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Cover illustration by Catherine McGuigan

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## DIVERSIONS

# An Ode to Old Homes

by FAYERUZ REGAN

**R**ICHMOND SEEMS obsessed with protecting its architecture, which might have something to do what happened on an early spring day more than a hundred years ago.

On April 2, knowing Union forces would soon swarm the city, the Confederate government, with boxcars laden with gold and silver, fled the former capitol of the Confederacy on a Danville-bound train. An evacuation was ordered, and as people left the city in droves, warehouses and the arsenal were set on fire to prevent supplies and ammunition from falling into enemy hands. Unfortunately, the winds of early spring ushered the flames to other buildings, and by the end of it, much of Richmond was burnt to the ground, erasing much of its architectural glory.

Richmond's been trying to make up for it ever since.

I'm all for preserving what we can, architecturally. Jackson Ward has the second largest collection of iron work in the country, after New Orleans. The Jefferson Hotel is a treasure, and walking down Monument Avenue during the holidays is a sight to behold.

When I first moved to Richmond in the 1990s, I was fresh from 1950s tract housing in Northern Virginia. I was in awe of the Fan District, with its herringbone brick sidewalks and iron gates. The front porches seemed to be an extension of the interiors, with pillowed porch swings and water fountains.

Now I live on the North Side, which has its own love affair with historic homes. At night, I bicycle down Seminary Avenue to gawk at the mansions, with the stately columns and floor-to-ceiling windows. Sometimes the curtains are drawn and I get a rare peek at gallery walls painted teal, and Christmas trees that are nearly twelve feet tall.

Here's to houses with radiators—every family's best friend in the wintertime. I love the way kids can toss their wet gloves and coats on them after a day of sledding, and the gear is ready to go again by morning. Radiators keeps your towels toasty while showering during the cold months. And they're great at keeping your coffee warm.

Here's to the original glass in our win-



dow frames, wavy and imperfect. It makes you think of the generations of families before you, who saw the same irregularities. These things inspire us to dig up public records of our homes, where we delight in old black-and-white photos, when our giant magnolias were just saplings. In Bellevue, a friend discovered that Lewis Ginter had planted the Japanese maple in her backyard. Though she has since moved to the country, she returned this year in hopes of retrieving a viable seed pod; she wants to plant a direct descendent from Lewis Ginter's collection.

Here's to the relics that tell us stories from those who lived in our homes before us. The elaborate molding of our doorways hide pencil markings that document the growth of children. Forgotten photos sit in the attic. Looking back at us are faces from strangers who are long gone. You wonder if there's anyone alive now who even remembers them.

My friend discovered a slit in her medicine cabinet, where men could dispose of their razors. They sit piled in the wall of her home and are virtually irretrievable. "His DNA is still in my house," she says with a shudder. We found vintage bottles in our garage, along with an old Red Ryder BB gun, just like the one from the film *A Christmas Story*.

Here's to old growth trees, creating canopies over our streets like the vaulted gothic arches of green cathedrals,

showering with dappled sunlight.

Here's to the possibility of hitting the Mother Lode in your own backyard. When the Great Depression struck in 1929, people began hoarding gold bullion, for unlike paper money, gold retained its value. In 1933, Executive Order 6102 forbade citizens from hoarding it, and the government gave itself the power to seize it. President Roosevelt had implemented the order in an attempt to save the economy. Citizens were weary, and sealed their gold into walls, or buried coins in their gardens.

In 2014, a California couple found \$10 million in gold coins buried in their yard, and it happens all the time. Though anyone could find a hidden treasure on their property, you have a greater chance of striking gold if your house was standing during the Great Depression. Consider using a metal detector, it may be worth your while to give your home and property a thorough once-over. If you don't have one, borrow one.

Here's to all of the luxuries that we consider a given in old homes, and may we never take them for granted. Things like hardwood floors and diamond door-knobs, stained glass windows and slate roofs, hand-carved mantelpieces and crown molding. Perhaps most importantly, old homes are special because they're one-of-a-kind, with a little bit of soul, just like their lucky inhabitants. **NJ**

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# A New Dawn For Hopewell

by CHARLES MCGUIGAN

**B**ACK IN EARLY MAY, Northside artist Nico Cathcart began painting a massive mural on the side of Butterworth Lofts at 245 East Broadway in downtown Hopewell. It would strive to capture the real story of this small city that sits at the confluence of the James and Appomattox Rivers, a city that thrived and then went bust on several occasions, a city at one time called the “Wonder City.”

Three weeks later to the day, on a clear, warm evening, Nico’s three-story mural is unveiled. It’s a spectacular interpretation of this unique city that before its incorporation in 1916 was one of the world’s busiest ports, serving as the Union Army’s central supply depot during the Siege of Petersburg in the final year of the Civil War. Since its founding, Hopewell has been a city of immigrants—Czech, Italian, and Greek, primarily —many of whom settled here to work in a DuPont plant that manufactured dynamite, then later, during World War I, switched to the production of guncotton. It is the second oldest continuously inhabited English settlement in the United States, and in the years before the Civil War was built on the blood, sweat, and toil of enslaved Africans, who endured the horrors of a living hell for generations.

Nico is at center stage here on Broadway. Wearing a white-and-black shift dress with a complementary black boater on her colorful head of hair, Nico is talking with two young women—Hopewellians both—who are now part of the physical fabric of this small city. Nherie Tellado and Ari Carlos were the models Nico used for her mural, which is called *A New Dawn*. Both young women, along with Nico, smile as they look up on the wall facing them, scaling all thirty feet of it with their eyes.

After a brief introduction by Heather Lyne, executive director of The Hopewell Downtown Partnership, the vice mayor of Hopewell delivers a few words, talking about the symbolism embodied in the mural. “The environmental aspects, the cultural aspects, the diversity aspects,” says Johnny Partin. “It really is a great symbol of everything that Hopewell was in the past, but more importantly about where we

are going in the future, about us coming together, and a new dawn for our city.”

Heather Lyne then takes the microphone.

“It started in 2019 in the world before COVID time,” she begins. “Our former director applied for a grant to do several large mural projects in downtown Hopewell to show people how the face of downtown is changing. They sent out a request for proposal nationwide to try and find artists that would design a mural to speak to Hopewell’s history, but also to its future. They wanted it bright, energetic, and with an emphasis on the natural environment.”

Once the world shut down, the project was put on hold. But this past January, Heather’s organization reached out to Nico. “We were fortunate Nico Cathcart was available,” says Heather. “I think she has blown us away with the amount of time and investment she’s put in to this project.”

And for Nico, before a drop of paint was applied, there was a lot of homework to be done. “She met with a lot of community members and leaders, business owners, and she met with naturalists at the Dutch Gap Conservation Area,” Heather says. “She put in her time with this design.”

After Heather reads Nico’s artist’s statement for *A New Dawn*, Nico herself addresses the crowd.

“I have to say a huge, big, warm, loving thank you to the community here,” she says. “It was a privilege to come and develop this project, and learn the history of this town and how it kind of relates to Virginia as a whole. It was quite a journey.”

Nico then gestures to the two young women by her side. “I am grateful for the two models who are here,” she says. “They were chosen because they represent the vibrant young community that’s developing here and has always been here. You ladies, thank you so much for your time and your patience. I have this great sense of love for this community after being here. Thank you so much.”

As the crowd parts, a number of us walk east on Broadway to Hopewell Street, then hang a right making our way over to Roja Taco Joint. As we



Northside artist Nico Cathcart at the unveiling of her three-story mural.

stroll, Nico explains different elements of *A New Dawn*.

“There are a bunch of different sym-

bols in the mural,” she says. “The two women are representative of the two rivers and how they meet in Hopewell which is why all the industry is here

and why all the immigration is here on the Appomattox and the James. So I'm also using them as metaphors for community in the way that they are connected just like the river connects."

And each woman wears a blue silk shawl, a nod to the artificial silk and gun cotton factories that once operated here.

"DuPont is in the background," Nico says. "But it is in the back, and the women are facing out away from it to note that it's in Hopewell's history but we are looking forward away from it."

The vast majority of images that appear in the mural were scooped from the natural world. "It is based on biodiversity," says Nico. "So it's showing a lot of local plant and animal species including the summer tanager and the golden throated warbler which are both found at Dutch Gap. While I was doing this piece, I had the privilege to interview a bunch conservationists in the." Along with indigenous flora—pawpaw, May apple, Jack-in-the-Pulpit and Virginia wisteria—the mural highlights some aquatic fauna as well, including catfish, sturgeon, and even a manatee.

"A lot of people don't think of a manatee as a Virginia animal," Nico says. "But what they don't realize is that because this is a tidal area manatees actually do swim all the way up here on the James." (As a matter of fact, just eight years ago several manatees were spotted in the Appomattox River not far from Hopewell.)

Nico then tells me why the two young Hopewell women were selected as models to represent the union of the two rivers. "Ari was chosen because she's the daughter of Greek immigrants," she says. "Her family has a long lineage and actually made up a lot of the work force for Dupont. That work force was mainly immigrants and Black people which is why I selected Nherie."



Ari Calos and Nherie Tellado, models for the mural.



Heather Lyne, executive director of The Hopewell Downtown Partnership, with Nico.

During the course of her studies about Hopewell, Nico spent a fair amount of time with a woman who offered valuable insights into Hopewell's racially checkered past. "I had the privilege to talk to Dr. Joanne Harris Lucas," says Nico. "She told me a lot about the experience of growing up Black in Hopewell because there are two different Hopewells."

Joanne Lucas's father was the late Curtis W. Harris—minister, civil rights activist, politician—who fought hard all his life against white supremacy in Hopewell. In 1960, he was arrested and sentenced to sixty days in jail for his role in a sit-in at the segregated Georges' Drugstore. That same year he spearheaded a protest against Hopewell's segregated swimming pool that culminated in the pools closure. He was a champion of liberty, a real hero. During a peaceful demonstration he led against Hopewell's plan to build a landfill in Rosedale, a Black community in the city, he squared off with the local ku klux koneheads on the steps of City Hall. Throughout the Civil Rights Movement, he was arrested for civil disobedience a total of thirteen times.

In late March of 1962, Dr. Martin Luther King, along with more than a hundred 100 Virginia ministers and laymen, accompanied Reverend Harris at a bogus contempt trial. Reverend Harris marched with Dr. King on Washington the following year, and two year later joined Dr. King in his march from Selma to Montgomery. He never stopped fighting for justice. He was later elected to City Council, and then mayor of Hopewell. He was leading Hopewell to a brighter future.

"One of the ideas behind this mural is the two communities coming together and trying to work together," Nico tells me as we approach the patio of the taco joint and an absolutely diverse crowd chowing down on tacos and sipping margaritas. **N9**

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# Tracking Down a Killer

by JACK R JOHNSON

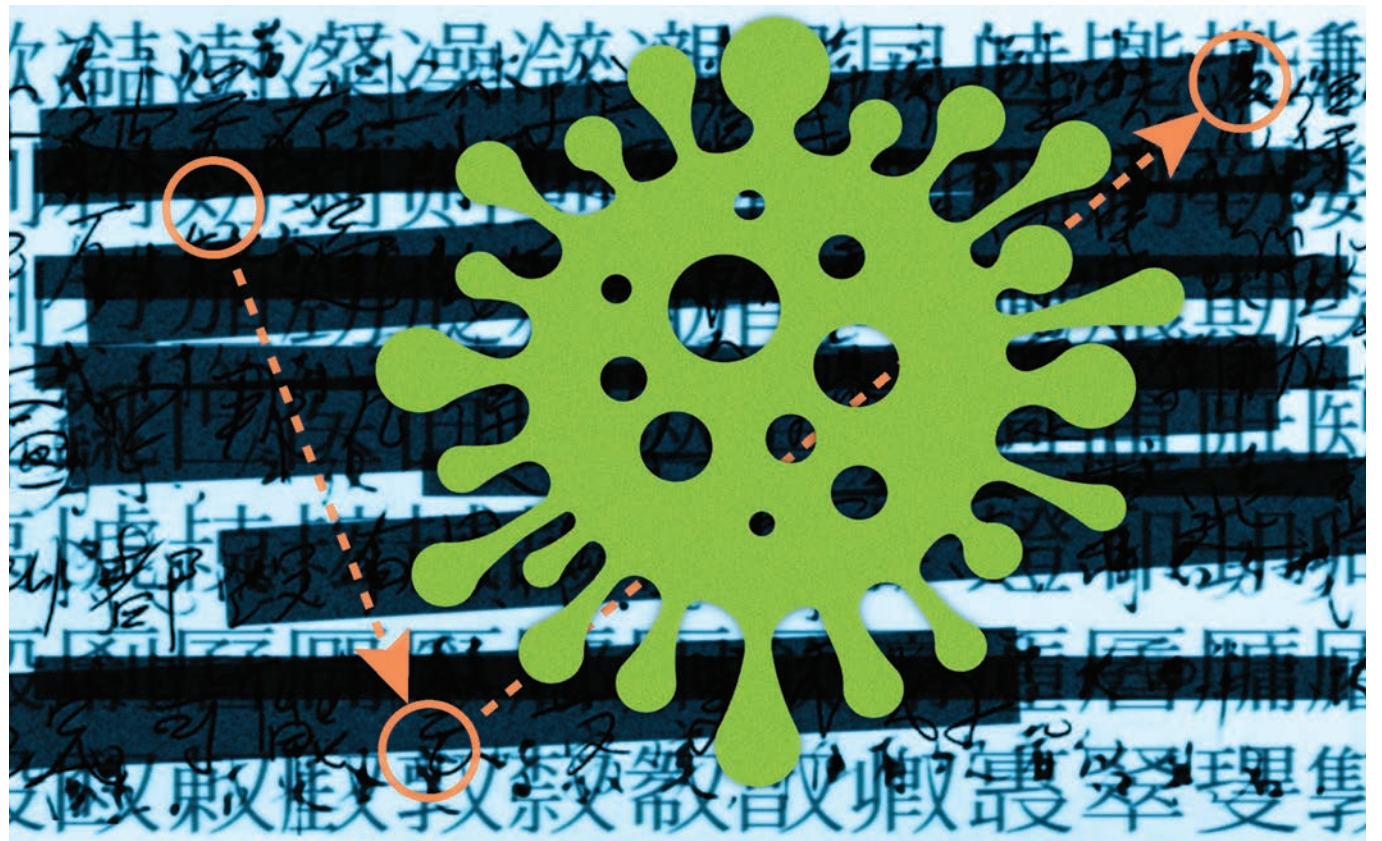
**C** OVID-19 IS ON pace to becoming one of the greatest killers of the 21st century. Well over half a million Americans have died as a result of the disease and worldwide, the figure is past three million and likely to top at least four million. How can we prevent another pandemic? As any good forensic scientist or detective will tell you, the way a criminal works, his pattern or MO, is often a clue.

Last week, President Joe Biden directed U.S. intelligence agencies to redouble efforts to determine the pandemic's origin, including whether it could have emerged "from a laboratory accident." Since COVID-19 emerged from Wuhan where China has a large virus laboratory (Wuhan Institute of Virology), leaks from the lab have always been treated as a possibility, but less likely than a so called "zoonotic" event, that is, a virus that can mutate in such a way that it allows it to start infecting other species.

Many of the great disease scourges of human history began exactly like this, with diseases hopping species hosts, like disgruntled dinner guests, moving from one restaurant to another. Tuberculosis, for example, is believed to have jumped from animals to humans during the process of human domestication of livestock. HIV/AIDs may have hopped from other primates to us.

There's growing scientific consensus that such a zoonotic event was the case with an earlier variant of COVID-19, the 2002 SARS virus—a deadly corona virus for humans. Guangdong Province in China—where SARS originated—is famous for its "wet markets," where an incredible variety of live fauna are offered for sale (sometimes illegally) for medicinal properties or culinary potential. The opportunity for contact, not only with farmed animals but also with a variety of otherwise rare or uncommon wild animals, is enormous. Additionally, that Southeast Asian region was also the location of two very scary but limited viral outbreaks – the H5N1 avian influenza outbreak in Hong Kong in 1997, and the Nipah virus outbreak in 1998–99 in Malaysia.

SARS was different in two respects.



First, it was deadlier—nearly one thousand people eventually died of the disease. Second, the initial reports written about the outbreak of "a strange influenza-like disease in the province" were marked 'top secret' under Chinese law, making any public reporting or discussion of the outbreak a violation of state secrecy laws. Yet, despite efforts by local and central government officials to suppress news of the outbreak, word of the disease gradually emerged thanks, largely, to the Internet and one courageous doctor who stepped forward: Jiang Yanyong.

On April 4, 2003, Dr. Jiang Yanyong a semi-retired surgeon in the People's Liberation Army emailed an 800-word letter to Chinese Central Television-4 (CCTV4) and Phoenix TV (Hong Kong), reporting that Chinese estimates for the spread of SARS were ridiculously low. Although neither of the two replied or published his letter, the information was leaked to Western news organizations. As a result of the embarrassing revelation, on April 21, 2003, the mayor of Beijing resigned as did the minister of public health. Only then did the Chinese government begin to actively deal with the growing epidemic. Most public health experts believe that this act prevented the disease from reaching pandemic proportions.

A similar concurrence of events happened with the next flare up of another deadly coronavirus—COVID-19. This one, however, although less deadly, was far more contagious.

Chinese leaders were equally slow to react to the outbreak that began in the city of Wuhan, suppressing information and even punishing those who raised the alarm. They also denied or downplayed the one element that made COVID-19 far more dangerous than SARS—the ease with which it could be transmitted from human to human.

According to a Frontline documentary, in the 54 days between the first known person becoming symptomatic with the virus and the January 23 lockdown of Wuhan, local doctors who tried to sound the alarm were punished and silenced. Local, provincial and national authorities downplayed the severity of the virus and kept international health officials and scientists in the dark. The Chinese government's weeks-long insistence that there was no clear evidence of human-to-human transmission of the virus cost the rest of the world valuable time.

"By the time we knew it was transmissible human-to-human, the cat was out of the bag," said Professor

Lawrence Gostin of Georgetown University, director of the World Health Organization's Collaborating Center on National and Global Health Law. "That was the shot we had, and we lost it."

"There was an early cover up in Wuhan, perhaps a few days to a week, before the threat was accepted," according to Ian Jones, professor of biomedical sciences at Reading University. "We will never know if faster action in those first days could have averted the outbreak," Jones takes pains to point out that again, after the revelations, China worked hard to help solve the crisis. "There has been a very open dialogue [since] and many research findings from the Chinese experience are now appearing," Jones said.

But the pattern of denial continued in other countries.

After the virus began to spread outside of China, "the science community sounded an alarm and most US public officials were slow to recognize the seriousness, and the president [Trump] publicly minimized the risk," said Rush Holt, former Democratic congressman and ex-CEO of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. "The role of informed scientists has been mixed - sometimes they receive public attention and



sometimes they are drowned out by politicians making baseless wishful assertions," he said.

Other countries followed similar patterns. From Brazil to Iran to Italy to India, politicians facing life-or-death decisions early on in the outbreak minimized the global health crisis. They wasted precious time fighting reality, not the disease.


The results were deadly.

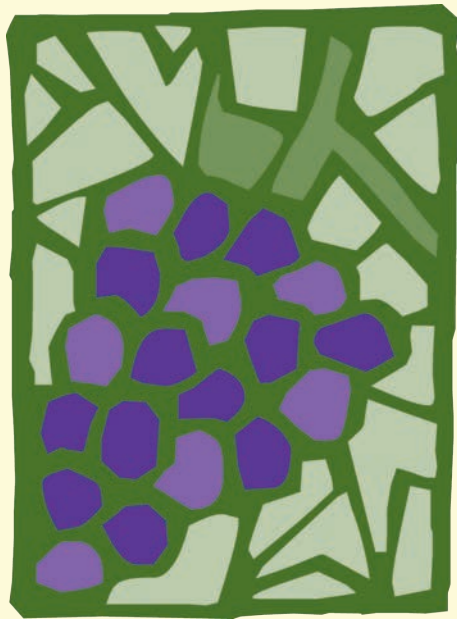
"Denial results in a delayed response," which usually leads to an exponential growth of infections, said Thomas Bollyky, a global health expert at the Council on Foreign Relations think tank. "Countries that were slow to respond have, so far, paid the price," Bollyky said.

A Vox report noted that "At the height of the pandemic Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador encouraged his people to eat out at restaurants, US President Donald Trump insisted most of America could start going back to work by Easter, and Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro downplayed the coronavirus as 'a little cold.'"

In fact, there are still countries like North Korea or Lesotho which have refused to report any COVID-19 deaths. In Turkmenistan, individuals have been arrested for openly talking about the virus, and it is illegal to wear masks in public. That government has also removed any reference to coronavirus from health pamphlets, schools, universities, offices, and hospitals. The U.S. under the former president actually ordered hospitals to stop reporting COVID-19 deaths to the CDC, effectively bypassing the single public entity designed to combat pandemics.

It is true, we may very well have contracted a deadly disease from bats sold in a wet market in Wuhan province, or from a variant leaked from the Wuhan virus laboratory, but it appears that man, with his infinite capacity for denial, is still the deadliest animal. To quote the sage Pogo, "We have found the enemy, and he is us."

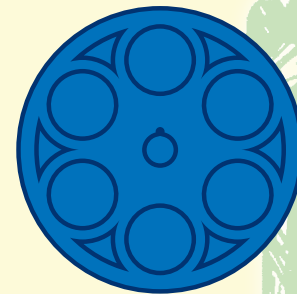
Preventing another pandemic like COVID-19 will require understanding that we are all connected: ecosystems, animals, humans. It's all about transparency, as Professor Wang Linfa, a bat virologist at Duke-Nus Medical School in Singapore noted: "What we need is early warning and working together, sharing information, transparency, I mean, COVID-19 is not going to be the last one, right? Everybody knows that." 



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# Through A Glass Clearly: Reflections and Distortions

by CHARLES MCGUIGAN

**J**OHN CRUTCHFIELD, owner of Artemis Gallery, recently purchased a number of new Richard Lee Bland pieces for his gallery's permanent collection. It's a totally different direction for Richard who has been an integral part of the Richmond art scene since the 1970s and is known for his representational oil on canvas paintings. "The thing I find unusual is the way the reflected light off these 1800 window panes creates an abstract image as if it were painted by a modernist," John said.

A week later I visit with Richard in his Fan carriage (ice) house tucked between Plum and Lombardy. For a while now, Richard has been looking for a new direction in his art.

"As a result of the recent history of our nation, I've been trying to transfer things into a different kind of art expression," he tells me. "And this last year I've been using the camera for documentation of a lot of political situations. I've been moving toward photographing topics around my neighborhood."

And then something almost accidental occurred. "About a month and a half ago I noticed in a window along West Avenue in the Fan District a wavy glass window pane up in someone's row house and I was on the corner and I had a good view," Richard tells me. "I was about fifteen feet away and I took a snapshot of it with my digital camera. I took it home and was able to crop around the window, and I had what one would have to call an image that was more like an abstract painting than anything else."

That first image resonated with Richard's aesthetic sense. "The reflections in the wavy glass from across the street reinterpreted, in a non-objective way, become a reality," he says. "And to me it's sort of representative of the reality that we're living today, where there's a lot of mixed communications, a lot of distortions in our understanding between people groups and community groups."

Richard is both an artist and a student of art history. He is reminded of another tumultuous time, and how artists of that era reacted. "After World War II



we moved away from representational art for a time," he explains. "Artists felt as though they couldn't express our culture and a world torn apart with representational imagery. They felt they had to show the emotion, the turmoil, and they could do that through slashes of paint and squiggles and explosions and outbursts of emotion in a paint style called abstract expressionism. And I've transferred that into my photography in the current time we're living in."

The results of his new-found art are stunning. He points to one of them on his laptop screen. "That's a reflection of a garden in wavy glass, in cylinder glass," Richard says. "The pathway begins to look like a stream bed; you feel

like you're by a creek. You interpret it through mood and feeling and emotion, and that suspends the reality part. Just the other day I was saying, reality will not tell you the truth. Now we're having to read through distortions to find the truth."

He considers the function of his art, and of all art. "It just brings some comfort and some healing," he says. "Art settles us, levels us out, helps us to have more faith, have more marvel. You know, like a child would have—the wonderment of a child."

Then, Richard invites me to consider another piece scooped by his lens from a reflection in an ancient pane of glass in a Fan row home. "It looks like you're

walking in the water on the James River, over the rocks, and the puddling water's all round you," he suggests.

You can almost hear the sound of rushing water.

"That's what I'm doing," says Richard.



*Kaya and the Sande Mask, by Miguel Carter-Fisher, 48"x72" Oil on panel.*

## PAINTINGS BY MIGUEL CARTER-FISHER AT ERIC SCHINDLER GALLERY

In a show titled, *Negative Shapes*, Richmond-based artist Miguel Carter-Fisher brings his extraordinary oil paintings back to Eric Schindler Gallery.

Of his latest show, Miguel asks, "What is the shape between memories and the present? Identity and the body? Embraces and resentments? Children and parents? Longing and fear? Intimacy and detachment? Our ancestry and our future?"

"In drawing, a negative shape is the space between objects," he adds. "Although it is the contour of a void, perceiving this shape is essential to understanding the relationship between things."

Show runs through July 9. [NB](#)

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A question frequently asked is whether the court appointed lawyer/public defender is going to do a good job, since the same government is paying them as is paying the prosecutor and the police. The answer to the question usually lies in the individual lawyer that is representing the defendant, rather than the source of payment. Lawyers are people, and there are good

ones and bad ones. As in everything else, experience matters. Court appointed lawyers and public defenders (with experience) are going to be very familiar with the Courts, the Judges, the prosecutors and often the police officers in their jurisdiction. Every jurisdiction is different, and knowledge of the rules and expectations of a jurisdiction can be the difference between good representation and bad.

When counsel has been appointed, the defendant should meet with the lawyer and make a determination thereafter as to whether it is a good professional fit. If not, and there are resources available, it might be time to meet with a lawyer in private practice to determine whether that might be a better choice. Ultimately, the relationship between the defendant and counsel goes a long ways to an outcome that everyone can live with. As said above, everyone is entitled to counsel of their own choosing if they can afford to hire someone, so the Court generally has no problem with someone who has been appointed counsel hiring counsel of their own choosing. And, again, and worth repeating, experience matters.



**Todd DuVal, Esq.**  
McDonald, Sutton & DuVal

Each month, Todd DuVal, who has been practicing law for almost 30 years, answers legal questions you may have so you can make the best decision about your representation in court.

# EMER- GENGE



**SEVENTEEN YEARS AGO, THEY DUG DEEP THROUGH THE RICH LOAM,** through hardpan, and successive layers of clay, from red to yellow to chalky gray, until they reached a depth of eight feet where they waited and whiled away the days and weeks and months and years, nibbling at woody filaments from the roots of trees to sustain themselves, their glowing ruby eyes wide and glaring through that darkest of nights.

**A**

**LITTLE OVER A MONTH AGO,** they began to dig their way out to the sun—trillions of them—creating small turrets of gray soil that ringed tunnels which led back to their vacant lairs. They clawed their way up trees, shed skins like Mylar body suits, and then, as their new albino bodies hardened and changed color, christened the air with untried wings and began a constant chorus, shrill as an alien invasion, and devoured bark, and engaged, for about a month, in a continuous orgy that would have made Caligula blush: For their time was so short. After laying eggs, they would fall dead and drop from the trees, exhausted and spent, and the eggs they had laid in notches on the branches of trees would hatch out and the young would fall or crawl to the earth and burrow eight feet down for another seventeen years of seemingly eternal night.

Just as Brood X periodical cicadas—the Great Eastern Brood—began bursting forth from the ground and trilling for sexual partners up in Northern Virginia, another sort of emergence was occurring a hundred miles to the south.

As COVID-19 restrictions were gradually lifted, thanks to an aggressive vaccination program under President Joe Biden, people began venturing out again, some for the first time in well over a year. Many restaurants opened their doors for customers to dine-in instead of just picking up their orders or having them delivered. And now, many of Richmond's most popular music venues are again open for live entertainment. Hermitage Richmond, for instance, will be hosting a series of music events called Concert Under the Stars on June 11, July 9 and August 6. Musicians will perform on the lawn at 1600 Westwood Avenue. "This is a wonderful opportunity to enjoy great live music and share a family-friendly evening under the stars with our residents and neighbors," says Amy Chapman, executive director of the retirement community.

On May 15, what started as a relatively small outdoor celebration of live music in the Northside the previous October, swelled into a jubilant gathering with 24 bands performing from front porches throughout the neighborhood. It was a remarkable day, fully six hours of live music.

Not long after everything shut down in March of

by **CHARLES MCGUIGAN**



*JOBIE (Josie Arthur) performs with her family at Bellevue Porchella.*

2020, Bellevue resident Brooke Ullman happened to be walking down MacArthur Avenue one evening when she heard music from behind a barrier of boxwood and white picket fence. Gathered in the side yard, playing fiddles, were members of The Bellevue Bon Temps. Brooke recorded a little video of it and posted it on social media. Then in July, she watched

her neighbors, Haze and Dacey, perform music from their front stoop, and passersby would stop and listen. That was the birth of Bellevue Porchella. Rob McAdams and others, along with the Bellevue Civic Association, have nurtured Porchella since its inception.

My son and I spent the entire day, migrating from one front yard to another, sampling music of every con-

ceivable genre. We settled in for both sets performed by Sarah Arthur and Friends from their front porch on Claremont. The entire family is musically gifted, and Josie (JOBIE), Charles and Sarah's daughter, recently released Simple Man, a song she wrote and performed. There's a music video of it as well. Her talent, like her parents, seems boundless. She is soaring.

Tentatively, there is another Bellevue Porchella coming in October with the hope that this will become a semiannual event. "The hope is that Porchella can happen in the spring and fall, growing as the pandemic recedes, and bringing the community together for the powerful shared experience of connecting through live music," says Rob McAdams.

Coming back this October, too, is Richmond's greatest annual live music extravaganza, which was cancelled last year due to the pandemic. Back in 2019, the three-day event drew an estimated crowd of some 200,000 people to the banks and islands of the James River. The Richmond Folk Festival returns October 8 through 10. "Now more than ever we know how important it is for us to come together safely in a shared celebration of culture and experiences," according to a spokesman for Venture Richmond, which produces the folk festival.

Other festivals are also returning. Back on May Day, Brookland Park Boulevard offered the public a taste of this unique commercial district. Hundreds strolled up and down Brookland Park Boulevard, sampling

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food, drinks and ice cream, chatting, listening to music. A block-long line waited patiently in the mild weather for a scoop of bliss from Ruby Scoops Ice Cream & Sweets, which was pretty much the case outside of Ms B's Juice Bar and half-a-dozen other eateries.

Richmond Commonwealth's Attorney Colette Wallace McEachin was there enjoying the festivities while doing a little stumping for this November's election.

"We're on historic Brookland Park Boulevard and this has been one of the places where African-Americans were first able to prosper once they moved out from the center of the city," she says. "I'm out here enjoying the people, the businesses, the food, and letting people see their Commonwealth's Attorney on the street." (Having won the Democratic Primary on June 9, Colette is poised to serve another four-year term.)

In late May as I roamed through Bellevue, I encountered a sight I hadn't in seen in more than a year—children and their parents gathered on a front lawn that was dominated by a bouncy castle of enormous proportions.

Lauren Austin and Shannon Klutz

were celebrating their son's birthday. "He turned five this week," said Lauren.

Shannon nodded. "It's a post-pandemic get together, blowout extravaganza," she said.

"We invited family, friends, neighbors," Lauren said.

"All of the circle is finally coming together," her partner said. "We're still cautious, but I definitely feel everyone is ready to just be together again. We have it until three, but the party will end just shortly after lunch, and then hopefully our son will just sleep a little bit. After the pizza, cake and presents."

Lauren looked up the street. "There are still five more coming," she said. "Seventeen kids, and then all their parents. Probably about thirty people in all."

Just up the street from the birthday party, I ran into Amanda Huegrich and her enterprising daughter, Noelle, who actually opened her own business during the pandemic.

"It's a pet care business," Noelle told me. "I take care of animals, I take them on walks, feed them, give them water, do the stuff that owners want me to do. I've been taking care of people's pets since I was three. I really enjoy pets so



Folks enjoying the sunshine and music at Bellevue Porchella.

taking care of pets is really fun."

Now, Noelle, and her close friend, Lucy, are going to put on a theatrical production (scheduled for one in the afternoon on June 12).

"Me and my friend are working on doing a play," said Noelle. "It's called 'The Red Wine Glass,' and it's kind of like Clue the movie, but we add our own things to it."

The performance will be a sort of improv production.

"We're not going to write a script," Noelle said. "I'm the narrator so I'll start and then keep on going, and everybody's going to bounce off each other, and there will be background people who don't even talk."

But Noelle will play more than the narrator. "We have several characters,"

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she said. "So I'm the narrator, but also the detective, and my friend Lucy is the poisoner. My mom and Lucy's dad are going to be the security, and Lucy's mom and aunt are going to be background players and then Lucy's brother is going to be a dead body. All he's going to do is start talking a little at the beginning of the play, drink fruit punch as wine, and then pass out on the floor. Me and my friend Lucy came up with it. We do better not writing a script."

We talked a bit about movies, and Noelle told me that her favorite filmmaker is John Hughes—writer, director, producer of such blockbusters as Home Alone, Planes, Trains and, Automobiles, Christmas Vacation and Ferris Bueller's Day Off, to name a few.

On May 21 as the sun was finally dropping behind the spires of the tree line, we settled on the asphalt, which was still warm, and waited for a tradition that had been going on in Bellevue for many years. It would be the first time since the pandemic struck that Bob Kocher would show a movie on the wall of the building that runs perpendicular to Once Upon a Vine. About a hundred, some with lawn chairs, others with blankets, filled the

parking lot and waited for the feature presentation, "Soul", to begin. My son Charles watched the entire film and was already looking forward to next week's movie.

I walked through the neighborhood for the next hour or so, and when I came back up MacArthur Avenue I was pleased to see it buzzing with activity. A year before it looked like a post-apocalyptic village—no cars, no people, and a deafening silence.

Mi Jalisco is full with folks dining inside, but The Mill on MacArthur is still doing only pickup and delivery. I talked with co-owner Amy Foxworthy and she explained the only reason they are not open for dine-in business is because of a lack of employees, which I will hear again and again from restaurant owners.

"I've been trying to hire people since August," Amy says. "We're ready to go as soon as we can hire someone."

More than anything else, they need a line cook, and a utility person—a dishwasher who can pinch-hit doing prep work. "We need both, but we could get by with one or the other and open up part-time," Amy said. "We've talked about doing Friday and Saturday night

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dine-in. We want to be opened up because people want to have the restaurant experience.”

After a pause, she added: “Everybody’s trying. I know Jimmy’s (Tsamouris owner of Dot’s and Demi’s) trying. We’re all just short-staffed.”

Demi’s, which is owned by Jimmy and his wife, Daniella, had a good crowd, even at the bar, and, across the street to the north, Zorba’s Pizza Express had a line out to the door, and someone drove away with a stack of pizzas for delivery. Two doors down, Dot’s Back Inn was hopping, inside and out.

At Dot’s I talked with McKenzie, Daniella and Jimmy’s daughter. “Things are great,” she said. “Everyone is starting to come out.” She scanned the tables on the front patio and inside the restaurant.

“We are super understaffed right now,” she said. “Especially in the kitchen, and we just cannot find anybody to come out and work, so we’ve had to temporarily close Mondays and Tuesdays.” But that will change in short order. “Hopefully, we’ll be able to get that opened back up within the next month.”

McKenzie smiled as she greeted a couple with two young children who



*HOB NOB is open for both indoor and outdoor dining.*

took a booth in the far corner. “A lot of people are coming without masks so you can tell they’re vaccinated,” she said. “They feel comfortable coming out. We’ve got people that we haven’t seen in a year that are finally coming in for the first time. They’ve only done take out, and now they’re finally sitting down and coming in. So it’s been really good.”



*Patrons enjoying the street-side vibe of MacArthur Avenue at Stir Crazy Cafe.*

On my way out I run into John Hubbard and his son Henry, Sherwood Park residents, who are sitting at a deuce on the front patio. Like many of us Northsiders, our kids grew up in the restaurants along MacArthur and Bellevue Avenues.

“I remember when everybody closed last year,” John told me. “This is the very first place I came back to when

they opened back up and it almost brought me to tears. What I find so interesting about what happened with the pandemic is that you appreciate the simplest things so much more now. Just to be able to come here and have dinner is almost as good as a week’s vacation somewhere. You feel happy for the simplest things.”

The next day I headed over to Lakeside Farmers’ Market and visited with owners Sharon and Peter Francisco. It was late morning and the market was lively. “We are having a pretty busy day today,” Sharon said. “We have the live music here and it’s been hopping, customers look like they’re pleased with their purchases and we have a variety of age groups that come through here. This is our 14th season.”

A few days later, in the early evening, I dropped in on Tracey Thoroman at HOB NOB. Both the front and the new side patios were packed, as was the dining room. “We are fully opened,” Tracey said. “We’ve added our bar stools back as of today June 2, and we’ve added a few seats inside since people seem to feel comfortable with more close proximity now. We now can seat 36 inside with the bar seats. On the front patio it is 14,



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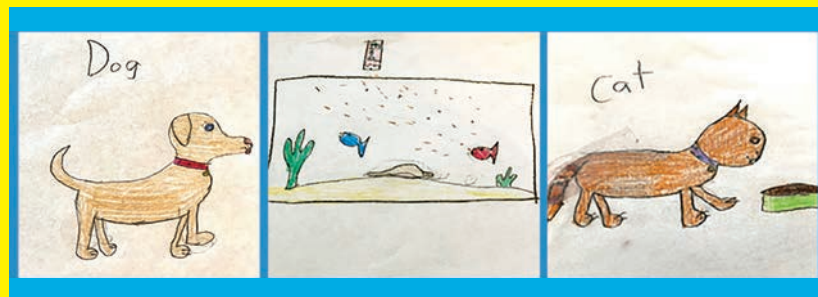
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and then we have 28 on our new covered patio. The new patio has been extremely popular since we reopened on April 7. It's covered from rain and everything else."

Like other restaurateurs, Tracey is also looking for additional help. "This week we're on a temporary pause on our lunch business just because we're dealing with some staff shortages like everybody seems to be right now," he said. "We need staff in both the front of the house and the back of the house."

Despite staff shortages, business has never been better. "Our business has been as good if not better than it ever was before COVID, which has been great," said Tracey. "Within a couple of weeks we'll have some folks coming on who we've just got to get trained and ready to go."

"It's been really great to see a lot of old regulars, and new faces that we've sort of accumulated during the pandemic from our drive through service," Tracey said. "We allow folks to come in

without their masks as long as they've been fully vaccinated. We've felt like our customers have just been great and responsible and haven't given us any pushback. We're just excited to be back open and seeing smiling faces again. It's been good to see people enjoying dining out again with their friends and family."

Earlier that week, I spent the better part of a morning with Beth Monroe, director of public relations and marketing for Lewis Ginter Botanical Gar-

den. We toured the entire garden, all fifty acres of it, and with every step we would see something spectacular that nature offered over to us.

"We have signs throughout the garden with poetry to encourage folks to stop, take a deep breath, look around them, and think about their experience and about all of their five senses," Beth said. "Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden this year is all about the healing power of nature."

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# The Dirty South: Baptism by Sight and Sound

by CHARLES MCGUIGAN

**T**OTAL IMMERSION is the best sort of baptism: every pore, every follicle, every pathway to your senses, caressed or assaulted, by water, by fire, or, in the case of the VMFA's latest installation, by sight and by sound.

The Dirty South, curated by Valerie Cassel Oliver, cleanses the human soul, washing away denial and the sugar-coated White lies that have persisted in this country for over four centuries. And with this baptism comes a revelation about the very foundation of Southern culture, and, more broadly, American culture.

Just before you descend into the exhibition area, a slab—slow, low, and banging—greet you, foreshadowing what lies down below in the heart of it all. Born in Houston's hip-culture back in the 1980s, slabs are Detroit classics with glossy paint jobs, plush interiors, mind-numbing sound systems, and of course swangas, also called Texan Wire Wheels. The Cadillac featured in this exhibition was customized by New Orleans-based producer and rapper Richard "Fiend" Jones, aka International Jones.

Once down the stairs, music engulfs you, along with visual stimulations. It seems almost labyrinthine, but you are led by an invisible thread of sound in the form of music and the human voice, as you begin a sonic and visual journey through the cultural history of the South, beginning a hundred years ago. You move from jazz to the blues to rhythm and blues to soul and finally to Southern hip hop, and the sounds are accompanied by more than 140 works of art that range from paintings to sculptures to drawings to photography to film to audio pieces and large-scale installation works.

When I enter one of the installations, I can feel the temperature rise by at least five degrees and the hairs on my arms stand up as if electrically charged.

The room pulses with a heaving red, almost womblike, lit by a single, naked incandescent bulb. Its walls and floor and ceiling are constructed of rectangular swatches of vinyl in varying hues—scarlet, vermillion, carmine, crimson—stitched together with black thread like an enormous patchwork

quilt. Even the cross and lectern and pews are swaddled in red.

Within this space the air is much closer than it is in the rest of the exhibition area, and it begs you to absorb and linger and learn, which is probably as it should be, because this installation depicts a very famous chapel at Dockery Farms (Plantation), Mississippi. Out of its doors, a little over a century ago, spilled an endless stream of a new music from Charley Patton, Henry Sloan, Howlin' Wolf, Willie Brown, Tommy Johnson, and Roebuck 'Pop' Staples, who had all belted out songs from their guts in this most sacred of places, giving birth to the Blues.

Over the course of my life I have seen hundreds of art exhibitions in museums across the country, but none possessed the raw, emotional and lasting power of The Dirty South. Different artists may inspire our aesthetic sensibilities, and it's pleasant to wallow in them. The Dirty South does that with scores of artists, but it does much more: It is transformative. Those who enter will not be the same when they leave, and the metamorphosis that occurs is not merely emotional or intellectual. It is spiritual.

If you leave the final room of The Dirty South, having watched the video 'Love is the Message/The Message is Death' produced by Arthur Jafa, and still do not understand what Black Lives Matter means, you are soulless or witless or simply an ignorant white supremacist incapable of grappling with truth, content instead to regurgitate and swallow, again and again, the ludicrous pablum of the Southern myth called the "lost cause." In a little over seven minutes, Jafa invites us all to consider the Black body as a sort of "repository of history, tradition, and knowledge, as well as a site of trauma, resistance, and resilience." Some of the images in this video, which runs a little over seven minutes, will force you to recall another video that ran a little over nine minutes. Shot last May on a cell phone by Darnella Frazier that video showed the sadistic murder of George Floyd, who died beneath the knee of a white police officer.

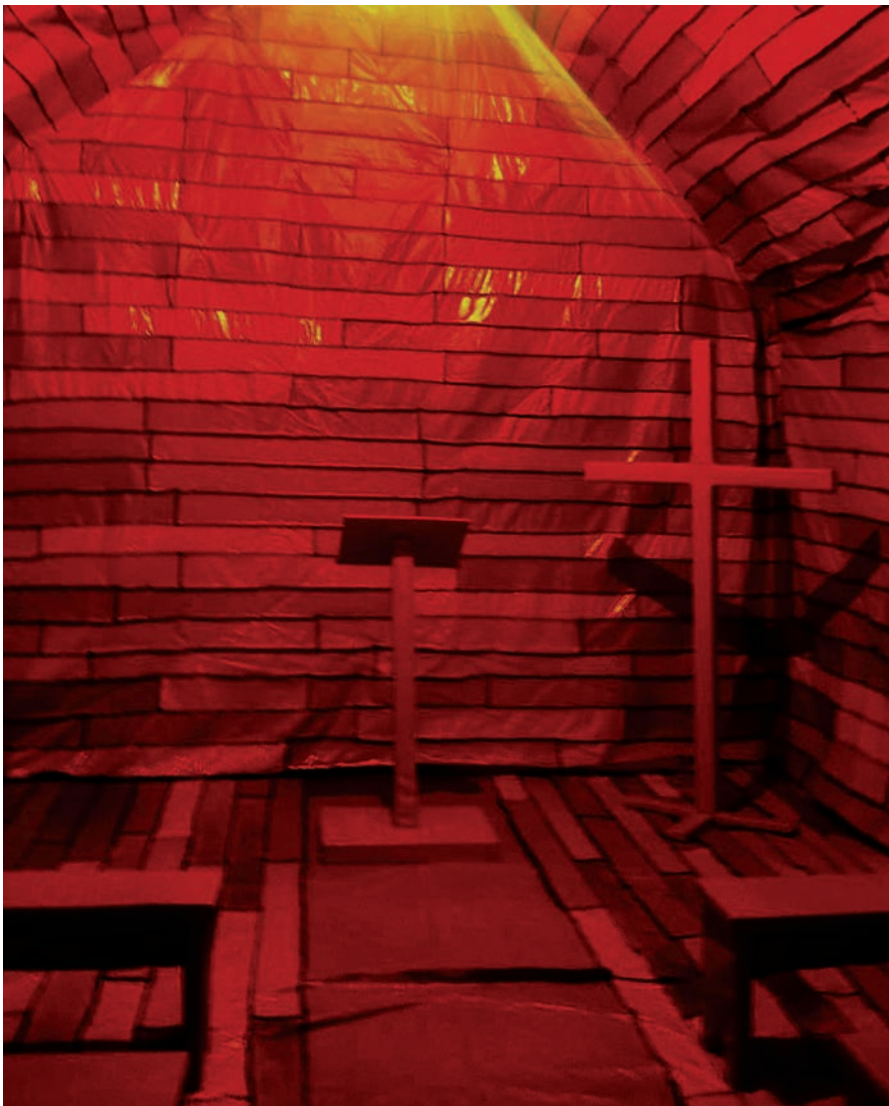
Every Southerner from Texas to Florida, from Georgia to Virginia, should see this creation. Every American should. And every child in every



*Crucifixion (Blue Jesus) by Mose Toller (Polychrome, wood)*

school needs to see this exhibit either in the flesh or remotely, for it is essential to understanding the stuff we are made of as a people. (On June 8, Governor Ralph Northam offered free admission to this exhibit for every child, pre-school through 12, and their immediate families.)

Along with the pain, the struggle, the joy and the resistance ensconced in the music and the visual art work, there is also an undeniable history lesson here, one that blows to smithereens all the idiotic tales of Southern history primers. This is the blemished truth about our Dirty South.



Slab by Richard "Fiend" Jones, aka International Jones.  
From *Asterisks in Dockery*, Rodney McMillian (Vinyl, thread, wood, paint, light bulb)

By the time I leave the museum with a friend, I am literally breathless. (I will visit the exhibit on three more occasions over the next two weeks, and each time the effect will be the same.) As she goes off to her car in the parking lot, I head out to Arthur Ashe Boulevard where I'm greeted by a truly heroic equestrian monument created by Kehinde Wiley that does more than symbolize a sea change in Southern culture.

Of *The Deep South* and its organizer, here's what Connie Butler, chief curator at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, had to say: "What the

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts is doing is radical. Valerie (Cassel Oliver) is spearheading really incredible efforts to make the city look at its history with slavery, and in that context, this exhibition is especially important."

When I look up to *Rumors of War*, the rider—a young Black man with dreadlocks in a ponytail, wearing jeans ripped at the knees and Nike high-top sneakers—looks absolutely triumphant.

Exhibit runs through September 6

**Virginia Museum of Fine Arts**  
200 North Arthur Ashe Boulevard  
Richmond, VA 23220

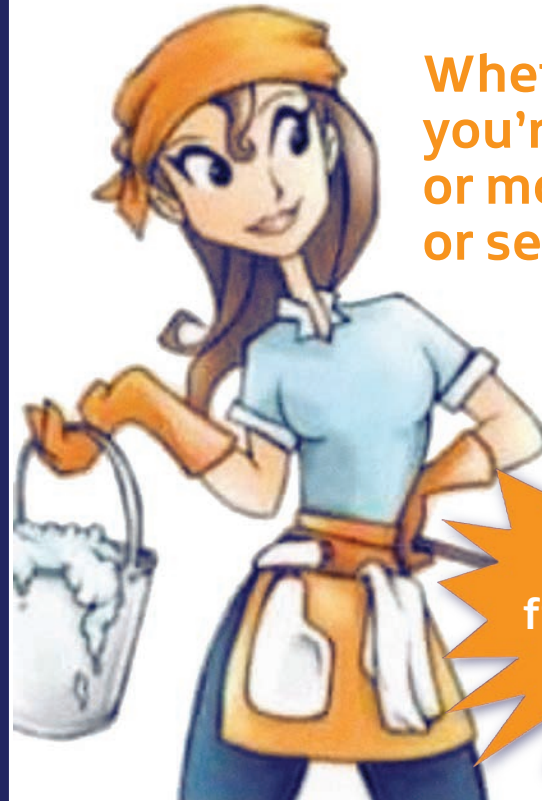
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## BOOK REVIEW

# Children Under Fire: An American Crisis

by **FRAN WITHROW**

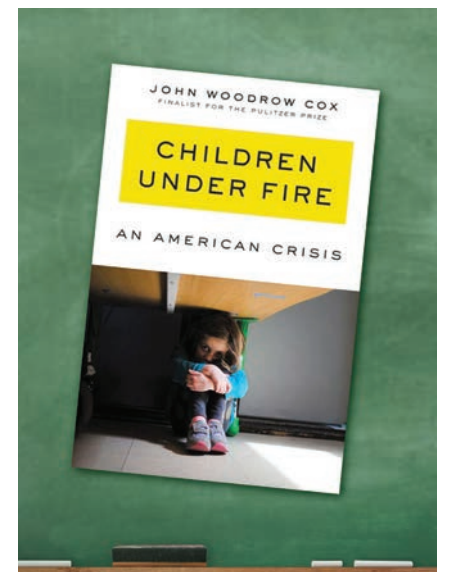
**T**YSHAUN, AGE NINE, IS good friends with Ava, age eight. Tyshaun lives just outside of Washington, D.C., while Ava lives in South Carolina. They connect via video often, even though their backgrounds are different, because they share one critical commonality: they both live with the aftermath of gun violence.

Tyshaun revered his dad, who was gunned down in the neighborhood while Tyshaun was in school. Ava's best friend Jacob was shot to death by a teenager while she and her classmates played on their school playground.

Both children have been deeply, irrevocably scarred by what they experienced. Tyshaun lashes out at school, and school authorities struggle to help him maintain self-control. Ava became so terrified at school that she suffers periodic episodes of rage, and must now be homeschooled and treated with anti-anxiety medications. The story of Ava and Tyshaun in "Children Under Fire: An American Crisis," exemplifies how the American epidemic of gun violence affects our youngest citizens.

John Woodrow Cox has thoughtfully explored just how debilitating gun violence is to children around the country, and his book is a sobering read. Cox, a Washington Post reporter, spent years discovering that children do not need to be victims of violence themselves to be devastated by the experience. The aftermath can be severe: children who cannot tolerate loud and unexpected noises; children afraid to play outside; children who write notes to their families during lockdowns, expecting to die.

It is a misconception to think that as long as children are not physically hurt, an encounter with a shooter will not have long-term consequences. We think of children as resilient and able to adjust to life's traumas. Yet while children can adapt after dealing with a crisis, it's not always easy. In addition, not every child exposed to violence gets the counseling they need. Even with therapy, exposure to violence wreaks havoc on children's emotional and social lives.



While shootings themselves are terrifying, lockdowns and active shooter drills can also traumatize and frighten children. And though schools are still inherently safe places to be, the nationwide perception that they are unsafe is overwhelming. I was heartsick to read about one school that performed a practice drill, but told everyone a real shooter was on site. This drill left children crying, having asthma attacks, and texting their families goodbye.

Cox suggests three ways to combat the rampant epidemic of gun violence in our country. His first suggestion is an age-old one: universal background checks for gun owners. Not only would this screen people who buy a gun; it would also make those owners less likely to engage in gun-trafficking because the gun could be traced back to them. Secondly, we must educate gun owners about how vital it is for firearms to be inaccessible to children. And thirdly, additional research is needed to discover what other tools might protect children from the devastation of gun violence.

Until these things happen, this American crisis will continue unabated.

And there will be more stories like those of Ava and Tyshaun. **NS**

**Children Under Fire:  
An American Crisis**  
By John Woodrow Cox  
\$35.99  
Harper Collins  
328 pages



**VIRGINIA  
GROWN**

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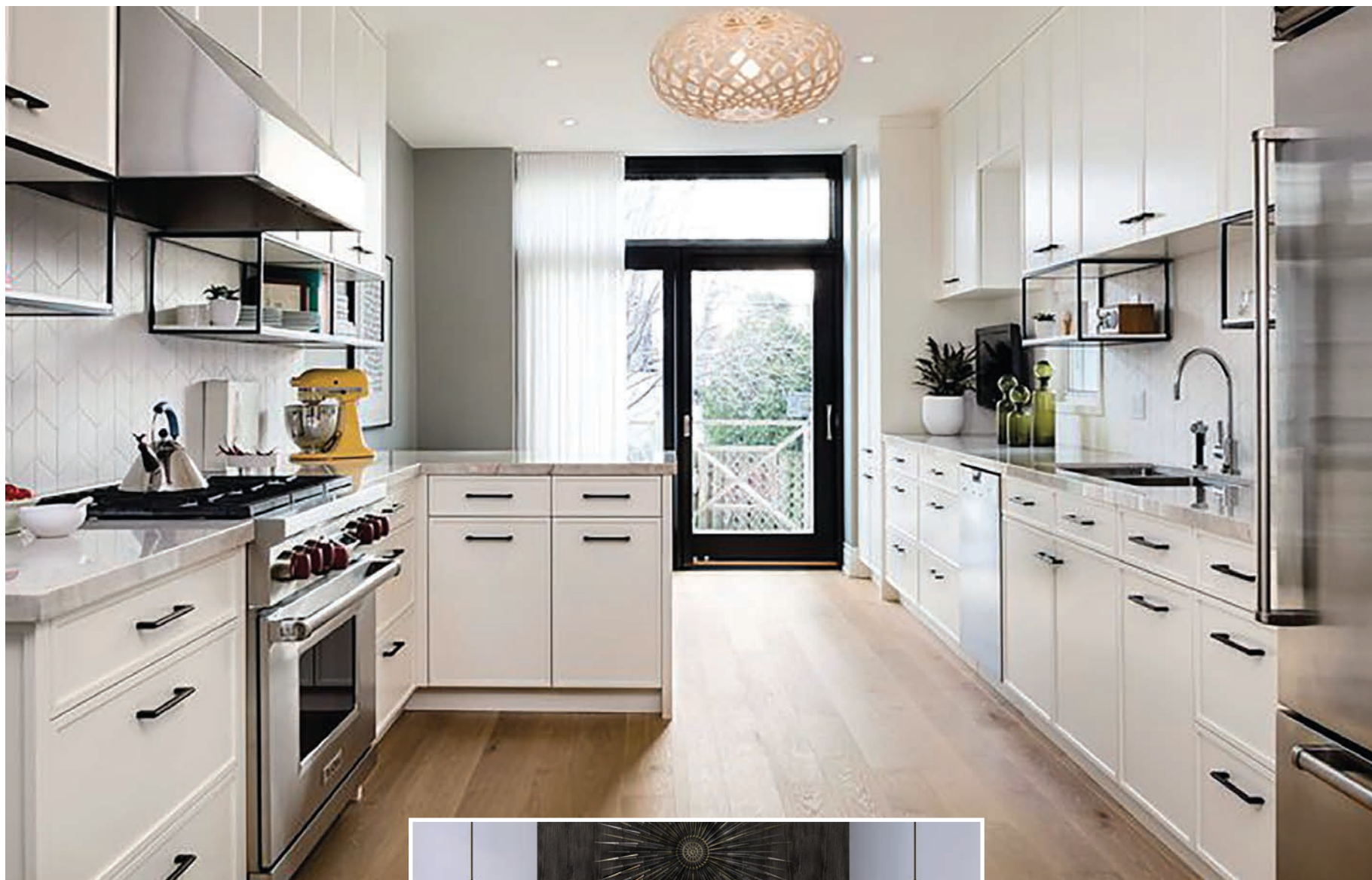


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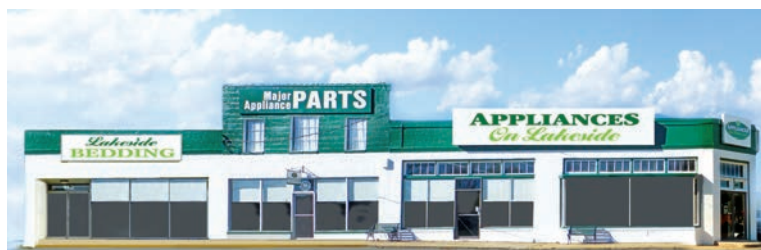


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