculture. Our children—who will have at this point developed radiation-resistant fur in an unprecedented Lamarckian response to Earth’s inhabitability problem, will look to us for some answers. And some of us will inevitably play *Frances Ha*, eternally black and white, dooming the rest of us for however long we have left. **EDGE**

Who's On the Phone



The fuss over TikTok...and why you should care.

By Mike Lane

There are more than 8 billion humans on this planet and, if you believe what you read, more than a billion actively watch TikTok videos. If TikTok were an organized religion—and for many young people it kind of is—it would rank third behind Christianity and Islam, possibly tied

with Hinduism. For the record, the population of TikTok accounts is growing faster than the population of Hindus.

If you've never watched TikTok or don't understand what it is, don't feel bad. Most people on TikTok don't really know either. They're too busy having fun.

The app itself, which began as a platform for short, hyper-expressive homemade videos—particularly amusing dance videos and pop songs—was created by a company called Musical.ly and purchased in 2017 by the Chinese company ByteDance for \$800 million. It took off during the pandemic, especially among teens and twenty-somethings. Influencers moved en masse to the app from Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, and advertisers followed. In 2021, TikTok raked in more than \$4 billion in advertising revenue. In 2022, that number more than doubled—at a time when ad revenue for digital competitors sagged. That has people like Mark Zuckerberg more than a little concerned; he has gone so far as to warn that TikTok's growing dominance is a threat to the US tech sector.

TikTok content has evolved somewhat, but not a lot. It's still silly and stupid and crazy and imaginative. There's just a lot more selling than there used to be. Unlike other social media apps, where the inclusion of ads is fairly obvious, TikTok advertisements are often disguised as one of the endless short videos that flow across the small screen, one after another, based on algorithms keyed to a user's interests. Often, you don't know you're watching a commercial until it's mostly done. If it's good, you don't even care.

For many, TikTok has become addictive. The average user spends on average more than 90 minutes a day glued to the app. In this country, there are around 100 million active users. That is an impressive digital footprint. To some, it is a threatening one.

Joe Biden and Donald Trump don't agree on much, but one thing they have in common is a deep distrust of TikTok. Both of their administrations tried to curtail its influence. They weren't concerned with the deleterious effect on young minds. It was the Chinese-owned part of TikTok that raised all kinds of red flags (no pun



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intended). ByteDance has consistently assured our government that the data it collects on Americans stays in America, on American servers. Yet Chinese law is very clear that its government can demand data from US affiliates of Chinese companies. So which is it?

US officials have been pressuring ByteDance to change its ownership here so that the direct link to China is severed. The Biden administration considers it a national security issue. The US military has banned the app on personal devices, as has TSA and a handful of state governments, including Texas. Many politicians on both sides of the aisle would like to see the app banned altogether.

In late-December, the big omnibus spending bill passed in Congress included a new regulation that prohibited federal government employees from downloading the TikTok app on their mobile devices—and instructing those who already have it to delete it. Senator Marco Rubio introduced a bipartisan bill on December 13th banning TikTok in the US altogether.

There is another issue generating profound concern over the growth of TikTok and that is its ability to prevent underage users from accessing violent, hateful, drug-related or sexual content. Right now, the minimum age



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to open a TikTok account is 12. Raising the minimum age to 17 or 18 has been discussed but, naturally has met with all kinds of resistance from the company. There is now a consumer protection lawsuit in Indiana around this issue. The Attorney General claims that TikTok has deceived children and their parents with the age rating of 12, dishonestly leveraging consumer trust in app stores like Google's and Apple's.

In 2021, TikTok introduced a feature enabling parents to link their TikTok accounts with that of their children, which theoretically would enable moms and dads to monitor and control what their young teens are watching. And the app has special filters to identify, delete and punish offensive videos before they reach young eyes. Not surprisingly, there are myriad work-arounds for these safeguards, including the use of alternative words for ones that are likely to be caught in the algorithm, such as “unalive” for “kill” and “seggs” for “sex.” There is even a word for this new vocabulary: Algospeak.

The problem is that TikTok is fun and cool and easy to use. It is a brilliant cure for boredom and a break from reality. And in the way that Facebook used to say it was the new office water cooler, TikTok has become the younger, hipper version of that.

Anyone with a smartphone can make a TikTok video in a matter of minutes. People who go about their lives otherwise unnoticed can have hundreds or thousands of followers. An ad that might only get a few glances somewhere else can rack up millions of views and increase sales by 100 or 500 or 1,000 percent. TikTok is the most efficient way to attract, influence and capture young consumers, who eagerly share what they like and willingly tumble down the TikTok rabbit hole.

While TikTok's supporters hail it as a new cultural and communications frontier, its critics have called it a Trojan Horse, a Wolf In Sheep's Clothing and—especially resonant for those who recall the notorious R.J. Reynolds cigarette campaign of the early 1990s—Joe Camel on Steroids. **EDGE**

EDGE

interview

Art Carrington



All photos courtesy of Carrington Tennis

One of the most revered and innovative tennis coaches in the Northeast also happens to be the preeminent authority on the culture and history of black tennis. In fact, **Arthur A. Carrington Jr.** wrote the book on it. Born and raised in Elizabeth, he learned the game at the legendary North End Tennis Club and, in the 1960s and '70s, became one of the most formidable players in the American Tennis Association (ATA), the oldest African-American sports organization in the United States. *EDGE* editor **Mark Stewart** spent a Sunday morning swapping tennis stories with Art, who received an education at North End that transcended the strokes he perfected there.

EDGE: Growing up in Elizabeth, do you recall how you first became acquainted with the North End Tennis Club?



AC: My mother had introduced me to the North End, but I didn't really get with it until I was in the fifth grade. A friend of mine moved across the street from the tennis courts and we would come from the playground and see all these black adults and all these nice cars—you know, guys wearing white shorts and playing tennis. Naturally, we were curious and we'd wander over to the club. Well, the members got us involved right away and we started playing. Sydney Llewellyn was out there—he coached Althea Gibson—and he would work with the younger fellows. All the top African-American players from the New York, New Jersey and Philadelphia areas would come and play there. It was quite incredible. It was very busy on the weekends, and in the evenings. In the summertime, me and my boys would play throughout the days.

EDGE: How important was the club to your development as a player and a teaching pro?

AC: I've been teaching over 53 years now. Every day, since my introduction to North End, whenever I go to a tennis court, in my mind I'm going back there because it became a safe haven and a place that we could really grow and learn from the kind of adult that was there. We had a small junior program at the club, but we interacted with the adult members tremendously. We had a lot of cookouts in addition to tennis tournaments at the North End Club. I got hooked on the social life as much as the tennis. You never really saw much alcohol, so there was no disruptive behavior. It

was the place where you learned about conduct and etiquette. It was a different environment—this is where the black doctors and lawyers and schoolteachers and funeral-parlor directors from all around Union and Essex Counties would come to play and socialize. This was my first exposure to people who we would now call middle-class, that were employed outside of, say, factories or the construction world. This is also where we were introduced to the idea of attending black colleges, such as Howard, Hampton, Morgan, Fisk, Morehouse, Delaware State and Lincoln University.

EDGE: What type of tournaments were held at North End?

AC: We would have our little state ATA tournament, which drew people of color who lived in New Jersey. I would see really high-quality tennis players come in. The first one I remember was a guy by the name of John Mudd, who lived in Orange. He was like 17 years older than me, but we later became doubles partners and he was very instrumental in my life—influential as far as tennis and socially. He was an entrepreneur who owned a nightclub in New York and a nightclub in Asbury Park, where he was from originally. He had a topspin forehand and a kick serve—he opened my eyes up to another level of tennis.

EDGE: Did you have other mentors at the club?

AC: Yes, many. One was Dr. William Hayling, a gynecologist who delivered thousands of babies. He was one of the founders of 100 Black Men along with

Jackie Robinson. He grew up with Mayor Dinkins in Trenton. I met African Americans from all over the country at the North End Tennis Club and gradually I began to spread my wings. I would go to these people's houses, where for instance I remember seeing my first finished basement. I mean, I came from good parents—working parents—but this was a step up, financially and socially speaking. This led me to be introduced to *their* counterparts in the white world. White doctors, white lawyers, and *their* kids.

EDGE: Describe the location within the context of Elizabeth back then.

AC: North Avenue was a very commercial strip. At one time, around 1900, it was a leading thoroughfare that went from Elizabeth to Newark. There was a doctor who owned a large house and he had the only double lot, which extended all the way back to the next street, which happened to be the start of the black



Art Carrington and Arthur Ashe

neighborhood. His family sold the house, but the tennis court was sold to the North End Club.

EDGE: What kind of friendships did you forge at the club?

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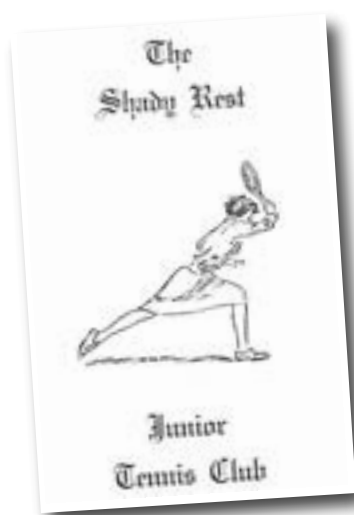




AC: There was a guy name Eddie Eleazer who lived near the club, who was a very good player. We went from fifth grade through Hampton Institute together. When colleges started recruiting me, I would tell them about him, as well as my brother, who was a year behind us and also was very good—he went to Rutgers. Eddie and I graduated from Hampton together and we won all the conference and national black titles together in doubles. There's nothing like having a comrade, you know what I mean? We were on the same teams together going back to Thomas Jefferson in Elizabeth.

He and I and Ron Freeman, an Olympic 400-meter man, formed a partnership that is unbreakable to this day. We all speak several times a week. We used to say, "We are doin' our thing and movin' on." [Laughs].

EDGE: At the other end of Union County was Shady Rest. In what ways did that differ from the North End Tennis Club?



AC: Shady Rest was a country club out in Scotch Plains. That was the number-one country club for black people. The people who built Echo Lake built Shady Rest and sold it to black owners in 1921. It had nine tennis courts, a nine-hole golf course and a large dining hall. It had the same kind of people as North End but was much larger. Shady Rest was the kind of place where you'd go to see Count Basie, Duke Ellington and Sarah Vaughan. Segregation made black entertainers go to places where black people socialized. It was *the* spot. There was nothing else like Shady Rest in the country.

EDGE: Let's get back to your coach, Sydney Llewellyn for a moment. He seemed like quite a character. Can you paint a picture for me?

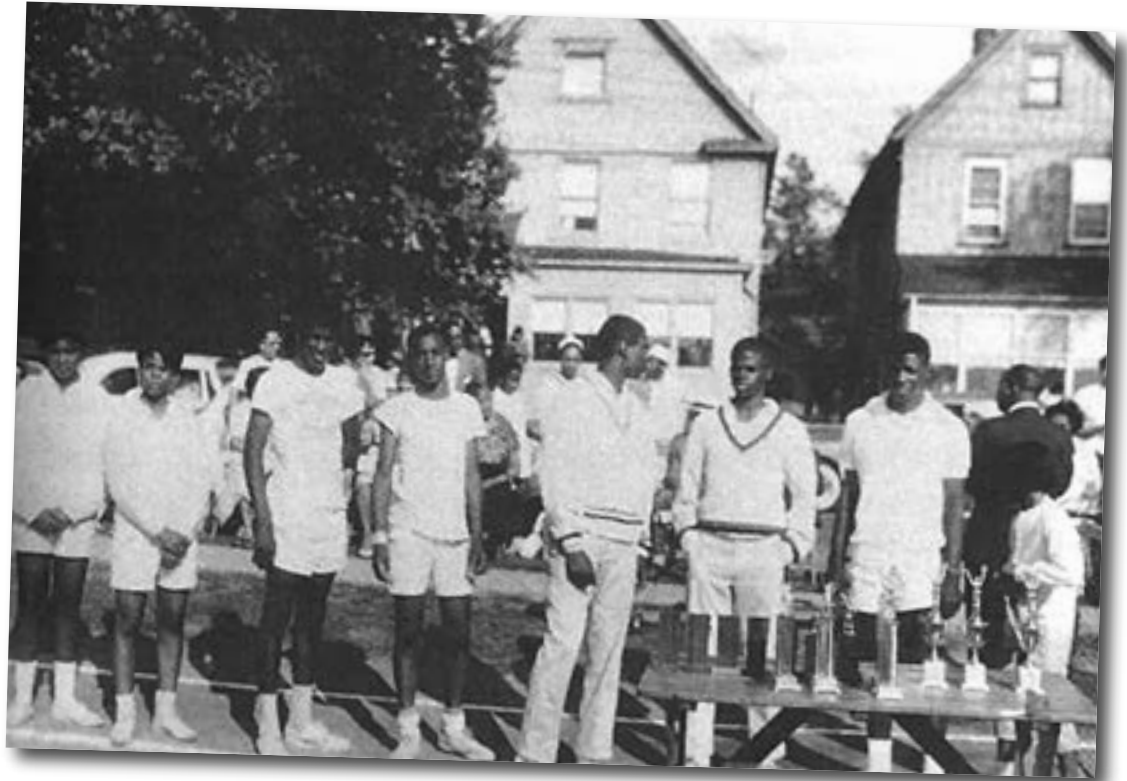
AC: I met him when I was 12. He came in from New York and he was always a real smooth dresser. He had his safari suit on with the safari hat—he was dressed to kill. He was the first tennis "pro" I knew, in that he had the tennis pro look, he had the gear, but he was also very cosmopolitan, a very smooth brother. [Laughs] As young urban kids, we loved to listen to him. He came from Jamaica at about 18 years old to New York. He told us he came to America to be a dancer, a hoofer and whatnot. Dancing was like the rap industry in those days. I learned a tremendous amount from Sydney about life and spirituality and family and manhood. He was a tremendous mentor of mine.

EDGE: What is it that made him special as a tennis coach?

AC: He was a purist as far as his stroke production. So he was like Nick Bollettieri—very fundamental.

EDGE: I worked with Nick on a book, by the way, and it was the most stressful year of my life.

AC: [Laughs] I can imagine that. That's what I'm saying, because when you don't have a real tennis background, you just pound them fundamentals, I guess. Actually, Sydney *did* have tennis in his background from Jamaica.



He had worked somewhere as a young man and had access to a white tennis club, so I suspect he was introduced to tennis in the proper way.

EDGE: After college, you kind of kept the North End club alive. What was happening at that point?

AC: Starting in the 1960s, some Jewish doctors offered their black colleagues an opportunity to come join their clubs for tennis and golf. It was just enough that we lost our leadership, which kind of just filtered away. In the 1970s, we finally gave up our place in Elizabeth. It's understandable. Everybody wants better facilities. When I didn't know anything else other than North End, that was the greatest facility. As my game improved and I competed at other clubs, I realized that there were better places to play. After I graduated from Hampton in 1969, I kept North End open in the summertime to run my tennis academy until 1975.

EDGE: What made you decide after college to get into coaching? What new perspective did you feel you could offer other players?

AC: I liked being independent in terms of the business part. Also, I believed in order to coach, to be a good

teacher, you need to be your own best student. You've got to gain inspiration in order to pass it on. I've always believed in whole-body integration, in purely flowing movement. I use rhythm as the special thing that makes the game flow. This has allowed me to be in tennis all these years with no injuries, no rotator cuff issues. I have a nice-looking game. I move with it and I move in a flow. So I teach people how to move properly and to respect rhythmic cycles and sequences, to understand how the body is supposed to work.

EDGE: Has it become harder to get young people to buy into this?

AC: No, because I use martial arts tools and other tools, including music, that are fun in my teaching. So when students go back out onto the court, they are more coordinated. That's what you need to do in order to be good. I'm a physical education teacher with tennis as a specialty. I think that's something that is missing from the game. Kids need to have a foundation, phys-ed-wise, that they can use all their lives.

EDGE: It is a rare thing for historians to be participants in the history they cover. While you were coming up as

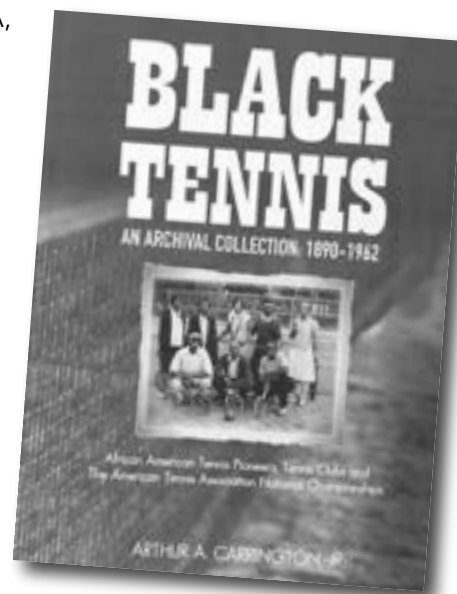


a player at North End—obviously long before you began researching your book *Black Tennis*—did you have a chance to interact with some of the pioneers from the early days of the ATA, the great champions like Ora Washington?

AC: Yes, I did. They were older people by then, of course. But you know, there were no books that told their story, no place you could go to learn about them. Even many years later that was the case. You hear about Arthur Ashe, you hear about Althea Gibson, but there is almost nothing about the tennis communities that produced them. If you didn't have the doctors and lawyers and other professionals—backed up by all these progressive African Americans—at facilities like the North End Tennis Club, you might not have *had* an Ashe or a Gibson or an Art Carrington. That is why I wrote *Black Tennis* and archived it the way I did. The story is in the community and that's what people are missing about places like we had in Elizabeth. During the time when tennis was booming with blacks, we were coming from little neighborhood clubs like North End. Most people don't know about this. They ask me, "How did you get into tennis?" And I'm like, growing up, I thought tennis was a black game! [Laughs] When I first set my eyes on tennis, it was all black people. There

wasn't anything that told me I'm not supposed to do this, you know what I mean? It's not like I was aware there was a "white" game. I embraced tennis and the people that went with it. **EDGE**

Editor's Note: Art Carrington was the national singles champion among historically black colleges and universities three times in the 1960s and was the second African-American player after Arthur Ashe to compete in the US Open. In 1972, he played in the ATA singles final, which was the first-ever televised match between black players. In 1973, he was crowned ATA champion. Art says that keeping the history of places like North End alive is "a way of making my own black life matter." Signed copies of his book *Black Tennis* can be ordered through The Carrington Tennis Academy, which operates in Amherst and Northampton, MA, at (413) 977-1967.



EDGE PEOPLE



TRINITAS NURSE ADDS 'AUTHOR' TO HER RÉSUMÉ

You'll never hear a nurse admit it to a "civilian," but one of the most overwhelming aspects of the job—and for many among the most intimidating—is charting. Najah R. Goodman, MSN, RN (*below*), a nurse at Trinitas, has authored a book entitled *Chart Like a Boss: A Documentation Guide for Nurses*, drawing on her own workplace experiences and sources including the American Nurse Association and The Joint Commission, the country's oldest and largest standards-setting and accrediting healthcare body.

Written to be a go-to resource for new graduates and seasoned nurses alike, *Chart Like a Boss* offers tips on multiple charting methods, how to gather and record clinical history, and communication guidelines between nurses and other healthcare providers. The new book also features medical illustrations, personal stories and real-world advice.



"I remember being a new grad nurse, starting off in a skilled nursing facility," she says. "I had no idea how to chart. When I would ask other nurse colleagues how they learned, they would say *by looking at other nurses' notes*. I thought nurses would love this type of book. It took a lot of research and some sleepless nights but, most importantly, the support and encouragement of my

nurse colleagues, healthcare professionals, family and friends—all the people who listened to me speak about bringing *Chart Like a Boss* to life." For more info visit inkandneedlepublishing.com.



EXCELLENT PRESENTATION

Dr. Constance Kozachek, PhD, RN-BC, CCRN was selected to do an in-person oral presentation at the Sigma Global Excellence conference in Austin, Texas in February 2023. The theme of the Sigma Nursing conference is *Creating Healthy Work Environments 2023*. Her topic, "Factors that Influence Smoking among Middle Eastern College Women in the United States," was part of her research for her doctoral dissertation and cited by Sigma as an excellent reflection of current nursing trends and issues. Dr. Kozachek's doctoral education focused on the social determinants of health and urban systems, while her graduate work focused on Transcultural Nursing. Prior to joining the School of Nursing as the Associate Dean of Trinitas School of Nursing/RWJBarnabas Health, Dr. Kozachek, a certified Critical Care Nurse, was the Director of Education, Training and Development at Trinitas.

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— Chef/Owner George Vastardis

Welcome Back!

The restaurants featured in this section are open for business and are serving customers in compliance with state regulations. Many created special items ideal for take-out and delivery and have kept them on the menu—we encourage you to visit them online.

Do you have a story about a favorite restaurant going the extra mile during the pandemic? Post it on our Facebook page and we’ll make sure to share it with our readers!

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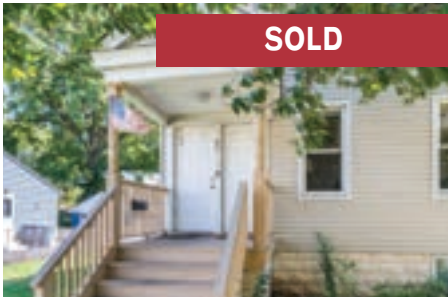
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1114 Seib Avenue **Elizabeth**
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Beautiful Colonial is sure to impress. Enclosed porch, stained glass window in foyer & wood carved staircase. High ceilings, encl. 3 season porch, LR, formal DR & EIK. 2nd flr: primary BR, 2 add'l BR & main bath. 3rd flr: BR/office, loft & storage.

www.elizabethbataille.com
Elizabeth Bataille **908.202.1702**



368 Windfall Lane **Franklin**
\$650,000

3,000 sq. ft., move-in cond. w/3 BR & 3 full BA. 1st flr: lg. KIT, FR w/gas FP & SR. Master w/ full BA. 2nd BR, full BA, & laundry. 2nd flr: loft, BR, full BA & utility room. 55+ Comm. w/clubhouse, indoor & outdoor pools, hot tub & gym & ballroom.

www.elizabethbataille.com
Elizabeth Bataille **908.202.1702**



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563 Spruce Avenue **Garwood**
\$2800/mo

Large first floor, 3 Bedrooms, convenient walk to transportation.

www.theateampropertiesnj.com
Alyssa Pereira **908.447.3133**



268 Millard Avenue **Hillside**
\$349,000

Charming 3 BR/2 BA home. 1st fl. has heated front porch, LR w/french doors opening to FDR. Kit w/eating area, BR & full BA. 2nd fl. has 2 BR & full BA. Lg basement w/storage space. Schools, transportation & shopping are all nearby.

www.elizabethbataille.com
Elizabeth Bataille **908.202.1702**



1036 John Glenn Drive **Hillside**
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george@premierhomespros.com
George A Castro IV **908.245.6767**



356 Coolidge Drive **Kenilworth**
\$459,000

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www.elizabethbataille.com
Elizabeth Bataille **908.202.1702**

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Elizabeth Bataille 908.202.1702



601 W. Lake Avenue Rahway
\$429,000

Colonial just blocks from Milton Lake Park. Foyer opens to LR & DR. KIT w/SS appl, den w/sliding glass doors to fenced-in yard. 2nd flr has primary BR, 2 add. BR & main BA. Walk-up stairs to attic. Full basement w/rec room & storage/laundry.

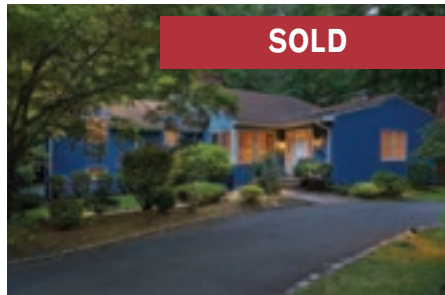
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1023 Harrison Avenue Roselle
\$449,900

Beautifully renovated home nestled in the heart of Roselle, from elegant finishes to the modern touch this house is a truly diamond.

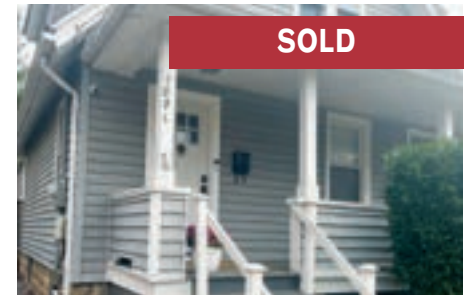
andres@premierhomespros.com
Andres Tellez 908.245.6767



1460 Cooper Road Scotch Plains

Lovely 3 Bedroom. 2 bath home on a acre of private grounds, including an expansive deck, attached two car garage and semi-circular driveway.

TheSoldiCollection.com
Frank D. Isoldi 908.233.5555 x202



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www.thenjreboss.com
Nicole Williams 973.342.8812



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\$399,000

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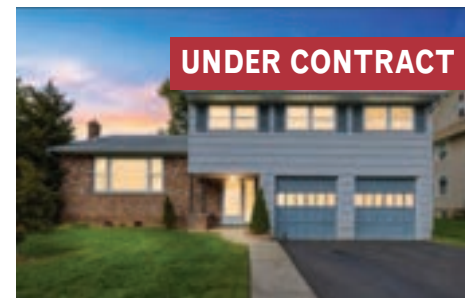
www.elizabethbataille.com
Elizabeth Bataille 908.202.1702



28 Crescent Road Springfield
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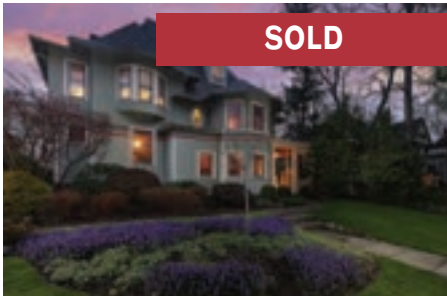


UNDER CONTRACT

218 Golf Edge Drive Westfield

Stunning home on one of Westfield's most desirable streets across from Echo Lake golf course, featuring an open floor plan, 2-story foyer, 1st floor en-suite, finished 3rd level and finished basement.

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This exquisite 4 bedroom, 3.1 bath Victorian blends the charm of the past with modern-day conveniences! Nestled on the sought after historic block of Kimball Avenue convenient to the award winning downtown Westfield.

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5 Minutes with...

Naomi Ackie



Was it challenging to play an iconic person like Whitney Houston in *I Wanna Dance with Somebody*?

What I realized, and this helped to put everything into perspective, was that she was only human. She was amazing in part because she was only human and achieved that much. To me, true empathy when it comes to working on something like this is to go, *Yes, she had one of the most amazing voices in the world. But she was just as human as I am.* Whitney had as many conflicts as I do, as many arguments with herself, as many problems as anyone else. In that context, it then didn't become a challenge—it actually became like a dance between me and my imagined Whitney. And as soon as you kind of take people off of a pedestal, when you take people and you ground them, it becomes so much easier to do your job.

How did you prepare for and research the role?

I had coaches for dialect and movement. But I actually overdid it when it came to research. I watched every single one of Whitney's videos on YouTube countless times, and it became like a prison. Funnily enough, that's not usually the way I roll. Like, I'm pretty relaxed when it comes to prep for work. But this took a toll on my mental health. I had to take a break from the script and Whitney for about a month.

Was there added pressure playing a non-fiction character?

Yes. I've been thinking about this recently...so, you know, there's the normal stuff: learn the accent, how her lips move around a song, what she physically looks like, how she presents herself. But there was

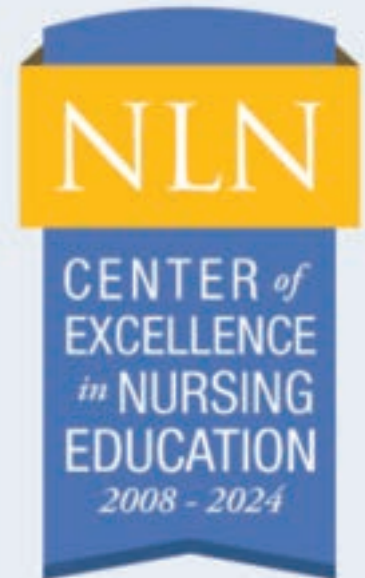
also managing my anxiety around what I want to create and what I think other people want to see. That was a real tussle for me, because there is this kind of struggle about being a people-pleaser when you're a performer. And I constantly had to be reminding myself, *Tell the truth of the story.* It shouldn't be perfect. This is an affectation, you are *pretending*. So allow yourself the freedom to do that. That was a lesson that I learned two weeks before we finished [laughs]. It's hilarious to me. I'm like, *God, I wish I knew that right at the top!*

Do you worry about any backlash from American actors as a British person playing an American of color?

Yes and no. I think there are not enough parts for black people and people of color in general. So really the problem isn't with me playing Whitney, the problem is with the higher-ups not investing in the right places. As a black woman, being in this industry, I am going to [irritate] some people. They might be white, they might be black, they might be both, they might be anyone else. I am going to do things that upset people, but I can only follow my instinct—and trust that when people hire me, they're not hiring me because I'm British or whatever it is, they're hiring me because I offer a service, I'm good at my job and I have integrity. Am I worried? Yeah, but I'm trying to do this thing where I don't worry about what people think about me anymore.

Editor's Note: This Q&A was conducted by Lucy Allen of the Interview People.

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