

New degree program begins fall 2021



VINCENT MEDINA/TM

Social Justice Degrees: Dr. Melina Abdullah spoke at a BLM protest of the Police Protective League on April 21, 2021. Dr. Abdullah was invited to speak at Cerritos College's introduction to the new Black/Africana Studies program. The theme of the social justice discussion was "The Intellectual Arm of the Revolution." Cerritos' new degree program is timely in light of the current climate in world.

Jacqueline Cochran
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Dr. Melina Abdullah expressed her excitement for Cerritos College's new Black/Africana studies degree program that will be available for students in fall of 2021 during her talk given on May 4.

Dr. Abdullah, Pan African Studies professor at California State University, Los Angeles and co-founder of Black Lives Matter-LA, said "In building an Africana studies degree program, Cerritos College has signaled to black students that Cerritos College is for you.

I am so encouraged by the fact that you have this degree program."

First of its kind at Cerritos College, the Black/Africana studies program offers an introduction to the theories, principals and the practices of social justice with an emphasis on the study of life, history,

culture and social justice traditions of black people.

This degree program will be open to anyone who seeks to do advocacy work to promote equality for all underrepresented groups in an effort to create a more equitable society.

"Now we need to figure out how to set-up pipelines. How does Cerritos College pipeline its Africana studies major into California State University, Long Beach, into Cal State, LA and then how do we create pipeline programs.

Like Cal State, LA has created pipeline programs into PhD, created pipeline programs to teach in Los Angeles Unified School District, we have a LAUSD ethnic studies requirement which Cerritos College can tap into," Abdullah said.

Dr. Abdullah continued her impassioned discussion about what black studies are and what it means to a community.

She said that black studies should be

thought of as intentionally and deliberately creating individuals who are engaged in community work.

Further she said that black studies and ethnic studies is the only set of disciplines that actually come from community struggle and community demand.

"We are intentionally building students who are evolving as scholars and that are activist's scholars. We are not meant to just engage in the classroom but we have developed our discipline as the intellectual arm of the revolution," she said.

Abdullah gave a brief overview of the establishment of the social justice movement as it relates to black studies.

She introduced the Sankofa principle that Dr. Jeremiah Wright wrote in his book called "A Sankofa Moment: The History of Trinity United Church of Christ."

According to Dr. Wright the Sankofa principle means that we cannot go forward without first going back to the past to

understand how we got to where we are. Sankofa is an African word that literally translates into "to go back and get it."

"If we do not understand from whence we came, will forever be headed in the wrong direction," she said.

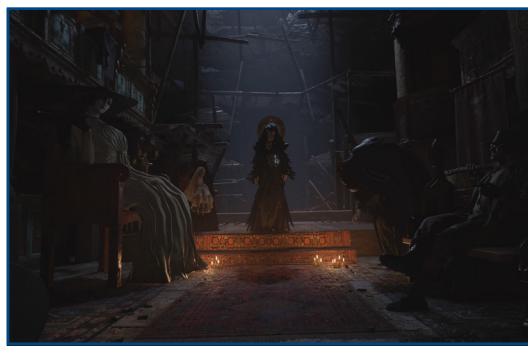
A graduate of Howard University where she majored in African American studies, Abdullah said that the issues she benefited from in the 90s was a struggle that began in the 60s and before.

She highlighted the formation of the Black Panther party in Oakland in 1966 by two Merritt Community College students, Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale, to illustrate the correlation with the BLM movement.

"People think when we talk about the birth of movements that are organized for transforming the world that it takes masses of folks but you should know that those movements are often started by very few people," she said.



Community page 4: Skaters take to the streets



A & E page 8: Resident Evil Village is horrifying



Sports page 11: Dodgers on deck to win again

Cerritos revved up alumnus' auto racing career

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Eli Villa, creator of EVilla Motorsports and Cerritos College Alumnus, enthusiastically tells students that the path to success isn't necessarily a straight path.

"Most people go from a community college to a university but I went to a university first and then discovered the Cerritos College Automotive program, he said."

Villa said that he would drive his then partner to Cerritos because that's where she was attending at the time. This is where he met Mr. Glick, instructor and the person who gave him insight about the Automotive Technology program and what it entailed.

Realizing the automotive program was more valuable to what he wanted to do in life, he transferred to Cerritos College. After transferring, he became a part of the Import Technician training program, which led him to volunteer at different shops.

He said what really started the ball rolling was taking on what he thought was an overzealous project which was an old beat up 1970 beetle. "I met a good friend who ended up becoming a mentor."

"This older gentleman basically built pro drag racing motors. He hung out with all the racing legends who made Volkswagens as big as they were. This gentleman mentored me on engine building," said Villa

Villa indicated that he

spent some years under this mentor's tutelage. After some time, He transitioned to another Motorsports endeavor which was fabrication and roll cage building. It was at this time he met another good friend who also became another mentor.

His second mentor helped to teach him notching, tubing, building races and suspension components and also roll cages.

It was at this time his second mentor suggested to him that he should go to the track and have a good time. He encouraged Eli to race and he immediately became addicted.

He said once he discovered how expensive racing is, he began to formulate a plan and search for ways to mitigate the cost so that he could continue enjoying the sport he was falling so deeply for.

"There was a series under SCCA that was called B-spec. B-spec was an option to get a low budget vehicle that you build up with a cage and suspension. This vehicle you can race with it.

"It's reliable and does not require that you do anything with the engine. This idea creates an even playing field so that it's all about skill and not money and parts," he said.

As more time passed, he saw what his mentor was involved in and wanted to follow in his footsteps to make more money to continue his racing endeavors. His mentor suggested that he begin to pick-up newer cars and build parts for those vehicles.

And then I saw Kia and discovered no one was making



JACQUELINE COCHRAN/TM

Successful: Cerritos College Alumni Association shared photos of Eli Villa during the Zoom discussion on April 29, 2021. The photos include some of his earlier racing vehicles. Villa currently has a motorsports business based in Washington state.

parts for this one," he said.

Villa said he started making basic parts and they began to sell and slowly began to build up. "I started working for a manufacturer of high end racing equipment, including racing suits, driver equipment, helmets, boots. Stand 21 is based in France,

"They are the official supplier for corvette racing and fortunate Motor sport. Plus they are the leading company as far as safety their merchandise is far above everyone else. They made everything custom from head to toe," he said.

Villa said that working for this

company led him to travel a lot and he experienced a lot in the world of racing. He experienced off-road, trophy trucks, Baja 1000, Baja 500, land speed racing such as Bonneville Salt Flats and Porsche racing series.

"I experienced a lot of pro level motorsports stuff which encouraged me to continue to build and build. I moved to Washington State and continued to expand and followed my passion which is Motorsports racing. My flagship vehicle is the KIA Rio," he said.

"The simplest thing you can do is to have a car, does not

have to be brand new or super expensive, it just needs to run, have oil and brake pads you will be fine. Register online with the Motorsports registry and do a track event.

He ended by telling students that the trades are an excellent way to earn a very good living, if that is where your interests lie.

"Crews are always sought after and that will give you a gist of what's going on.

You get to be a part of the team and learn what the rules are, what's involved, how a car works and get to know people in the industry," he said

Tri-College competition encourages entrepreneurship

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And the winners are Fredric Royce and Heidi Leonardo, college students attending Mt. San Antonio College. Their energetic business pitch is that of Nihon'ichi: a Vegan California Roll company.

These students are winners of the Tri-College student pitch competition that was hosted by Cerritos College and held on April 29 at 1 p.m. virtually via Zoom.

First place winner Royce said, "If I was on the debate team, I would not have had a chance to put something forward that would transform all of your lives.

My last advice to those who aren't transferring on yet is that you miss 100% of the shots you don't take. But you'll get those shots if you play the probability rule."

The second place prize was

given to the Allergen Protector, created by Mt. SAC students Weizhen (Wilson) Jiang and Hongbai (Ralph) Ruan.

Rounding out the competition was third place winner Ashley Juarez who created The Hangout, an innovative idea where she combined aspects of Bumble and Uber to create a business that

brings people together.

The top business pitch was awarded \$1000, second place received \$500 and third place received \$250.

Cerritos College students Julie Franco, Elizabeth Silva and Rosa Gonzalez were among the top 11 finalists at the competition.

Other student presenters

from Mt. SAC and Norco College included Jonathan Lewin, Ashley Orozco, Kaitlyn Krueger and Lyda Im.

The business pitches were a wide range of innovative and well thought out businesses like luxury handbag rental to Save T Net, which is a way to protect packages from being stolen from your home or apartment.

The Tri-College business pitch competition was the brain-child of Cerritos College's own Dr. Jianli Hu, Business Administration instructor and the Business Pitch planning committee lead.

The idea is to help students learn to practice presenting business ideas in front of established entrepreneurs, business experts, professionals and community leaders.

Participants are required to submit a presentation or one to two minute YouTube video.

Other requirements include a description of the product or business, an explanation of how

the business will serve its target market as well as outline the marketing and promotion plan.

You must be sure to include a summary of the financial plan. Each participant must also be enrolled in one of the three participating colleges.

At the end of the event, the professors and judges gave participants advice as they move forward towards their entrepreneurial goal.

According to Gary Schoeniger, competition judge and founder of Entrepreneurial Learning Initiative, told students that they should recognize that they are already ahead.

"You should not concentrate on the opinions of professors.

But you should always listen to the opinions of the people whose problems you are trying to solve," he said.

For further information and to pitch the next million dollar idea, contact the Business Administration department.



JAZMIN TAHA/TM

New ideas: The Tri-College student pitch competition flyer. The yearly competition gives students an opportunity to practice making business pitches to actual entrepreneur's, professionals, professors and community leaders on April

La Jara Brewing Company to open in Norwalk

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A trio of brewers smiles as their brewing tanks roll into their soon-to-be brewery and bar in Norwalk's South-Eastern leg.

Derek Johnstone, his father Randy and business partner Jason Sullivan, are the entrepreneurs behind La Jara Brewing Co., a backyard hobby turned business venture that hopes to bring locally crafted brews to a community hungry for business.

"We do not have a hard date for opening as there are several things in motion that are out of our control, but we are tracking for a summer opening," said Derek.

The co-owner began brewing beer at home for 10 years and is one of the company's master brewers. Before having their own building, he and Sullivan had to use home equipment or ask other breweries to use their fermenters for more extensive production.

The new tasting room and brewery are being constructed in what used to be a tile and granite warehouse in Norwalk, located right off the Carmentia exit on the 5 freeway.

The partners walked through their building with plans and posted renderings for where everything would be.

The main entrance is a commercial roll-up door that lifts to reveal a full bar and lounge area, where the wall has taps that will pour cold beer straight out of the freezer. Glass panes allow visitors



La Jara Brewing Co.: Rudolph 'Randy' Johnstone (left), Derek Johnstone (right), and Jason Sullivan (middle) stand in front of their new fermenters at La Jara Brewing Co. They hope to begin brewing and open by Summer 2021.

to view the brewing process while they eat and drink.

There is also a designated manufacturing floor leading to another opening for shipping.

"Our brewhouse can produce 10 BBL at a time, and we have five fermenters that allow us to ferment 1550 gallons of beer at any time," Derek said.

The brewing room needed to have the concrete completely repaved to support the fermenters at their total weight. The large steel tanks serve as the new home for his award-winning beers, a significant upgrade from the original tall pots he used initially.

"It was part of the original business plan to have a brewery and bar in the same building," said Sullivan. "A — this building is oversized for us. It's too big, which gives us room to grow.

B — we can convert it into manufacturing space. It's big

enough for manufacturing and big enough for us to have a really big tasting area for people."

Once the company had a building, it required several city permits before construction could begin.

The partners brought their designs to Norwalk City Hall and in October of 2019. They celebrated the approval of a permit allowing them to construct a tasting room in their brewery.

"This is a huge milestone and allows us to proceed with our project as we have been envisioning: Locally inspired beers brewed with regionally sourced ingredients served as fresh as can be," writes a picture caption of the trio on social media.

They envisioned celebratory toasts and clinking glasses that would be another pastime enjoyed in a pre-pandemic world.

COURTESY OF RUDOLPH JOHNSTONE

Weddings, parties, sporting events, funerals and any other planned gathering that could facilitate the spread of the deadly virus were postponed indefinitely. La Jara Brewing Co. was not ready to open yet, but permit requests stagnated, plans stifled and development was slowed to a crawl.

"I think with COVID, there was a slow down at first, but that was pretty much global," said Sullivan, "there were delays getting permits approved because the government started furloughing. There was maybe a month or two where we weren't sure what could happen but (the city) figured it out quickly."

Since they had pending permits, Sullivan and the Johnstones rushed to the city departments so they could begin working.

"We had some pending

permits with the city, so we had to chase those down. Certain officials were only there one day a week. Then they would leave it with someone else, and that person had gone for the week. The schedules were always changing," said Derek Sullivan. "Once we got the permits from the county, we hit the ground running, and all this went up in the last three months."

Since then, the partners continued to work hard on remodeling their building for brew production, which meant complete renovations from top to bottom. Along with repaving the floor, they had to rewire the electrical grid, replace the old plumbing and build the brewery inside.

"We are oversized on purpose, so we have room to grow," said Sullivan on possibly expanding to a barrel aging process.

They capitalized on some leftover granite from the previous owners, adding it to their table and bar designs. Accommodations for social distancing and an estimated seating capacity are unclear. The owners await new directions from the county as the summer approaches.

La Jara Brewing Co. said 13423 Excelsior Drive was an optimal location for their business, offering freeway access and little to no competition in the area.

"We looked at everything. It really comes down to a community that doesn't have a brewery and is excited for one," Sullivan said.

He noted that Norwalk residents may have the tendency to commute to neighboring cities to spend their money.

Read more at [Talonmarks.com](https://www.talonmarks.com)

Car erupts into flames adjacent to the Norwalk Town Square

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A Chevy sedan erupted into flames across the street from Norwalk Town Square at approximately 6 pm on April 29.

Within minutes the Los Angeles County Fire Department Station 20 responded to the incident and put out the flames.

The fire's thick black smoke could be seen from blocks away.

Fire Captain Scott Miller and his team worked quickly to extinguish the fire.

Miller said the fire was unintentional and that it was caused by an electrical issue.

"The owner pulled over because he smelled something, then looked in the trunk and saw flames. He tried to put it out, but it got away from him," said the fire captain.

Miller reported there were no injuries in the fire.

"My speaker was on fire," said Robert Guzman, the owner of the vehicle.

"I smelled smoke, so I pulled

in right here, I opened the trunk, and my speaker was on fire. I only had the speaker for a few weeks."

Guzman was not injured in the fire.

The vehicle owner left the scene, but his mother, Maria, arrived on the scene later to assist with additional paperwork and questions with law enforcement.

"He bought this car about two weeks or so ago. I was shocked," said the mother.

"I was relieved when he said he was safe and uninjured."

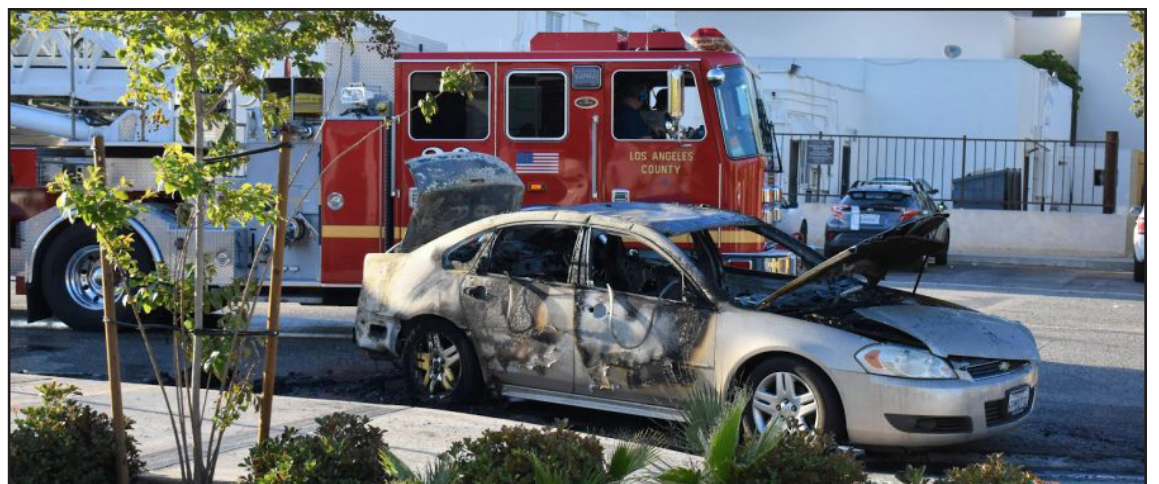
Once the fire department left, Vernola's Towing Services arrived to take the vehicle away.

Since there was nothing to salvage from the car, it will be taken to a lot across the street from Vernola's towing. It will eventually be taken to a junkyard for disposal.

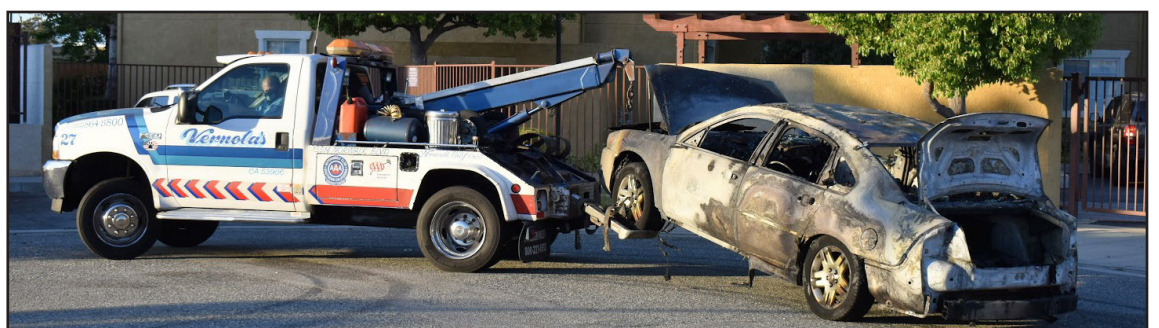
Pedestrians watched as the charred vehicle was towed away.

Vernola's Towing Services is owned by the family of former Norwalk Mayor Luigi Vernola.

The former Mayor died on January 1, after battling COVID-19.



Car Fire: A Chevy sedan catches fire across the street from Norwalk Town Square on April 29, 2021. LA County Fire Station 20 arrives quickly to extinguish the flames.



Vernola's Towing Service: Vernola's Towing Service takes the vehicle to their yard, where it will later be disposed in a junk yard. The Chevy sedan burns after a speaker caught fire in the vehicle's trunk on April 29, 2021.

Skate protest starts off AAPI Heritage Month

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"I never thought this would happen to me, much less anyone I knew," said Jenna Dupuy, an 18-year old Puerto Rican-Korean American who was harassed and assaulted at Tustin Legacy Skate Park.

A Skate to End Hate protest was held in support of Dupuy at the park on May 1, the first day of Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month.

As Dupuy described, she was at the Tustin skate park on April 11 when a man began harassing another woman at the park. Dupuy defended the woman, but he turned his attacks toward her.

He began calling her racial slurs such as "commie bitch," "North Korean whore" and "nuclear terrorist."

"My shirt was torn off, and I had to lay on the ground, naked and exposed," an emotional Dupuy described during her speech. "The injuries he left me with were a fractured shoulder, I refractured my ankle, and I sustained a concussion. I was left with scratches and bruises all over my body.

She shared images of her injuries on her Instagram page.

Dupuy said that the attack happened because of the decades of stereotypes and fetishization that have enabled violence against the Asian community.

"Growing up, I was surrounded by media that perpetuated the sex appeal of Asian women. It caused me to internalize that Asian women are meant to be quiet and submissive," Dupuy said.

"I am an Asian woman, and I am not going to be quiet or subservient! They are going to listen to me and my story because the violence against my community has gone on for too long, and it stops now!"

Kaila, the head organizer of Skate To End Hate, received harassment and death threats while coordinating the demonstration. When scouting the park for the protest on April 28, she was harassed and mobbed by a group of young skaters.

She has since pressed charges on the boys.

For safety and while the investigation is ongoing, she asked to only be referred to by her first name or by her organizer Instagram handle @tallcabbagegirl.

"What happened that day was ridiculous," Kaila said as she described what happened. "[My friend and boyfriend] were immediately harassed by a group of boys. The security guard didn't do anything until I called on him. The boys formed a half-circle around us and started trying to get in my face and started waving their arms around."

The activist stated that one boy in the mob hit her, and she defended herself by trying to



VINCENT N. MEDINA/TM

Skate to End Hate: Skate to End Hate march begins at Tustin Legacy Skatepark on May 1, 2021, the first day of AAPI heritage month. The protest is in response to the attack on Jenna Dupuy, who was beaten at the park three weeks prior.

block the attack.

"A lot of people were dismissing this saying, 'They're kids, they don't know any better.' Well, I think a kid should know better than to hit a woman," she said.

Kaila recorded the boys and posted the video and a further explanation of the events on her Instagram.

"One thing I didn't notice until looking at the video was that some of them were pulling their eyes back to make fun of me being Asian," Kaila said. "When I was looking through the video to send to my team, we realized that they were staging everything ahead of time. It was planned."

Several young skaters did disrupt the demonstration by walking through the audience of supporters while activists were speaking.

"The skating community, especially the younger generation, is pretty toxic," said Dupuy. "They were causing a disturbance, and I let them know, 'If you are going to disrespect my friends and the speakers here, I'd appreciate it if you'd leave.'"

OC Justice Initiative and CORE Movement helped organize the event.

"We heard about what transpired, and we wanted to support them as they stand against Asian hate crimes," said Antony Bryson, the founder of the CORE Movement.

Bryson also plans to run for U.S. Congress in California's 47th District, which covers Long Beach, Garden Grove, Westminster, Stanton, Los Alamitos, Cypress and Catalina Island.

"If I am elected, I will push for more equality, more social



VINCENT N. MEDINA/TM

Tustin PD: Tustin Police Officer watches protesters march in the street on May 1, 2021. Officers warned the marchers to move on the sidewalk, but protesters refused and shouted, "Who's streets? Our Streets!"

justice legislation and getting rid of qualified immunity. I will also reevaluate the current policing in California," Bryson said.

The demonstration also drew the attention of Irvine Mayor Farrah Khan.

"I am an Asian woman, and I am not going to be quiet or subservient."

Jenna Dupuy
AAPI Activist

"We want to make sure that the message is getting across that we are not going to tolerate hate in any form," the mayor said. "I think Irvine was the first city in

California to set up a 'reporting portal' on the city website. This allows people to report an incident online from the comfort of their home."

After several speeches from activists, the demonstrators took to the streets and marched from Valencia Avenue to Edinger Avenue.

Despite warnings from the Tustin Police Department, the protesters marched in the street.

Law enforcement told the marchers to go onto the sidewalk so they would not stop traffic, but the demonstrators responded by shouting, "Who's streets? Our streets!"

Marchers felt the officers tried to intimidate them by riding their motorcycles close to young protesters and revving their engines behind demonstrators.

"We can't protect you if you are on the street," officers said through their megaphones.

Once the marchers returned to the park, a Jiu-Jitsu demonstration by Instructor Richard Arreola and his team from the Hybrid Academy was set up to teach participants how to defend themselves.

"We don't encourage violence," said Arreola. "We embrace the true characteristics such as discipline, self-control and character. If we must defend ourselves, then we are prepared."

"Just because you can do something doesn't mean you should," the instructor emphasized to the audience during his demonstration.

Skate to End Hate intends to hold more demonstrations to protest Asian hate crimes.

Latinas building their future in South Korea

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“I always knew swim coaching is what I wanted to do, but I thought it was always going to be a side thing. I never thought it would bring me halfway across the world.”

Kara Jue has always lived near water and has been swimming since she was a little girl, at the age of four. Born in California, her family moved to Texas when she was just one year old.

After graduating college, Jue was living a quiet, normal life in Corpus Christi, TX, working as a swimming coach and also working for a non-profit.

She received an opportunity to do something outside the box, after her mother's friend suggested a coaching job in South Korea.

In Aug. 2019, Jue packed her bags and moved to Jeju, South Korea.

The island of Jeju is completely different from the bustling capital of Seoul.

It offers beach resorts, breathtaking landscapes of dormant volcanoes such as Hallasan Mountain, and cave-like lava tubes formed long ago.

Familiar with living in an easy-going beach town back in Texas, Jue quickly acclimated to



COURTESY OF KARA JUE

‘Swimming’ across the world: Kara Jue, is a part-time swimming coach and teacher in the island of Jeju, South Korea. She moved from her hometown in Texas to Jeju on August 2019, after accepting a coaching job in the island.

her new home where she works as a teacher at an international school and is also a part-time swimming coach.

“When I lived in [Texas], I moved around a lot. Every year I would move to a different school. So, I had to learn how to adapt — wherever I was — very quickly. When I came to Jeju it was just like moving again,” said Jue.

Jue is also currently working on her teaching license for swimming, with plans to become a full-time swimming instructor. Despite living on a paradise island, Jue has also been affected by the pandemic.

“Working at a school, I can't really travel anymore. Last year

I was going to Japan, Thailand and the Philippines. Now I'm just locked in this island. Living on an island is great, until you're stuck here,” she said.

Being half Chinese and Mexican, Jue decided to share a little piece of her Mexican heritage in the island of Jeju, by making and selling her own tamales.

She started her own small business last year, called Tejana Tamales, a name which references her Texan roots.

Jue is also finishing her coaching license in six months and hopes to pursue a full-time coaching job in Jeju.

“I really plan on staying here and establishing the beginning of



COURTESY OF ANDREA PEREZ

Los Angeles native: Andrea Perez, works at the Samsung Electronics Headquarters in Suwon, South Korea. She moved to South Korea in 2017, after accepting a job offer with the Korean conglomerate.

my career here,” said Jue, “That's my plan so far, but honestly I'm a go-with-the-flow type of person. So, if a better opportunity or something arises, I'll go with it.”

Andrea Perez is also a driven Latina from the US, building her career in South Korea. Perez was born in Los Angeles, CA and moved to South Korea in October 2017 after accepting a job offer at Samsung Electronics.

Perez works in the mobile training and development department at the Korean conglomerate.

“I create mobile training and marketing content and I produce training videos for employees in retail stores,” she said.

Moving to a foreign country with a completely different language and culture can be a challenge in itself. Andrea says that not speaking the Korean language has been a huge challenge for her and often prevents her from living a normal life.

“It's difficult ordering food, making new friends, all the way down to the simple things such as checking food ingredients and directions.

Many say it is my fault for not learning the language and I completely agree but I am trying — it just takes time,” said Perez.

Not speaking the language has created a barrier for her...

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California nurses face stress & heartache battling COVID-19

Emily Melgar
Opinion Editor
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Best of Spring 2021

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to take an excruciating toll on front line healthcare workers in California.

Nurses on the front lines not only face constant potential COVID-19 exposure but have also experienced a debilitating amount of stress and emotions in the last 11 months.

Ana Valdoria, a registered nurse at Veterans Affairs Long Beach Healthcare System, has worked in the healthcare field for 26 years and says things were very chaotic and stressful when the pandemic first hit.

“It's very stressful even until now,” Valdoria said.

Valdoria explains the stress they feel when there is a confirmed positive case and they try to trace back whether they were exposed themselves or not.

In addition to the risk exposure, the hospital is seeing an overflow of COVID-19 patients.

The hospital had to create a Mobile Medical Hospital, which is made of tents in the parking lot in front of the hospital, to make room for more patients.



COURTESY OF ANA VALDORIA

Front line heroes: Registered Nurse Ana Valdoria, wears a mask as she arrives at White River, Arizona on Aug. 14. Valdoria was deployed to assist with the Apache Tribe and Navajo Nation COVID-19 patients.

As the COVID-19 surge continues, Valdoria says their numbers are going up.

She was recently deployed to Arizona to help the Navajo nation with their COVID patients.

There she treated a 31-year-old COVID patient on his birthday. “He could only say three words — not sentences — three words,” Valdoria remembered. “Three words and he was done and completely out of breath.”

A message for those skeptics who question the virus, Valdoria

tells them, “You really have to see it for yourself to even say anything. To be able to judge this whole situation.”

As a mother, Valdoria also faces the burden of taking the role of a teacher with most schools doing online learning.

This is a challenge many adults in the U.S face, and one Valdoria says has been difficult to juggle.

Valdoria received her first dose of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine in mid January and will receive the second dose in

February — this has alleviated some of her fear and anxiety.

“I hope to lead by example,” Valdoria added, “Maybe more people will get the vaccine as they see more and more people getting it.”

PIH Health Whittier Hospital registered nurse, Victoria Garcia, said the beginning of the pandemic was a scary time with so many unknowns.

Garcia explains her frustration after months of treating COVID-19 patients and feeling hopeless.

“You do everything you can,” Garcia said, “and most of them will probably still die.”

Garcia says that after treating COVID patients for two to three weeks, the nurses become attached.

Seeing them decline has made them cry and left them thinking of the deceased for days after they pass.

“We're almost grateful their families can't see them,” Garcia said, “It would traumatize them. It almost traumatizes us and it's our job”.

Garcia received both doses of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine in January and is happy for the “extra layer of protection.”

For Garcia, looking into the future means hoping for the day she can see her family without the fear of getting them sick.

Garcia also wishes that people who are skeptical about the vaccine or COVID-19 do their research.

“Look at the worse possible

cases and imagine them being [your] family,” Garcia said. “There are people who suffer alone until the very last moment. Why would anyone want that for people?”

Elena Rodriguez, a registered nurse at the Torrance Memorial Medical Center, also explained the same challenge of the unknown when the pandemic first hit in March 2020.

Rodriguez works in the specialty department for pediatrics at Torrance Memorial and said they did not see their first child case of COVID-19 until Nov. of last year.

During the first few months of the pandemic, the pediatric nurses' shifts began getting canceled as fewer children were being seen at the hospital.

In an effort to avoid layoffs, the hospital found different jobs for the pediatric nurses to do. “I've had many roles since COVID. I went from a peds nurse, to making wipes, to being a spotter [for ICU nurses],” Rodriguez said.

A first-time home buyer needing job security, Rodriguez said she jumped at the opportunity to work at a nearby COVID-19 testing site.

Rodriguez is now working at the testing site twice a week in addition to her role as a pediatric nurse at the hospital. “I come home tired,” Rodriguez said.

“I haven't had a weekend off in three months.” As a mother of two, she says it has been very stressful because her kids miss her.

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Best of Spring 2021

Couples eager to say 'I do' forced to alter their wedding plans

Josselyn Garay
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Weddings are something that every couple looks forward to from the second the proposal happens. Unfortunately, due to the ongoing pandemic many couples can't look forward to that special day, as large group gatherings still remain restricted.

Whittier residents, Nancy Monroy and Gustavo Lara, are one of the many newly engaged who've had to hit an unexpected pause on their wedding plans.

"It's been really hard on me, it took a toll on my mental state as well. Not knowing when I'll get to live the wedding I always dreamt of since I was a little girl," Monroy said.

She also expressed how not knowing when she will be able to enjoy the celebration of her dreams is truly worrisome.

It has been almost one year since the initial lockdown was first imposed and there has been

little to no change to the rules of having parties and gatherings.

It is still unsafe to have large gatherings that include more than 15 people, especially if everyone is from a different household.

"It's upsetting to have your plans cancelled out of nowhere, especially when a big amount of hard earned money is completely lost," said Lara.

“It was nice having just our parents there to witness our special day we will never forget.”

Brenda Bravo
Recently Married

Many venues have refused to issue refunds to those who left deposits or even paid their expenses in full.

Monroy expressed, "You know we tried and tried to get our

money back for all the stuff we had already paid in full and the only thing I was able to get credit for was my dress — but just credit, no cash."

According to NBC, a San Diego couple was dealing with the same issue.

Another couple from Whittier, Brenda and Osvaldo Bravo, handled their wedding plans completely different and shared some thoughts for couples going through similar situations, on how to get some stress off their mind.

"Not knowing how long we're going to be in this is very hard and can lead you to overthink a lot, but I think just having a positive outlook on everything helped me decide what I wanted to do with my wedding and I don't regret anything at all," Brenda said.

Mr. and Mrs. Bravo were one of the few couples who actually said screw it, we're still going to get married during a pandemic.

They both expressed how reading blogs and watching



DOUGLAS GRAHAM/FLICKR

'In sickness and in health': A couple from Loudoun County getting married in front of a courthouse during COVID-19 pandemic. Couples have had to make tough decisions and choose wait to get married during the pandemic.

YouTube videos on how they weren't the only ones going through this helped a lot.

It made them appreciate life a little more and made them realize that maybe a big wedding party wasn't really necessary.

"At first I was so upset with the world because I always wanted a big wedding, but after reading this blog and seeing how I could still celebrate life with my best friend in the entire world, a small wedding didn't seem too bad," Osvaldo Bravo added.

"Plus we saved so much money that we can use for our honeymoon when everything is safely back open.

It was nice having just our parents there to witness our special day that we will never

forget. Plus now we have a funny story to tell our kids about our wedding." They both laughed.

The Bravos hope that every newly engaged couple stays hopeful and comes to accept the idea of having a small wedding celebration because they are not as bad as they sound.

Brenda acknowledged the struggles that it can have mentally on a girl. "Ladies, I know this stuff sucks. We have our dream wedding party in our minds since we're little girls. But what's most important right now is staying safe and keeping your loved ones safe, don't let this take a toll on your headspace or your love life."

"Say fuck it, and just have a small wedding. You won't regret it."

Los Angeles DJs adapt their craft during the pandemic

Mirella Vargas
Life Editor
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Before the pandemic, you could find Jesus Rojo spinning the hottest hip-hop and reggaeton tracks to the masses packed in popular downtown Los Angeles clubs, including the Broadway Bar, The Reserve and the Treehouse Rooftop on any given weekend.

Those places, however, along with clubs and bars across the county, still remain closed due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Rojo, known as DJ Hazeus, is one of the many DJs in LA who have been impacted by the pandemic, and since then has had to adapt and explore other avenues to continue their craft.

"I had a lot of events planned for this year, weddings, private stuff a lot of other events that involved artists and DJs. When all this stuff happened, everything got put on pause," said Rojo.

Almost a year into the pandemic, most activities where one could enjoy music, including festivals, concerts and night clubs still remain too dangerous to



COURTESY OF ANGELKIHILLZ/INSTAGRAM

LA based: DJ Hazeus, is one of many DJs who have resorted to virtual live sets amid the pandemic. He hosted a livestream fundraiser featuring other local artists and DJs, with proceeds going to families affected by Covid-19 on Nov. 27, 2020.

resume.

This has upended the music industry and forced labels, promoters, artists and even DJs to adapt and find new, creative ways to bring the music to the crowds.

Different formats have been tried including virtual live-sets, online concerts and even drive-in concerts, to give music-lovers an experience without the risk of spreading COVID-19.

At the beginning of the

lockdown last year, many DJs took to Instagram Live to stream music to their followers.

But once Instagram noticed it was suddenly flooded with live sets, they strongly enforced copyright laws and DJs noticed the algorithm started to cut off their livestream and take it down within seconds of going live.

This forced many to move to other platforms, one of them being the popular live streaming

service Twitch, initially used for video game streaming content.

"I didn't even know how to do any of this stuff. It's a whole other thing. You have to literally learn how to broadcast," Rojo said.

Rojo expressed how there's been a bit of a silver lining, having the opportunity to step back from the club scene and focus solely on the music — something he had been wanting to do even before the pandemic started.

He has started a weekly stream called LA Vice Radio on a digital platform called Massif LA, which features many underground and upcoming rap artists from LA.

"That's when I started doing what I'm working on now, which is a brand called LA Vice. I'm going on SoundCloud and finding music that is underground and local, that people don't know about but that is fire and that people are going to want and like," said Rojo.

"From doing these mixes and reaching out to these artists, I've been able to tap into them and they've actually reached out to me as well."

Rojo, along with many in the industry, believe that shows and events won't go back to normal attendance until later in the year or until 2022, so in the meantime he is focused on his weekly broadcast and plans to expand it to include a Twitch livestream featuring different artists and DJs each week.

Other DJs in the community have also used their craft for good, organizing livestream events to help those in need over the holidays.

Read more at [Talonmarks.com](https://www.talonmarks.com)

'Mortal Kombat' (2021): (Nearly) a flawless victory

Oscar Torres
Co-A & E Editor
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"Mortal Kombat" goes for a different approach than the 1995 film but maintains its own charm.

Many were skeptical when the film was announced, since the 1995 version was still considered a classic. Fans were hoping that this film would be the same in both quality and fan service.

The film starts in 17th century Japan where the Shirai Ryu clan is living in peace with the clan leader Hanzo Hasashi who bears a dragon marking.

He leaves to grab more water but comes back to see his entire clan along with his wife and son killed by the Lin Kuei clan led by Bi Han.

Hanzo fights with all his might but is killed by Bi Han, and upon his death, he is sent to the NetherRealm. However, his youngest daughter still lives with Lord Raiden appearing to take her so that she would be safe.

In the present day, Outworld has won the ninth Mortal Kombat tournament and only needs one more win to take over Earthrealm, the sorcerer Shang Tsung sends Sub-Zero (Bi Han) to earth to kill the champions with the dragon marking to make sure Earth realm becomes defenseless.

The scene cuts to Cole Young, a former MMA champion, after a fight that he ends up losing, spending time with his wife and daughter when it suddenly begins to snow, caused by Sub-Zero.

Jax tells Cole about how he has



WARNER BROS. & HBO MAX/

Finish him!: *Mortal Kombat* is an ongoing fighting game series where you can kill your opponent by performing a fatality. This is the first *Mortal Kombat* movie in years after the 1995 film and its sequel, which were not highly regarded by critics and fans.

the same dragon marking saying that he has been chosen. He then tells him to go find Sonya Blade while he goes to deal with Sub-Zero. However, Jax fails to beat him and ends up armless and unconscious.

After making sure his family is safe, Cole goes to the address that Jax told him and meets Sonya Blade, who tells him about the dragon marking. She explains that they have been chosen to participate in a Mortal Kombat tournament to save Earthrealm.

Before they have time to think, the group gets attacked by Reptile. They are able to take it down with the help of Kano, who pulls its

heart out of its body.

They travel to Raiden's temple and meet with Liu Kang who shows them to the temple to meet with Lord Raiden.

Raiden tells him that he's the descendant of Hanzo Hasashi but tells him that he's unfit to fight alongside them and sends him back to his family.

Meanwhile, Shang Tsung assembles his warriors to storm Raiden's temple and kill the fighters, one of his warriors, Kabal, tells him about Kano and how to help switch sides.

Kabal meets up with Kano and persuades him to join his side. He ultimately agrees and destroys the

staff that protects them leading them to fight for their lives.

They beat them all with the assistance of Scorpion, taking down Sub-Zero, before searching for more warriors to participate in the tournament representing Earthrealm.

The story could have been better as some parts of it would either feel off or drag way too long. Several characters felt either underused or not written well.

Kano was probably one of the best characters in the film, with his banter and comedic vibes, thanks to actor Josh Larson. Cole Young was an interesting choice in adding in a new character but I've

grown to like the character and the way he is, I just wish he could have more to do and more to say.

Though not as intense as the newer "Mortal Kombat" games, the fatalities can still be as brutal as all hell, with even some classic fatalities making their way into this film.

The costume designs are phenomenal, with each look of the characters looking almost identical as they did in the games.

Overall "Mortal Kombat" is a good adaptation of the video game franchise and shows that video game movies can be great adaptations of the source material.

'Star Wars: The Bad Batch': Episode two is another hit

Oscar Torres
Co-A & E Editor
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The second episode of *The Bad Batch* has arrived and it brings out a nice pair of both character development and action.

The episode was about 30 minutes long in contrast to the 71-minute long premiere on May 4.

This is a welcome change as much of the criticism from the previous episode was how long it was to get through.

After escaping Kamino, *The Bad Batch* and their newest member, Omega, head to Saleucami to meet up with an old friend and Clone deserter Cut Lawquane, who tells them about the inhibitor chips that all clones have on them when being born.

Audiences last saw Cut in season 2 of *The Clone Wars*.

The squad thought it be a good place to hide out but it turns out that Cut and his family are leaving Saleucami due to a strong military presence on the planet.

They later found out that they need chain codes in order to get onto public transports, leading Tech and Echo to plan a way to steal some codes for the family.

This results in a firefight with



LUCASFILMS LTD. WALT DISNEY COMPANY

Back in action: (L-R): Hunter Wrecker and Tech in a scene from "STAR WARS: THE BAD BATCH", exclusively on Disney+. © 2021 Lucasfilm Ltd. &™ All Rights Reserved.

the *Bad Batch* trying to escape the planet.

Not too long after, they successfully obtain the codes and safely leave the planet.

Hunter tries to leave Omega with Cut since he believes he deserves a family, but she tells him that she's staying with the

squad knowing that she's just like them.

The plot was charming as we got to see a bit more of Hunter's emotional side, thinking about what's best for the kids and worrying if tagging along with them is safe for a child.

It gave off similar vibes with

Mando and Grogu from *The Mandalorian*, a show that Dave Filoni also worked on, and it worked in this show as well.

It was also incredible to see Cut again after so long as it was a great aspect to see and a shame that they didn't touch more upon this concept in *Clone Wars*.

The dialogue was great as each character had a good number of lines that stood out and a good dynamic with Tech and Echo as there are more scenes of them interacting and planning together.

The animation and visuals are still impressive as environments look detailed, with dirt looking clearer and blaster effects really shining in great detail.

One of the main gripes that is in the last episode that it was a bit too long.

Even though it was a premiere it felt longer with the advantage that it had is that the pacing was great.

It was a good idea to have a 30 minute episode instead of an hour.

Even though it was great to have the first episode being long to entice fans, it did feel that it went a bit too long.

Decreasing the runtime made it work, with the episode functioning like an actual animated show.

Overall "Cut and Run" is a great second episode, that brings back a familiar face and shows more sides of the characters' thoughts and feelings.

The episode gets a four out of five, a great second episode, and hoping that fans get to see more familiar faces down the line as the series progresses to new planets and new threats.

'Twin Peaks: The Return': Lynch's critique on television



JAZMIN TAHA/TM

Falling: *Twin Peaks: The Return* was broadcast on Showtime during its run. The run on cable television allowed it to be more liberal with what it portrayed on television.

Rafael Magana
Co-A & E Editor
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Twin Peaks is a difficult show to describe.

A joint effort between Lynch and Mark Frost, the series focused on the murder of Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee) and the subsequent investigation by FBI Special Agent Dale Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan)

in the small town of Twin Peaks.

The original series, premiering in 1990, was a landmark series for television and it defied many of the tropes that were present in television at the time.

The television landscape in the early 90s was primarily dominated by shows that stuck to a very traditional formula.

It was the norm to tune into a channel and watch a family

comedy or similar programming.

The television landscape was saturated, to say the least.

Lynch saw the lack of innovation and capitalized on it. What resulted was a show that's difficult to put into words.

"Twin Peaks," during its original run, was equal parts soap opera and psychological horror.

A parody of sorts, the show masterfully balanced its

purposefully cheesy elements while maintaining many of the horror elements that Lynch was well known for.

The show ran for two seasons, before being canceled by the ABC network.

Lynch continued to expand the series mythos in a prequel movie set before the events in the series, "Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me".

25 years after its initial cancellation in 1991, the show returned in 2017 as a limited event series known as "Twin Peaks: The Return" with Lynch and Frost returning at the helm.

Series mainstays returned, all reprising their original roles from the first two seasons.

A notable thing about the return of all the original characters is that they've all aged in the context of the show as well. For example, Agent Cooper is shown to have aged in real time.

The most fascinating thing about the series' return was how Lynchian it was to its core.

Lynch opted to have us return to a world that seemed foreign.

It's a strange feeling, returning to a world that was at times almost comical in its portrayal of its protagonists and subject matter only to find that it's become cold and alien.

To elaborate, while horrific events were merely referenced and toned down quite a bit in

the series original run on ABC, nothing is left to the imagination in *The Return*.

Scenes of intense violence and gore are present, yet never feel like they're violent for the sake of being violent.

The presence of such intense violence only serves to strengthen the fact that the Twin Peaks that we're in is far removed from the one we visited in the 90s.

When returning to an established franchise after a long period of absence, it's common to have a bombastic return and make the reintroduction of characters a big deal.

"The Return" challenged this, in a way that initially seems cruel but only serves the darker undertones of the show.

Shelly (Madchen Amick) continues to work in the same diner she worked in, while her daughter, Becky (Amanda Seyfried), is shown to be in an abusive relationship with a drug dealer.

Dale Cooper, the heart and soul of the series, has been stuck in the otherworldly Red Room for the past 25 years, while his doppelganger (It's a long story) runs amok in the real world leaving behind a trail of death, a complete contrast to his old self.

In many ways, *The Return* is indicative of the time it released, and unabashedly revels in its absurdity.

'Resident Evil Village': More action, more horror

Rafael Magana
Co-A & E Editor
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Resident Evil is an interesting franchise.

Having its roots as a spiritual successor of sorts to a little-known Capcom classic known as "Sweet Home" (1989), the series has taken us to haunted mansions, apocalyptic cities, seedy underground laboratories and shows us a worldwide biological war in its sixth entry.

Now in 2021, 25 years removed from its initial release, you'd be forgiven if you thought that the series would be burnt out and struggling to innovate.

Luckily, this is not the case. "Resident Evil Village" is the most fun I've had with the series since its predecessor and biggest influence, "Resident Evil 4."

Most of the title's promotional material revolved around what ended up being the first 2 hours or so of the game (the village and castle) with the remaining 7 or so hours of my playtime being in locales that were merely hinted at.

The gameplay here is nothing too drastically different from what was seen in this game's direct predecessor, "Resident Evil: Biohazard."

A first-person perspective is still utilized, and you can block, craft items and backtrack to certain areas to access places that were previously inaccessible.

The classic Resident Evil staples

are all present and accounted for, but it was such a relief to see the return of a merchant.

The merchant, known as The Duke in this game, ensures that every player will have a different experience while playing.

Players can opt to purchase a healing item if they're in need, upgrade their arsenal, increase their inventory and even cook a meal to increase some of their stats.

Money is limited, so it's impossible to see all the weaponry in the game in a single playthrough.

The action has been turned up to 11 in this title.

Initially, it was a bit concerning following the highs that its predecessor had reached (primarily being a survival horror game, with little to no high action sequences) but the game does not skimp out on any of the horror aspects.

One sequence, about halfway through the game, was legitimately terrifying.

It's incredibly unsettling and stands out to me as likely the scariest moment that the series has ever had.

Plot-wise, the game is a direct follow up to "Resident Evil: Biohazard," following the same protagonist, Ethan Winters.

Much of the plot revolves around discovering why the series poster boy, Chris Redfield, murders his wife and kidnaps his daughter, and it has some twists



CAPCOM

Village of Shadows: In *Village*, players venture to a village to save their kidnapped daughter, Rosemary. To do so, they have to take down the Four Lords of the village, who are led by Mother Miranda.

and turns along the way.

Fans of the series' lore will find much to like in the title. A standout character was Ethan Winters himself, going from a mostly silent protagonist to a character with motivations and an actual personality.

Much of the title was well

thought out and is an excellent entry in the series, with many of the gameplay elements being staples of the series, while other elements such as the tone are a mix of the past and new ideas.

The conclusion of the game leaves the series open for future titles, and the series has an

exciting future ahead of it.

Capcom has certainly turned the series around in a short amount of time.

"Resident Evil Village" gets four and a half stars out of five. If you're a fan of survival horror, it's definitely worth your time. Just bring a spare pair of underwear.

Community engagement can prevent police killings

EDITORIAL

Decades of harmful policies and law enforcement practices have left scars and festering wounds in the Bipoc communities they're supposed to serve. The murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor brought police killings to the surface of American media once again.

Videos of people being shot dead by police spread rapidly on social media platforms, prompting dozens of protests against law enforcement and police brutality. Activist groups held rallies and marches demanding accountability and justice for minority victims of police shootings.

The reason people don't see eye to eye on this issue stems from the causes of each of the killings. Why did the officer have his gun drawn? What happened before the officer pulled the trigger? What does the body cam/bystander footage show or not show?

The media and couch riding analysts try to drive the narrative in some direction that either justifies the use of lethal force or demonizes it. If you try to put yourself in the officer's boots (albeit with very limited information), you might ask, "Was this person a considerable threat to my or anyone else's life?"



In formation: Huntington Beach Police sit on horseback during a protest on April 11. They arrested several protesters on the Huntington Beach Pier. Police suppression of protests showcase issues around use of force against crowds and individuals.

VINCENT MEDINA/TM

There's often a gray area for most of these cases, with the police saying one thing and activists saying another. In the case of Ma'Khia Bryant, a Black 16-year old girl who was killed by police in Columbus, Ohio, one officer claimed to take a life to preserve another.

Later that evening, the Columbus police held a press conference and released body

camera footage from each of the officers on the scene. Body camera footage from the officers and a neighbor's wide-view shot from across the street shows that Bryant appears to be the attacker and wielding a knife.

When officers arrived, Bryant pushed another girl to the ground in front of officer Nicholas Reardon. Reardon took out his gun and turned to see Bryant in

the midst of an altercation with another person wearing pink against a car.

The officer could be heard yelling, "Get down! Get down! Get down!" but Bryant did not respond or comply. Reardon shot her four times.

What follows every controversial killing is the debate arguing: were they or were they not an immediate threat to

someone's life?

For many, this scenario was a justified use of force. However, we as a society cannot be satisfied with a 16-year old girl shot dead by law enforcement.

Can it be said that there was no hope for Bryant, who had her whole life ahead of her, the moment she picked up a knife?

All too often, these cases end with a grieving family and maybe an officer suspended with pay. What should follow is a community engaged discussion on the matter. What led this child to that moment, and what can the community do to make sure that this never happens again?

In the case of 13-year old Adam Toledo, body-cam footage shows he was running from officers when a deputy asked to see his hands. Toledo allegedly threw a gun behind a fence and turned around, hands raised, when Chicago P.D. officer Eric Stillman shot him in the chest.

Toledo was certainly running away, as footage shows, but was killed after finally complying with the officer's orders. Sentenced to death for running away? He did not point a weapon at officers, no lunging knife, just standing still with hands raised.

If public safety is a major interest, then investments in equity and opportunity is an absolute must.

Have we learned enough from the pandemic to create the 'new normal'?

EDITORIAL

The world is opening up and society should think twice before conforming to "normal" life after COVID-19. The nation has the opportunity to create a new, post-pandemic normal that utilizes the important lessons life with the virus taught.

Normalcy can be harder to remember than many would believe. Bumper-to-bumper traffic, concerning flu season and the daily stress of those working nine to five were among the many things considered the norm of pre-pandemic life.

Cases and the number of deaths from the cold and flu season since the pandemic do not come close to what they normally were. During the 2018-2019 flu season, 35.5 million people fell sick from influenza while the number increased to an estimated 56 million in the 2019-2020 season.

Every year, people rushed to

get vaccinated to try and prevent falling ill but cases were seemingly inevitable.

However, preliminary data for the 2020-2021 flu season shows that flu activity was significantly lower compared to previous years.

The social distancing and mask requirements that were implemented to stop the spread of COVID-19 also helped stop the spread of diseases like the common cold and flu and it can continue to do so.

During the peak of the nation's quarantine, people washed their hands, constantly used hand sanitizers, and while this worked to prevent the spread of COVID-19, people should also realize that maintaining good hygiene is important even in a world where the virus is one day eradicated.

Rates in pollution have also contributed to health concerns as the world was already struggling in its fight against climate change. Those bright and sunny days



ALAN BLOOM/FICKR

Normalcy: The nation eagerly waits to see what the world will look like post-pandemic. As normalcy returns, people need to stop and reflect before settling for the old world that was detrimental to human society.

outside only helped pollute the ozone levels from excess fuels coming from cars and power plants.

Traffic contributed to pollution as many roads all over the country were congested with daily drivers commuting to and from their jobs or day to day excursions.

A positive change to come from the pandemic was better air quality as a result of the various

lockdowns.

Pollution as a whole decreased tenfold once the government-mandated lockdown was issued as some were asked to quarantine when feeling ill or exposed to the virus.

The transition emptied both freeways and schools as only some essential businesses such as grocery stores and healthcare facilities stayed open.

If people encourage employers to allow for work from home to continue, even on a part-time basis, we can tackle the issue of traffic and subsequently help the environment.

Making strides towards better healthcare and environmental progress is important, however, social justice reform is perhaps even more important as the nation resumes regular life.

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Anti-protest laws threaten primary freedoms

EDITORIAL

The party of “free speech” and “small government” are using their governmental power to suppress protests with threats of state and vigilante violence, jail time and exclusion from government jobs and assistance.

So much for the tolerant far-right!

In what seems as a counterintuitive move, many Republican lawmakers across the country are attacking the first amendment with new anti-protest state laws.

Amongst the multiple bills, Oklahoma passed a law which grants both criminal and civil immunity for drivers who hit protesters with their cars while “fleeing” a dangerous protest.

Under the new law, protestors would also be given new penalties for those who obstruct streets or traffic, including large fines of up to \$5,000 and up to one year jail time.

Protestors being hit by cars happens more than one would expect.

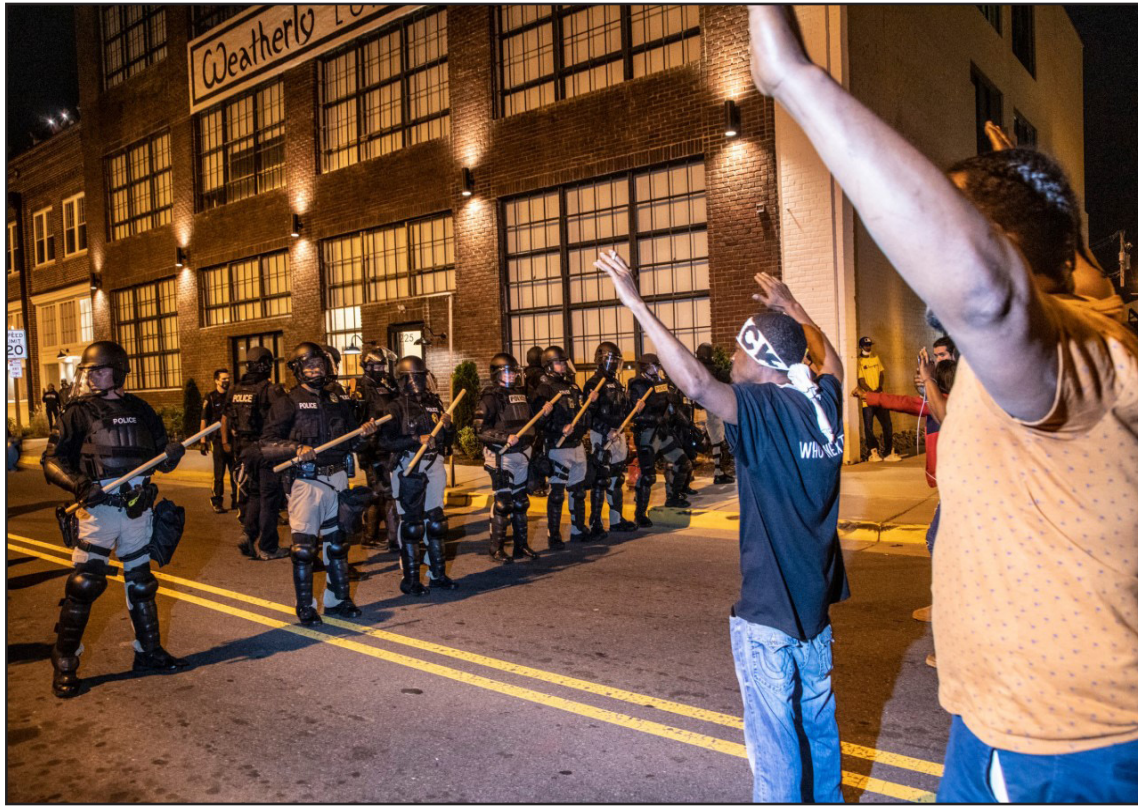
According to Ari Weil, the deputy research director for the Chicago Project on Security and Threats, there were at least 72 incidents of cars driving into protesters in 2020, from May 27 through July 7.

During the nationwide BLM protests last summer, the police often used brutal and excessive force against protestors and there were even cases of police using their cars as weapons to hit protestors.

In Detroit, an officer drove his police SUV through a crowd, sending protestors flying and two New York police officers did likewise at a Black Lives Matter protest in May 2020.

These new laws could potentially give more room for police misconduct and violence like what we’ve seen before.

With the history of people getting injured and even killed by vehicles while protesting, it would seem that new laws would be created to protect those exercising their first amendment right, not



TRAVIS LONG/NEWS & OBSERVER/TNS

Hands up: A demonstrator protesting the police killing of Andrew Brown Jr. raise their hands in front of a police line Tuesday, April 27, 2021, in downtown Elizabeth City. At least six protesters were arrested when police in riot gear marched toward roughly a dozen protesters two hours past curfew. Protesters were peaceful but refused to clear the streets.

make them more vulnerable.

Besides the physical threat this poses to protestors, the penalties are extremely harsh and can potentially ruin the lives of those convicted, in other ways.

In Florida, Governor Ron DeSantis signed a similar bill into law, granting immunity to drivers who hit protestors, and makes “aggravated rioting” and blocking traffic a felony.

Those convicted of a felony get their voting rights taken away and serious difficulty finding employment.

In Minnesota, the GOP wants to make those convicted of protest-related charges ineligible for government programs, including housing assistance, food stamps and student loans.

With many lower class citizens and minorities relying on these types of government programs, it is very clear who Republicans are attacking with these outrageous new laws.

The Republican Party is attacking a form of protest that shaped the history of our country, from the civil rights marches

of the 1960s to workers’ rights marches, and help improve the lives of the disenfranchised.

It is concerning to see Republican lawmakers and the far-right justifying violence against American citizens who are exercising their rights, simply because they disagree with their message.

Ironically, the January 6 insurrection attempt at the Capitol Building is the justification many legislatures are using to push through these protest restrictions.

Despite overt attempts by many leading lights of the GOP to use a violent “protest” for their political aims, Republicans now have a boogey man of their own creation to justify penalizing protests they actually oppose: anti-racist, anti-fascist and anti-police street actions.

Not all of the proposed or enacted bills were “inspired” by the fascistic storming of the capital, as many were on the books before the event took place.

The GOP plan to stifle their political enemies was already in the works and only boosted by

this convenient excuse.

The reactionary assault on democracy has been well under way well before the attack on the capital. Republicans, who often label themselves as “free speech defenders,” have been mounting a decade-long campaign to criminalize protests.

Even if many of these laws fail to pass their legislatures, the attempts to pass them only show that the Republican party is more than willing to use the big government they supposedly oppose to suppress people utilizing their first amendment to resist that same big government.

As they say, if at first you fail to suppress the people’s voice, try try again! These bills could return in more subtle or liberal-friendly ways, sneaking under the radar and dodging the media cycle.

Perhaps we shouldn’t be surprised that a party of rabid racists and conspiracy theorists that unquestioningly support the hyper-militarized racist system of policing are using their powers to target the largest anti-police and anti-racist protest movement this

country has ever seen.

The deeply anti-democratic roots of the Republican Party are in full bloom and we all should be worried. When state violence against protestors is so brazenly condoned by those threatened by systemic change, the results can be catastrophic.

People could very easily lose their lives to a militarized police force with even greater leeway to deal out violence to vulnerable crowds with little recourse or response.

Police forces across the country are deeply political, with a clear favoring of the GOP amongst their ranks and a clear opposition to anti-racist and anti-fascist causes.

When these ultra-conservative, roided up shock-troopers of reaction are let off the leash by these new open ended laws, expect them to make full use.

We cannot sit by and let the forces of capital and racist reaction to slice away at our fundamental rights as humans to protest and make our grievances clear to those in power.

There are no easy answers as to how to fix this. Much of the damage has already been done.

While a Democratic sweep of state legislatures could reverse some of the damage, voting isn’t enough to counter the root-causes of this anti-protest push.

This is especially true considering the anti-voting bills the GOP is often pairing with protest suppression.

Supporting grassroots legal funds, bail funds and opposition to these bills in the courts may put a band aid on these problems for the time being.

But most importantly, support anti-racist protestors full throatedly and unapologetically.

Resist attempts by centrists to drive wedges between “good” and “bad” protestors.

Solidarity is the most important tool any social movement can possess and we need it now more than ever in the wake of our country’s disturbingly anti-democratic trend.

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Back to back titles in sight for Dodgers

Matthew Ramirez
Staff Writer
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This Los Angeles Dodgers squad can potentially be the best team baseball has ever seen.

After just winning the World Series one season ago, the team is already off to a fast start this year.

They have done everything necessary to make the push to become the first team since the New York Yankees back in 1998 to repeat as World Series champions.

Fast forward to 2021 and a very talented Los Angeles Dodgers come into the new season as the ultimate powerhouse of the MLB.

This Dodger team looks to be even better assembled than the team that got themselves to the promised land a season ago.

During the 2021 MLB offseason, the Dodgers would go on to retain Justin Turner and sign lots of help for their pitching stack, which included the likes of Jimmy Nelson, Tommy Khanle and the new addition of 2020 National League Cy Young award winner Trevor Bauer.

The move to acquire Trevor Bauer was a huge pick-up in terms of the Dodgers effort to repeat as the champions of baseball.

Bauer was crowned as the best

pitcher in the National League last season.

If there is any window to go back to back World Series Champions, now is the time.

They were close on a couple of occasions in 2017 and 2018 when they made two World Series appearances but lost both of them.

After back to back seasons of not winning the championship, they would go to the playoffs in 2019.

The Dodgers lost to the Washington Nationals in the National League divisional series.

This year, the Dodgers are stacked all around position wise and aren't missing any pieces to the puzzle.

After the Dodgers had made such roster moves, they were immediately favored by most of the league reporters and odds makers to repeat as world champions.

The Dodgers are currently sitting in third place in the National League West Division and are ranked third in the league with a record of 18 wins and 17 losses (18-17).

Despite their bizarre rankings, the Los Angeles Dodgers should still be the favorite to win a back to back World Series title, resulting in their eighth title.

Julian Edelman isn't Hall of Fame worthy, despite 12-year career in NFL



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL/TNS

Superbowl Champ: New England Patriots wide receiver Julian Edelman (11) makes a catch against the Houston Texans during the second half of an NFL football game Sunday, Dec. 1, 2019, in Houston.

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There is no doubt that Julian Edelman is one of the better slot receivers of our generation.

With three Super Bowl rings and a 2019 Super Bowl MVP to his name, there is no uncertainty that the former Patriot has had a successful career.

With that being said, successful does not mean Hall of Fame worthy.

After 12 years of being a New England Patriot, Edelman is

calling it a career.

Following his retirement, many people have been debating whether or not Edelman has had a Canton worthy career.

There really should not be a debate. Edelman retires with zero All Pros and zero Pro Bowls.

No wide receiver, let alone any player ever enshrined, has made the Hall of Fame with zero Pro Bowls to their name.

Edelman ranks 75th all time in career receptions, just in front of Green Bay Packers legendary receiver Jordy Nelson.

In 12 years of professional

football, he only had 36 receiving touchdowns which ranks in the 200s column.

His career yards rank 156th, just ahead of fullback Larry Centers.

These are nowhere near Hall of Fame numbers.

There are plenty of other wide receivers who deserve the gold jacket more than the three-time Super Bowl champion.

Former Green Bay Packer Sterling Sharpe had a career full of accomplishments.

Sharpe was a three time All Pro and a five time Pro Bowler.

He led the league twice in receiving touchdowns and three times in receiving yards.

Former Pittsburgh Steeler and two time Super Bowl winner Hines Ward was also a three time All Pro and a four time Pro Bowler.

Both of these receivers are not Hall of Famers.

Ward had 380 more catches than Edelman, over 5,000 more receiving yards and over twice as many receiving touchdowns.

The only argument that Edelman's supporters have is his playoff performances and numbers.

They claimed he dominated when it mattered the most.

Read more at [Talonmarks.com](https://www.talonmarks.com)

NFL players deserve their yearly salary despite contract injury loophole

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Sports Opinion

The National Football League is managed by crooked and greedy executives who take advantage of their players' salaries to boost their own financial status.

On May 4, the NFL announced that they are not obligated to pay players who suffer an injury away from their team's facility.

Clubs are encouraged to remind players of the significant injury-related protection provided if they choose to work out at the club facility and the risks they undertake in choosing to train in non-NFL locations.

This memo is remembered a day after Denver Broncos Offensive Lineman, Ja'Wuan James, tore his Achilles tendon while performing multiple workouts away from the team's facility.

How can you take a player's yearly salary away from them while they're doing everything in their physical and mental ability to prepare for the season?

It's understandable if James was doing non-football related activities and he suddenly injures himself while doing whatever he was doing.

However, James was working on his craft and perfecting his skill to be prepared to return this month for mini-camp.



CHARLES TRAINOR JR./MIAMI HERALD/TNS

Defensive Stop: Miami Dolphins' Ja'Wuan James (70) celebrates with Jerome Baker (55) after Baker's interception to help seal their victory over the New York Jets on Sunday, Nov. 4, 2018 at Hard Rock Stadium in Miami Gardens, Fla.

In a players contract, they're guaranteed injury-related money which is a small portion of their original yearly salary that will cover expenses.

Teams can now take away that "guaranteed earning" if the player injures himself away from the team's facility.

To the NFL executives: stop putting James in the wrong doing of this situation! There could be multiple reasons as to why he was

training at another facility rather than working out at an NFL facility instead.

One of them is to be closer to family.

Many NFL players and even college athletes train in their hometown or near it so they can visit friends and family.

These players train and workout all year long at their teams facility day in and day out.

They deserve the right to

perfect their skill set wherever they please.

If they do injure themselves in the process, they should still get paid either way.

These players have families to take care of and bills to pay.

The off-season doesn't mean that all of their bills suddenly come to a halt because the season isn't in session.

James and the hundreds of players in the league deserve to be

paid regardless of what facility or season they're in.

They have lives to live off the field as well.

Living life as not just an NFL athlete, but as an athlete in general, requires money.

If you want your star players to have a safe and speedy recovery, pay them what they deserve so they can get the treatment they need in order to play at the best of their abilities.

Best of Spring 2021

Falcon pursues fitness career after near fatal accident



EMILY MELGAR/TM

Miracle: The Cerritos College student hopes to transfer in Fall 2022. He is ready for Cerritos College courses to return to campus when the time comes

After surviving a life-changing car accident in 2017, Rafael Ricky Rincon-Alvidrez re-enrolled at Cerritos College and aspires for a career in physical therapy.

Inspired by his battle in a two-month coma and living with a traumatic brain injury (TBI), Rincon believes fitness was key for his mental and physical recovery.

The 31-year-old says he is grateful to still be alive.

"I have a second chance at life," Rincon said, "and through the process of my recovery, I became very motivated about kinesiology, physical fitness and

physical aptitude."

Rincon first attended Cerritos College from 2007 to 2011 and decided to take a break to pursue comedy and an acting career.

"It was fun, but eventually I realized that education was definitely a priority for me," Rincon said, noting that his decision to go back to school started with his accident.

On Dec. 17, 2017, Rincon was driving on the 91 freeway and tragically fell asleep at the wheel.

He was unfortunately not wearing a seatbelt and was thus ejected out of his car's windshield.

As a result, Rincon was in a coma for two months and suffered a TBI.

He was admitted to Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center for his recovery.

Rincon was eager to make progress during his recovery process.

"I remember when I first started [my recovery], I instantaneously wanted to run a mile," he said.

"It was the first thing I asked the nurse," Rincon added.

One week after being released from Rancho Los Amigos, the

fitness enthusiast was able to run his first mile since the accident.

Today, he is on his way to graduating from Cerritos College with an Associate Degree in Kinesiology and says if he stays on track, he hopes to transfer to a university in Fall 2022.

"Cerritos College has given me a tremendous amount of support," Rincon explained, "Student Accessibility Services (SAS) at Cerritos has been very accommodating and very helpful when I returned after my accident."

He added that SAS helped with things like priority registration and has also had positive experiences with his professors.

"They have been nothing but helpful, encouraging and motivating," and added that the experience has inspired and helped keep himself leveled with his educational ambitions.

Rincon's long-term goal is to transfer to California State University, Northridge because he is interested in their Adaptive Fitness Trainer Program.

The future Cerritos graduate says he wants to be an adaptive fitness trainer so that he'll "be able to help and motivate individuals that have mobility issues or that have gone through situations like [his]."

In addition to returning to school, Rincon maintains a strict fitness regimen to keep himself fit.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic closing up most gyms in Southern California, Rincon

decided to build his own gym at home.

Rincon works out on Mar. 12 at his home gym. His shirt represents his belief that physical fitness can help with mental health and strength.

Rincon works out on Mar. 12 at his home gym.

His shirt represents his belief that physical fitness can help with mental health and strength.

"I would like to keep building on myself and bulk up a little more than I currently am."

Rincon currently works out six to seven days a week for one to three hours a day.

His routine includes one-hour workouts of High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT), followed by two hours of weight-lifting training.

The former cross-country athlete says he has also kept running incorporated in his fitness routine, as it has always been a passion of his.

In recent weeks, as gyms have begun reopening with the number of COVID-19 cases declining in the state, Rincon has also started working out at Orangetheory Fitness in Long Beach.

The local gym focuses on HIIT-based workouts, one of Rincon's main fitness routines.

"For example, you do 20 pushups and right after you do 20 high-kicks.

After that, you do 20 diamond pushups, and that accounts for one set," he explained.

[Read more at TalonMarks.com](#)

Women can and will always be allowed to referee in a Super Bowl



RICH SUGG/THE KANSAS CITY STAR/TNS

Women's Rights: Sarah Thomas, the first woman to be part of a Super Bowl officiating crew was on the field before Super Bowl LV at Raymond James Stadium in Tampa, Florida, on Sunday, Feb. 7, 2021.

Davonte Booker

Staff Writer

[@talonmarks](#)

Last Tuesday, the NFL announced that it will have its first woman officiate the Super Bowl, which is something astonishing to a lot of people. Despite their

surprise, without a doubt, there's no reason a woman can't do things just as well, if not better, than a man can. That includes professional football officiating.

43-year old Sarah Thomas has been named the Super Bowl down marker, who is a part of the seven-man officiating team crew

on the field.

There is no reason a woman should just now in our country be achieving these accomplishments.

Thomas is an Alabama native where she first started out refereeing at the high school level before moving on to officiate NCAA football games.

She became the first woman to referee a Division-I college game, as well as the first woman to officiate in a Big Ten conference stadium.

After putting years of refereeing experience under her belt, Thomas officially started her professional career as a full-time referee in 2015.

Four years later, she became the first woman referee to officiate an NFL playoff game.

This is another amazing accomplishment for her.

It's astonishing, seeing how currently she is the highest paid referee in a predominantly male profession.

Women are continuously shedding this societal normalcy and rising to new growth of equal rights.

It's always good to see women showing that they can always do anything any man can do in a profession deemed unsuccessful for women.

She's a role model for other women who look to work in that particular field of work or other fields as well.

Not every woman has to be an NFL official but this shows there are other professions deemed masculine that women are amazing at as well.

This is one big step for women in sports and the NFL, but they shouldn't stop there. What about raising pay salaries for women throughout the NFL?

This action will express gender equality to women and men in the same fields.

Seeing how women have been underpaid in all fields and aspects of business, this barrier-breaking action can be a big step for a lot of possible women officiates.

In an interview on the NFL website, Thomas explains how she wasn't ever planning on being the first woman to do any of what she's done and how amazing it's been being the influence that she is for her daughter and other women.

"That's what I want my daughter to do. I do know there are still industries that are not on an equal playing field with women.

[Read more at TalonMarks.com](#)