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VANPORT MOSAIC
A storytelling experience of Black residents from Vanport as they were flooded out of their destroyed homes and moved to Albina

GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN?
What happened/is happening exactly?

DR. KING HAD A DREAM
RECLAIM THE DREAM
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On the front cover:
Young activist Kofi Franklin speaks at Reclaim MLK March. photo by Brooke Jones
Back cover: about us. photo by Jon Bordas
DR. KING HAD A DREAM,
RECLAIM THE DREAM

Annual march honors Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday and legacy
By Jake Johnson and Cory Elia

photo by Brooke Jones
Women’s March on Portland sprung up in its absence opting for the “Women’s March & Rally for Action Portland.” The “x” in women refers to movements to include all people who identify as women.

The afternoon of Sunday, January 20, 2019, was another day of protesting, this time in North Portland. The 5th annual Children’s March For Social Justice was held at Peninsula Park and started at 1 p.m. This event has been hosted for 5 years by Don’t Shoot PDX; this time a multitude of other groups joined them, and the event had both a food and clothing donation drive.

The event page read, “The 5th Annual Children’s March for Social Justice is our most important action of the year. Once again children lead with parents, community, and neighbors supporting the promotion of free speech and social change. The Children’s Art and Social Justice is joining forces with several community groups, unions, sponsors and partner organizations. This event is a protest, meant to include everyone as we support and uplift the voices of Black people. We are unapologetic in our movement for Black Lives and we use this event to center the voices of our children, who are most vulnerable to the systemic violations of civil liberties.”

During the weekend of January 20th, many women’s marches took place around the country—an annual tradition since Donald Trump became president after being caught on tape years ago saying as a famous person he could do whatever he wanted to women, “grab them by the pussy. You [famous people] can do anything.”

However, due to controversy surrounding a lack of inclusivity from the National Women’s March organizers and similar concerns here in Portland, the organization connected to national movements had previously decided to dissolve its Portland organizing efforts.

Jeessamyn Johns attended the event with her children. Before heading over, Johns read her kids a book about the March on Washington. Her daughter asked, “Why do we have to go?” Her daughter believed that people know better now. Jeessamyn had to explain to her daughter that there are still issues with racial inequality. At the event her children chose to hold some of the handmade art protest signs. One chose a sign that said, “stop killing us, #Human.” The sign has a picture of a tree with Nia Wilson’s picture and a heart. Wilson is Black, she was stabbed to death by a white man at a BART station (like the MAX but for the Bay Area), Johns’s other child picked a sign that simply read, “Keep Families Together”—a slogan typically referencing an opposition to the Trump administration’s family separation policies.

In the past, the marches were scheduled to coincide with Trump’s inauguration, however this year the group opted to move its event. The group cited efforts by Don’t Shoot Portland to honor Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. the weekend of Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday and national holiday. The Women’s March organizers cited Oregon’s past problems with racism and erasure of the efforts of people of color as one reason it chose to move the date of its march. The group also encouraged its followers to attend Don’t Shoot Portland’s event, the “Reclaim MLK Annual March for Human Rights and Dignity.” Don’t Shoot Portland is led by 2020 mayoral candidate and community activist Teresa Rafford.

The MLK march, however, was led by children.

Pacific Northwest Youth Liberation Front also was planning to hold a “No KKK, No Fascist USA! Student march against Trump” on the 20th. However that group also opted to “show solidarity with Occupy ICE PDX and Don’t Shoot Portland” by encouraging its followers to attend the Reclaim MLK March instead.

In preparation for the event, Don’t Shoot Portland made protest art signs that they displayed at Peninsula Park and later carried. The signs made visible many of the march’s ideals as the marchers walked to MLK, then headed south toward the convention center. By 2 p.m., hundreds of people filled the northern end of Peninsula Park. Attendees lined up on N Rosa Parks Way. Children stood at the front carrying banners. Even though the event started in fairly substantial rain, as attendees assembled to begin walking, the rain largely subsided, making the march infinitely more manageable. The march featured chants of
(top) Young child carries a sign that reads "protect kids not guns." photo by Sierra Clark
(bottom) Young children holding the Don't Shoot Portland banner while getting ready to march. photo by Sierra Clark

(above) Kofi Franklin, young boy who led a good amount of the march and chants. photo by Brooke Jones
(bottom left) Photos of Fyndi Jermany, the Vice President of Don't Shoot Portland, an organization where the community action plan stands for art and social justice activism. She works with Teressa Raiford, who started the organization and is currently planning on running for mayor in 2020. photo by Brooke Jones
(bottom right) A young girl watches a frequent protest soundtrack, the Unpresidented Brass Band. photo by Sierra Clark
"Black Lives Matter" and "Dr. King had a dream. Reclaim the dream."

Martin Luther King Jr.’s "I Have a Dream" speech is commonly cited, however, many people encourage those who honor Dr. King to examine all of his philosophy. In 2015, The Root wrote about reclaiming MLK’s dream from the watered down message it has largely become. "Somewhere between his assassination and today began an MLK-neutering campaign meant to turn the famed agitator’s holiday into a national Day of Service, a generic mishmash of good feelings that contorts King’s social-justice legacy into a blissful Hallmark card of post-racial nothingness."

The #ReclaimMLK movement has been led by young people involved with Black Lives Matter who hope to shine a light on all of MLK’s message. MLK’s message went beyond simply hoping that children of all racial backgrounds could grow up in a society where they could all be friends. MLK criticized the racially oppressive structures of our capitalist society and war. MLK supported workers’ right to strike for better working conditions. MLK was radical then, and would probably be considered radical now. Part of Reclaiming MLK’s dream hopes to show that you can’t cherry-pick what parts of the Civil Rights Hero’s message you want to keep, MLK is an entire package.

The group was well over 500 people and stopped several times to reform. One stop was at a mural by local artist Isaka Shamsud-Din titled, "Now is the Time. The Time is Now." The mural depicts Dr. MLK Jr. and other prominent figures in the African American civil rights movement. Despite minor incidents with irate drivers, the event was peacefully observed. One of the organizers kept reminding attendees that the event didn’t tolerate violence of any kind and that despite drivers who often grow impatient with marchers all attendees must remain peaceful and
not engage or escalate any situation.

Kofi Franklin is one of the young people who helped to lead the march. At various times throughout the day, Franklin could be heard on the megaphone calling out chants for the crowd to join in with.

“I feel really brave and proud that I’m here supporting my people and my brothers and sisters. I feel good about it,” Franklin said. “I also feel good that I’m helping other people. I’m helping other people becoming who they really are.” Franklin wanted people to know that the day’s events should encourage people to “Be positive, and to support what you support; when things get hard, to not give up; and to march for your rights.”

Due to construction around the convention center, the MLK statue that the group normally marches to was covered. The group stopped at the corner of MLK and NE Stanton St. in front of a mural of an inclusivity flag used to fundraise by Nasty Women Get Shit Done PDX that encourages viewers to vote. After speeches by Teressa Raliford, Kofi Franklin, and others the group opted to head their separate ways.

Left Page:
(center) Portrait of Kofi Franklin by Brooke Jones

Right Page:
(right) Seannalle Hart, member of “Don’t Shoot Portland”. photo by Brooke Jones
(bottom) Shannon Neal, an old Portland State student who fought for and continues to fight for Disarm PSU. She graduated a few years ago, and is currently working with Don’t Shoot Portland. photo by Brooke Jones
Vanport Mosaic is a community-driven non-profit working to "amplify, collect, honor, preserve and present the many silenced histories of our region," said Laura Lo Forti, the organization's co-founder and co-director. "We are a platform for memory activism," seeking to prevent collective historical amnesia. On January 12th, the Multnomah County Gresham Library held a screening* of *A Place Called Home: From Vanport to Albina*, a collection of short films and audio narratives assembled by Vanport Mosaic, that trace the experiences of African-Americans in Portland from the 1940s through the 1970s. "Vanport was a multiethnic, multicultural, multiracial community. So Vanport is an entry point to the many histories that we don't fully understand, that brought us where we are today," Lo Forti told the audience.

Vanport was built in 1942 to house low-income shipyard workers. At the beginning of World War II, Portland was one of the major shipbuilding centers in the US. The Kaiser Shipyard Company built Vanport in one year, on a flood plain between Portland and the Columbia River where Portland International Raceway stands today. At the time, Vanport was the second largest city in Oregon and the largest public housing project in the nation. The people that lived there came from all over the country in response to ads seeking shipyard workers. At its peak, in 1945, Vanport housed some 40,000 residents. Many were laid off through the finale of WWII.
By the time Vanport flooded on Memorial Day in 1948, an estimated 18,500 people were living there. The flood is one of the most tragic events in recorded Oregon history. That year, the Columbia River was overwhelmed from heavy snow and rain, and in the days before the flood, Vanport residents were told there was no danger. On the morning of the flood, the Housing Authority of Portland even slid notes under each door, reassuring residents that “Vanport was safe.” A poorly constructed railway dike bordering Vanport broke and the surging river quickly flooded Vanport. At least 15 people died. (Many residents weren’t registered and the number of fatalities could be much higher.)

Lucile Shamsud-Din moved to Vanport with her family when she was two years old. Her descriptions of the intimate, multicultural community are poignant. “My wish is that people recognize and appreciate that Vanport is a memory. There are people who still carry that memory with them.” The theme to this form of history-telling is the idea of a mosaic. As Shamsud-Din put it: “A mosaic to me is all these pieces and there's always gonna be something missing and if something gets filled in, some resin, some sand, something, but there are pieces missing, not a whole, but you can make something beautiful out of that by telling the story.”

Ed Washington, a survivor of the Vanport flood and community liaison for PSU’s Office of Global Diversity and Inclusion, was the first oral history participant in the Vanport Mosaic documentary. He describes watching people streaming out of Vanport on the day of the flood. At first, he said that people assumed they’d be able to return the next day. “I just surmised over the years that we people wanted to go back because that was their home, that was all they had. They didn't have houses in Albina, they didn’t have houses in Portland, they’re home was in Vanport. When it started filling up, everybody knew, it was over. It was over.”

Thousands of Vanport residents were rendered homeless. Because of racial segregation and redlining by the Housing Authority of Portland, African-Americans were intentionally moved to north and northeast Portland, forming neighborhoods like Albina. Jackie Winters, former Senator of Oregon, was also featured. She lived in Vanport through the flood. She described how the city handled displaced African-Americans. “Albina became Albina because it was a conscious decision that was made to draw those lines so that we individuals would not move all over Portland, but there was a concentrated area for those coming from Vanport. That was done by design.”

Ben Washington described life in the lively Albina Community, the roles played by the Urban League and the NAACP, and what segregation was like in Portland. “As my mother would always say to me: ‘you can get angry, but you can never hate.’ That has sustained me, because there are many opportunities to hate.”

Myrtle Carr, now 96 years old, moved to Portland in 1945. She began volunteering at the Urban League, and is now considered one of the founders of the Portland chapter. “The Urban League was housed over a restaurant, that stated we cater to whites only. And there was so much prejudice here.” She told a story about meeting Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. when he came and spoke at Benson Auditorium in 1961.

Donna Maxey described what it was like for her family to lose their house, livelihood, and community when the City of Portland razed the Albina neighborhood in the early 1970s for the Urban Renewal Project. The City demolished the neighborhood to expand Emanuel Hospital and make way for I-5. “How they excavated— I feel like saying excoriated—the community was they forced you to take the money they gave you. And so you had to leave. And to this day, every time I hear the words PDC—Portland Development Commission—it just makes my blood boil. I always like to say Urban Renewal Negro Removal is what it really was. It was very hard to leave the community.”

One attendee named Esther was there with her son. “My uncles—who are now deceased—lived in [Vanport], and they had migrated from Mississippi and Louisiana following, you know, the steel, for jobs, and came and lived there.” She sees her first-cousins in summer family reunions. “When we get together, they talk about how all their family pictures and things were all lost as a result of what occurred in Vanport.”

Helen White and her husband go to Delta Park, where Vanport used to be, to watch their grandson play soccer. “We've heard about the flood. We want to learn more...Now, it’s just, like, you don’t have any sense of it having been flooded, or that it would flood now,” Mrs. White said. “There's no indication, from what we've seen, that people died and suffered and lost their homes.” White said that she looked forward to the screening for the oral histories.

The event was moderated by local activist, journalist and artist, Donovan Smith. He touched on what it was like being a black kid growing up in gentrified NE Portland. “A lot of the work that I center myself in right now is based around the thing that we call gentrification. Today, that's the wording that we give to it, but really, outside of the damage, it's just black life in general and black life as it pertains to Oregon.” To conclude the event, Smith encouraged the audience to look into several projects, “to get active with the black community in Portland.” Several community-driven projects in the works have a direct link to the Albina neighborhood. The Hill Block Project is a plan to develop a vacant lot on N. Williams Ave. to honor Portland’s African-American community, in a vision proposed by the community. Grassroots organizations and the Urban League are part of this effort. The Albina Vision is a community-led vision for the lower Albina Section next to the Moda Center. “It’s one of the only areas where large scale affordable housing development can happen in this city,” Smith said, “so the community is looking at this and saying OK how can we develop this to be an area that has affordable housing and small business and documentation of the history.”

The Rosewood Initiative is a grassroots organization that meets monthly—how they organize reminds Smith of The Black Panthers. Smith also mentioned concerns over the Diamond Project, which is an effort to bring major league baseball to Portland and build a stadium in a cargo site, NW of the Fremont Bridge. The construction, Smith said, would be like a continuum of history in that there would be ramifications for minority communities, and representatives of those affected communities are not invited to the planning-table.

Activist and organizer Donovan Smith presenting at Vanport Mosaic’s event.

The power of this event is in the use of oral histories.

A written summary of the event inherently falls short of doing the event justice.
By a show of hands, it was the first time many in the audience had attended a Nature Night Speaker Series event, hosted by the Portland Audubon Society. The series's usual attendees share a passion for the Audubon's natural history programs, but do not traditionally feature a political leader. However, the inaugural event for 2019, titled “Harnessing the Power of Grassroots Organizing with Jo Ann Hardesty, Portland City Council,” was an opportunity to learn more about Portland’s newest Commissioner who was sworn in with the new year. Commissioner Hardesty ran a historical campaign fueled by her record of public service and community organizing. Now, for the first time, an African-American woman serves on Portland City Council, and for the first time, women make up the council’s majority.

Hardesty told the audience a bit about herself, and how her background has formed her values. She described her childhood in Baltimore as one of ten children “in a community where everybody was your mother.” This type of community is less common today, she lamented, but posed questions that she’s carried through her career: “How do you build community in a way that respects every individual no matter what their background is—no matter where they started in life—no matter what their socioeconomic status is? How do you actually make sure that we’re looking out for each other?”

She delved into her U.S. Navy assignment in the Philippines as one of the first women on a deployed ship, and experience she said taught several lessons: that she could survive anywhere in the world; that it can be good to ask “why?” when you are told to do something; and that making well-informed decisions is important. She had a brief stint as a commercial real estate agent in the Bay Area. Hardesty recalled thinking “man this is like the most boring job I have ever had in my entire life—and actually it was probably the second most boring job I’d had in my entire life. But what I also realized then, was that I could not work for money. I could not work for money. I needed money because I needed to eat, and I needed a place to live, but I couldn’t work just for money. I had to have a job that mattered. I had to do something that made me jump out of bed in the morning with excitement about what’s possible in this day.”

Hardesty moved to Portland on January 1st, 1990. She recalls reading the news in the Oregonian a snowy Sunday over her first cup of coffee. A white man was hospitalized after coming to the aid of an African-American man who was being harassed on the bus. “I thought, where did I move? right? Because everything I had heard about Portland before January 1st, 1990 was it was ‘progressive,’ it was ‘inclusive,’ ‘everybody could get along in Portland’—that’s what I heard before I moved. But that paper was like a stark reminder that maybe I hadn’t heard everything I needed to know about this city that I had just moved to. Maybe I just needed to do a little more education.”

While working as the first director in development and marketing with Black United Fund of Oregon, she was thankful for the opportunity travel around and see the state, get to know people and small nonprofits. One of the first boards she joined was the Environmental Justice Action Group, EJAG, which she felt was disconnected from the community at large. EJAG, she said, “didn’t really understand what environmental justice looked like, how to carry it out, and how to be inclusive of
communities of colors as frontline communities who are suffering from many of the environmental issues that we were confronting."

In the early 2000s, she found a group of people that understood the premise that environmental and social justice are interconnected. Within The Coalition for a Livable Future, she said, strong environmentalists and strong racial and social justice champions advocated for each other's issues. "We were able to develop proposals and curriculum and educational opportunities that help elected leaders really learn that you can't separate clean water from somebody's ability to feed their children."

For seven years, she was the Executive Director of Oregon Action. In 2000, the organization registered 56,000 voters, a feat that she said lent her credibility and attention when she went to legislature to advocate for an issue. Oregon Action, she said "worked with people who were on the down side of power, to teach them to advocate for their own best interest." She recruited people from substance treatment programs and soup kitchens—people with felony convictions, who often don't realize they can vote in Oregon—people, Hardesty said, that "didn't think anybody would listen to them," that "didn't think that they had a voice in a political process." But everyone on, what she called, a “ragtag group of community organizers" shared certain values: a passion for Oregon, concern for their kids' future and food stability.

In 2005, they hit the streets to get support from over 10,000 people to help pass Oregon's only public campaign-finance system, Portland's Campaign Finance Fund, a voter-owned election program that used tax dollars to fund campaigns, so that regular people could run and serve in public office," said Hardesty. But, after three campaign cycles, the *** went back to the voters and was narrowly defeated in 2010, thanks to a counter-campaign well-funded by "the people who would prefer to pick our leaders for us." Luckily, another "better" public-finance campaign system was passed and will go into effect for 2020.

How did Hardesty run a successful campaign without such a system? "I can tell you as someone who has spent the last 18 months of my life running for office that it is the hardest job in the world to run for public office, especially if you are not someone who has access to big money." What she had that her opponents did not was the confidence from people she'd met through decades of community organizing, people who were willing to volunteer time, money and hard work.

Portland Clean Energy Fund Initiative

Began by challenging the mechanics of the Energy Trust of Oregon, which used a utility tax to subsidize energy-efficient upgrades for homeowners whose houses were in good repair—it not only excluded most low income homeowners and renters, but taxed them to fund it.

Hardesty said many groups were planning programs to mitigate climate change, but weren't involving frontline communities—"communities that have always been most impacted by activities and policies that impacted their life," but "didn't actually have a lot to say or do with actually developing it."

When they began developing the Portland Clean Energy Initiative, the central question was how to reduce carbon emissions around building a new "green" workforce. Critics
Portland energy-efficient by 2050, but had no plan. Hardesty thought her coalition’s plan could get the ball rolling. If City Council didn’t want to pass it without voter support, she wagered, they could send it to voters themselves. “Mayor, we have an opportunity for you!” Hardesty spoke with Mayor Ted Wheeler, “and his words, and I quote, ‘Jo Ann, I just don’t want to tell my friends that they gotta pay more money to do business in Portland.’” Ultimately, 68 percent of voters chose to pass the measure anyways.

Now that Hardesty is part of City Council, she is committed to seeing that the Portland Clean Energy Initiative is implemented as it the voters intended. “Our goal,” Hardesty said, “is to make sure that we are training the workforce of tomorrow, because we spend a lot of time training today for jobs that won’t exist anymore.” The implementation she imagines involves getting apprentice workers in green energy fields the training hours they need to achieve journeyman certification: “once you are a journeyman, you can go anywhere in the country and get a family living wage job.”

Starting in 2021, the Portland Clean Energy Initiative is estimated to bring in 80-100 million dollars of revenue per year, and Hardesty says she’s watching where that money goes like a hawk. “There are people trying to get their grubby hands on this money.” 3 percent of it will go towards testing innovative, creative approaches; 15 percent will go to green infrastructure and parks. The next step for the initiative is assembling a “community oversight committee,” made in part by representatives of frontline communities and people with energy expertise. She intends to oversee the Office of Clean Energy Initiative when it emerges.

Portland’s new City Commissioner, Jo Ann Hardesty wants people to know that she’s driven by a commitment to community engagement: “We are in a wonderful position in Portland to really do things differently than we have done them in the past, and to do them in a way that is inclusive of all community members, of all community voices, and to be able to leave a legacy that our grandkids will be proud that we were the ones that moved this forward.”

Hardesty was able to take a few minutes to chat with us after her talk.

This interview has been edited for clarity and brevity.

JH I like your jacket.
MC Oh likewise! Where did you get your sweet pink jacket?
JH (laughs) Online! A store called thredUP, which is a secondhand online shopping experience.

MC Cool! We match! You spoke at DisArmPSU in the past, so you’re aware of the effort on campus to disarm our security officers, and a man recently died on Thanksgiving in police custody and CPSO. Our campus security officers were the first to respond to that scene and he is not a student at PSU. [Do] you have plans to include PSU’s first responders—who can be first responders in our urban situation—in the approach to changing how first responders are on scenes with mental health crises?
JH So, they are a separate police force that I have no oversight over, but I’ve used my voice and my experience in supporting the students who want to make sure they’re disarmed. I don’t know if you know, but I was actually on the community committee at the very beginning, when they were debating when a Board of Regents were debating whether or not to have armed the security. Everybody to a person—the only people who thought it was a good idea was the Board of Regents—the students, the faculty, the community members, nobody thought that was a good idea, because we all know that when police have guns, they use them.

I was concerned from the beginning—we were told that PSU Police would not be modeled after Portland Police Bureau, and the first thing they did was hire predominantly retired Portland Police officers. One of which was the first to respond in this instance.

Ah—and so, you can’t create a new police force that’s going to be Officer
JH  Friendly if they're all coming from a police force who is not known for Officer Friendly behavior, right? So I think that was the second mistake. The first mistake was actually arming them. The second mistake was actually hiring retirees from Portland Police Bureau. And, most of the people over there, to their credit, aren't people who have actually had any incidents of community violence attributed to them specifically. But having said that, if you're recruiting from a force that's known to use excessive force, then that's not going to be good for students. At all. So, I will continue to use my voice. I know for Mr. Washington, who was killed, whenever his family does something, they ask me—when ever they do a public event, they ask me to come and speak. I will continue to do that, and will be there to be supportive however I can.
But, I mean, I'm still waiting. Do you know? Did the report come back from the overpaid consultant that they hired from California? Is there a public report that came out of that?
JJ  We haven't heard about the report actually being released from Margolis Healy, or the other people yet.
JH  Well I'm really concerned, because we were promised right after Mr. Washington was killed that there would be an independent investigation of the incident—the entire incident. Heard nothing about that, yet. ...So, PSU is losing community credibility. Because, that was what—those two things were promised, and I was not impressed with the consultant that came up at all, because, he appears to be just a someone that shows up after an incident and gets paid big money and then goes away. So he has no responsibility for implementing any recommendations that he makes. When I asked him, "Are you local?" Because I thought, well, if we're going to be talking about how do people in the community feel about police on the campus—if we're going to be talking to students and faculty and community members, you would think he would hire someone locally. So hiring this guy from California—he was just unimpressive. And so, the fact that we still have no information, right? And he's been gone for quite some time. Would certainly like to know where the President stands on making that information available to the community, because we're entitled to know—because, quite frankly, now we'll be scared to walk through PSU. Because if you've got people who are prone to shoot people, because they're—because, for whatever reason, you know—that would create community fear.
JJ  Yeah, definitely doesn't help people view them as transparent and forthcoming.

JH  I've been there two weeks. (laughs) So probably not long enough to do an assessment of it.
But let me tell you the "aha moment" when I first got there. Two weeks before I started, I show up and they gave me a temporary office. They gave an iPhone and a Dell computer. You know, Dell computers don't talk to iPhones and vice versa—and I didn't even know Dell still made computers! I thought that was, like, a relic from the good old days. So it gives you a sense of how disconnected we are from the best technology that we could possibly have available to us as someone who works for the city. In fact, I refused the Dell and made them get a Surface. I was like, "I'm not going backwards. Thank you but no thank you." That was a shock to me.
I realized that—as I get more into the bureaus that I'm responsible for—that technology is one of the city's problems, and should be one of the easiest ones to solve, since we are surrounded by tech folks, right? But, for some reason that doesn't appear to have been a priority to the city yet.
JJ  Yeah, they still make the Dell computers because they need them for flashback movies—(laughs)—in case someone wants to make movies about the early 2000s.
JH  Right, right! The good of days right? I bet they got 8 tracks players right next to them.
JJ  Yeah. Definitely.

MC  What would your current politician self tell your activist self what's possible. Everything you dreamed of?
JH  Again, it's so early—I'm not quite sure if it's everything I dreamed of. But what can I tell you...just to stay connected. Right? I think what's easy to do once you get elected to office is to isolate yourself, because you've got people coming at you all the time, right? It's easy to say, "Well, I talked to 50 people today, so I don't actually need to go out and talk to anybody else." But I think the reality is that the more I talk to people that are having a diversity of experiences—whether they are people living on the street, or whether they're people running Fortune 500 companies—the more I talk to them, the more I stay connected.

MC  Would that [connectivity] be one of those bottom lines you mentioned your values have shaped?
JH  Absolutely. Yeah, when I was a legislator—and that was 18 years ago—I knew who I represented in the legislature, and who I represented was those people who didn't have a voice in the legislative process. So, it's not lost on me—being the first African-American woman on the City Council—that there are a lot of people that just don't see City Hall as a welcoming place and we have to change that. But more importantly, we have to get City Hall out of City Hall and get City Hall, like, out in other communities, and I'll be working on that as well.

MC  I just have a couple more—did Ted Wheeler really say that?
JH  He did! He really did. Yeah, "I just don't want to tell my friends they have to pay more money to do business." Right?
MC  Wow.

JH  That's what he said. And—do people in county jails get ballots automatically?
MC  Not automatically—
JJ  Because if they don't know, how do they end up—
JH  —they don't know! Right. Because, what they would have to do is actually change the location of where their ballot came. So, they could either change it to the jail address, or they could change it to a social service agency that could take them. Now, when I was with Oregon Action, we were able to go into the jail and actually collect ballots. I don't know if they still allow them to do that now, but we just did it. They were OK with that. So, they have to already be registered, right?

JJ  They can't register once they're in prison.
JH  They could, they could. It just depends on how long they're in jail, right? Because anything less than a year...would be in the county jail. So, if they're in the jail and they're not registered they can register while they're in the jail. If they're already registered, then they would need a family member to bring their ballot to the jail, and then we [Oregon Action] could pick it up from there.

JJ  Lots of cogs to be able to make it happen.
JH  And, quite frankly, the first thing that you'll hear is, "Oh, you can't do that!" Because that's what I heard when I first said, "Well, we need to collect ballots." And they were like, "Oh you can't do that!" And we're like, "Yes, I can!"
JJ You were right earlier, when you were talking about how talking to people who happened to be felons are like, "Oh, I can't talk to you because I'm a felon, so I can't vote." But, no, you can!

MC [The Pacific Sentinel] summarized Oregon voting laws in the wake of everyone scrambling to figure out their own states elections. I was surprised to find that out.

MC Do you know of anything else that people aren't talking about that you wish people would be talking about?
JJ Like, any politicians getting you excited these days?
JH Well, I'm looking forward to the Federal Government being reopened again, so we can see what the new Congress is going to be able to do. We have the most diverse Congress ever, which is a huge change.

I think over the last couple of years, since the election of 45—I just can't quite get that name out of my mouth—since the election of 45, what I have noticed is that people are much more intentional, and we can see that from the outcome of the ballot that we just had... We had more bad things on our ballot than we've had in quite some time, and every last bad thing went down in flames, right? And the good stuff passed overwhelmingly! Right? That said to me that people are paying close attention. I mean, when I started campaigning—it was a year ago, August—and people came to house parties, standing room only! In August! A year before the May election! So that was pretty phenomenal. So I knew people were paying attention and people were being much more intentional where they put their vote and where they put their energy. So, I think that's a good sign—it can only get better from here, right? I think that some people were surprised at the outcome when 45 was elected, and many people are shocked now that hate is so visible is our community again. But the reality is that you gotta fight back, right? And I think this election was a good first fight back.

MC Thank you so much.
JH You're so welcome. My pleasure.
Measles Weasels Its Way Into Portland

By Jake Johnson

2018 closed with a few cases of measles springing up in Clark County, just north of Portland across the Columbia River in Washington. As of January 30, 2018, the number of measles cases had grown to 35 confirmed infected individuals with 9 more suspected. One of diagnosed individuals is from Multnomah County.

The Oregonian reported an analysis of Oregon’s charter schools showed that 65 percent of the state’s public charter schools lack the ability to stop the spread of measles through “herd immunity.” If 93 to 95 percent of a community—a school, a church, a neighborhood, etc.—are vaccinated, the amount of people who are vaccinated act as a roadblock for the disease, drastically reducing measles’s ability to gain momentum, spread outside that community, and grow into a public health crisis.

Portland State University sent students an email on January 23 encouraging students that “so far no Oregon residents have been diagnosed with measles.” Since this email, one person in Multnomah County has been diagnosed with measles.

The email, sent from the Center for Student Health and Counseling, wrote that due to the State of Oregon and PSU vaccination requirements, a majority of students have been immunized. The email advised students to check their immunization records and get vaccinated at SHAC. The email said students they should contact SHAC or their primary care provider if measles symptoms develop: a fever, cold-like symptoms, and red eyes.

Coverage of Measles will be continued in our March issue.
The human microbiome is a hot topic in the science realm, but it has also been making its way to top selling shelves at our bookstores. If you have been noticing this mysterious term more and more, perhaps you are wondering, just what are these microbes, and why do we need them?

The term microbiome refers to all of the microorganisms in and on us, including bacteria, fungi, parasites, and viruses, and all of their genes. Our bodies are made up of trillions of cells, but in addition to our own cells, there are also trillions of microbial cells that inhabit us. What do they all do?

While many of us think of microbes as pathogenic or harmful, each one of us has our own unique set of "good" microbes that we could not survive without. The microbes of our skin support our immune systems, and help us to ward off other "bad" microbes that cause disease. Microbes within our gut help us to digest certain foods, such as fiber, and they also nourish us with vitamins that our bodies are incapable of producing.

Why should we care about the microbiome?
Research has suggested that disturbances within the microbiome—which can be caused by antibiotic overuse or poor dietary lifestyles—may contribute to modern diseases. Dr. Blaser's research has focused on Helicobacter pylori, a common bacteria found in our stomachs, and its gradual decline in individuals of developed countries in the past 100 years. Humans have coevolved with H. pylori over the past 50,000 years, but it turns out this common gut bacteria is responsible for stomach ulcers, and gastric cancer. The fact that this microbe has been steadily declining may sound like a bonus, but Blaser suggests that low levels of H. pylori may have consequences, potentially leading to obesity, celiac disease, and asthma. Are humans losing an ancestral indigenous friend?

Viruses also play an important role. Dr. Ken Cadwell, a professor from the Department of Microbiology at New York University, uses mice to study how a virus can benefit the intestines, and even take over the job of friendly microbes that may be eliminated by antibiotics. While antibiotics are necessary for eradicating infectious microbes, they can also deplete the ones we need, and the sudden opening in real estate makes mice susceptible to intestinal injury. Cadwell's study showed that if a mouse treated with antibiotics is infected with murine norovirus, the virus steps in and restores its intestinal lining. Could this lead to the use of viral therapy as a treatment for gut maladies?

These are just a couple of examples from the swiftly growing body of knowledge regarding the microbiome. If it piques your curiosity, but you do not fancy reading scientific journal articles, try picking up Ed Yong's I Contain Multitudes: The Microbes Within Us and a Greater View of Life, or Dr. Martin Blaser's Missing Microbes: How the Overuse of Antibiotics Is Fueling Our Modern Plagues. They are wonderful reads for the non-scientist interested in how important our microbes are.
On Jan. 25 2019, the federal government emerged from the longest shutdown in U.S. history after thirty-five days of political gridlock on the Hill. President Trump shut down the government because Democrats, who won the House majority, refused to to approve of a spending bill that includes 5.7 billion dollars for a wall along the southern border.

"How ludicrous it is that this government is shut down over a promise that the President of the United States couldn't keep?" Benet, Senator of Colorado, implored to the Senate on day 35. "This idea that he was going to build a medieval wall across the southern border of Texas, take it from farmers and ranchers that were there, and have the Mexicans pay for it, isn’t true. That’s why we’re here!"

House Democrats passed several bills to fund and reopen shutdown agencies, but Senate Majority Leader McConnell refused to bring any of them to the Senate floor for a vote.

Democrats rejected a "compromise" offered by Trump that included wall funding in exchange for temporarily protecting the status of certain immigrant groups, such as DACA recipients and those fleeing natural disasters or civil unrest.

The country is still reeling but we’re not out of the weeds yet—Trump agreed to open the government for 3 weeks while both parties continue to negotiate.

According to the Congressional budget office, the shutdown cost the United States economy $3 billion it will never get back.

**Government shutdown is still a mess.**

The government is finally open after the longest shutdown in U.S. history over Trump’s campaign promise for a wall along the southern border. But we’re not out of the weeds yet — Trump agreed to open the government until February 15th while Congress continues to negotiate. Let’s take a look at this bureaucratic mess.

**Almost 10,000 federal workers in Oregon have been affected**

According to the Oregon Employment Department, the total number of federal employees in Oregon is around 28,000, two-thirds of which work in agencies that had funding and weren’t directly affected by the shutdown (i.e. the U.S. Postal Service, Department of Veteran Affairs, Department of Defense and Department of Labor). There are around 9,600 federal workers in Oregon that have been affected by the shutdown, given their agencies didn’t have funding approved. Some of these workers were furloughed. Some agencies used left over funding to cover operations for a short time.

A **salary furlough** is a period of time during which a worker doesn’t go to work and doesn’t earn wage. The employee is still considered employed and therefore retains benefits. Furloughed workers can apply for unemployment benefits; federal workers without pay cannot.

Federal contractors worked without pay and don’t get back pay. They will be counted as unemployed in the January jobs report released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

On Jan. 17, OPB reported that more than 2,700 federal workers living in Oregon had filed for unemployment since the shutdown began (as opposed to last year by this time, 561 federal workers had filed for unemployment). Many were resorting to the Oregon Food Bank and community fund raised resources.

**Shutdown by association**

KGW8 interviewed a cafe worker who was hit hard by the shutdown. Her coffeeshop, Celyn’s Espresso Cafe in a federal building in downtown Portland, depends on business from federal workers. She typically serves 100-200 people a day. During the shutdown, it was down to only 30. She had to cut hours for the shop and her only employee. “I have been praying a lot,” the told KGW8 holding back tears, “I don’t know what else to do.”

"The shutdown breaks the treaty and trust obligations to tribal governments" On Jan. 23, the ACLU reported that the shutdown was disproportionately hurting Native Americans. On Jan. 10, the National Congress of American Indians—the representative tribal organization in the country, wrote President Trump and congressional leaders a letter urging them to end the shutdown. "The shutdown breaks the treaty and trust obligations to tribal governments." After centuries of oppression, many tribal members are poor (at least 8% of Native Americans live in poverty, the highest poverty rate of any racial group in the U.S.) and
many tribes rely on federal programs for basic services. Unemployment is over 40 percent on many reservations. “Ironically, the Americans most affected by immigration over the last 500 years continue to be the most heavily impacted by the shuttering of multiple federal agencies that are unrelated to securing the homeland.” They lament widespread impacts from destabilized programs in public safety, social services, education and health care. Because of the shutdown, tribal officials say some programs are on the brink of collapse. Other programs were surviving on tribal reserve funds.

U.S. Department of Interior
Indian Health Service (IHS)
IHS is a federally administered program that gives health care to about 2.2 million Native Americans and Alaska Natives. It is also run by HHS, but gets money through the Department of Interior. Advocates say that the limitations imposed by the shutdown violated the treaties signed with exchange for native land. 60 percent of IHS employees (9,000) had to work without pay to keep IHS-run clinics open for direct patient care. “We're the most underserved population for health care, and that's after promises that has long ago dismissed or forgotten,” William Lyall, the Chairman of the of the Cowlitz Indian Tribe told KATU news during the shutdown. He added that it had been the longest they’d had to rely on their reserves. Grants that support tribal health programs, like those that manage preventative health clinics, were suspended. Some preventative health facilities overseen by IHS were on the brink of indefinite closure.

National Parks (National Park Service (NPS))
Crater Lake and Mt. Rainier are two nearby national parks that closed their facilities because of the shutdown. No one collected trash, and Search and Rescue services were on hold. Luckily, no one needed rescuing.

Day 13, Jan. 3, 2019
It's a new year and a new session for Congress. Leaders elected in the Nov. midterms are sworn into office. Democrats take control of the House and swiftly pass a spending package to reopen the government and grant 1.3 billion dollars in funding for border security, but not a wall. Trump refuses to sign the bill without border wall funding.

Day 14, Jan. 4, 2019
Trump says he may declare a national emergency as a way to get wall funding without Congress approval. This move would siphon funding from states, like Texas, Puerto Rico and California, reeling from natural disasters.

Day 19, Jan. 9, 2019
Trump meets with Democrats. He offers to open the government in exchange for wall funding. They refuse. He storms out

Day 20: Jan. 10, 2019
Trump goes to the border to bring more attention to what he calls a crisis.

The house passes several spending bills to reopen certain agencies and departments, but Republican Senate leader, Mitch McConnell, refuses to bring them to the floor for a vote.
Crater Lake National Park closed its roads to vehicles because, how they put it: “due to conditions caused by the impact of human waste buildup on the park’s water system.” Also, no one plowed the snow on its roads, in a place where average annual snowfall is 43 feet. It took them a couple of days to reopen.

Down in Southern California, Joshua Tree National Park’s number of rangers was down from a hundred to just eight. Garbage and toilets also overflowed, but worse yet, the small crew of workers couldn’t prevent illegal off-roading and tree-slaying. A rash of vandals chopped down some Joshua trees. The peculiar desert trees grow 2-3 inches a year, take half a century to mature, and live around 150 years.

Science: When you’re considered expendable

The United States government employs scientists and funds research. But it’s scientists are furloughed and many research programs halted, jeopardizing the studies that require constant data sets. The national president of the American Federation of Government Employees told Eos that the shutdown “basically has shut down science, but I guess if you’re a president who doesn’t believe in science, you would like to shut science down.”

Access to federal websites was limited. Students who are working on research projects, theses or dissertations couldn’t access scientific datasets on federal websites; this also hinders scientific research and could delay some graduations.

A local student, who prefers to remain anonymous citing “professionalism” concerns, is still waiting to see the NASA scholarship he was awarded. “I had to pick up two jobs to pay for school because I was gonna get the scholarship and I didn’t get the scholarship. I mean, I have it, but it’s not—Government owes me money right now.” He was expecting to see the funds by the beginning of Winter term. “I worked it out, but I’m not going to get As in classes because I gotta work. That stresses me out.”

The U.S. Department of Agriculture

The USDA is responsible for managing agencies involved in food, agriculture, natural resources, rural development, nutrition.

Farm loans (FSA)

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) had to call 2,500 workers back to work without pay so that it could open its offices to manage loans and emergency assistance programs offered to farmers. While it was closed, some farmers considered resorting to high-rate bank loans.

National Forests (USFS)

The USFS and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manage public land in national forests and grasslands, forestry research and development and wildfire management. In Oregon, national forests cover a whopping 16 million acres, about 25 percent of the state. USFS and BLM jobs account for 45 percent of the federal jobs that didn’t have funding thanks to the shutdown.

Garbage was piling up uncollected in national forests, too. Governor Kate Brown’s husband took matters into his own hands. He took garbage from overflowing trash cans at Mt. Hood National Forest to the dump and sent a bill for the $28 dump fee to the president, as reported by the Willamette Week.

Wildfire season is around the corner

PBS reported that the government shutdown was stalling important preparation for wildfire season. Wildland firefighting is a collaborative effort, and critical planning for wildfire season usually takes place in the winter, during a narrow window when temperature and humidity conditions are right. Because of the shutdown, some critical steps weren’t happening. Local, state and federal firefighting agencies usually meet to strategize but annual retreats were cancelled. USFS and conservation groups weren’t meeting to plan wildfire-prevention projects. Federal instructors couldn’t train local and state crews and certification classes were getting canceled. Wildfire mitigation measures, like removing dead tree piles and conducting controlled burns to thin out dry vegetation, were on hold too. (Trump blamed the most deadly and destructive wildfire in California’s history on poor forest management and unraked forest debris, when, in fact, human-caused global warming is drying forests out and making them more susceptible to huge fires.)

Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

The FDA is technically within the Human Health Services, but gets a lot of funding for food safety operations through the Department of Agriculture. 40 percent of its workers were furloughed. The FDA was going to run out of funding in February. During the shutdown, some inspections decreased.

Department of Human Resources

Food Stamps: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

Oreganians on food stamps got a letter in mid-January: “You are getting this letter because you get Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits every month,” it
There are 615,405 Oregonians, 350,000 weeks early. Assistance Program (SNAP), Oregon secured
enough funds for a separate food program that serves
enough funds to get through March a spokesman for the Oregon
Transportation Security Administration through March.

Because of the shutdown, the USDA asked
states to give out February benefits early, so
benefits were distributed to Oregonians 2
weeks early.

US Dept Homeland Security Transportation Security Administration (TSA)
The Oregonian wrote about over 700 air traffic
controllers and security officers “being held hostage” at Portland International Airport. The airport
workers that are classified as “essential” can’t strike and have to work through the
shutdown without pay. The Oregonian reported
380 unionized TSA workers were directed “to
local food pantries or grief counseling services
as needed.” A month into the shutdown, TIME
magazine reported that 1 in 10 TSA workers are
calling in sick. TSA agents earn an average of
$35,000 a year. Many say they can’t afford to
work without pay—some were selling plasma
to make ends meet. On day 28 of unpaid
work, TSA agents rallied outside of Portland
International Airport, in the airport’s “free
speech area outside the terminals.”

On Jan. 23 the unions that represent more
than 130,000 U.S. air traffic controllers, pilots
and flight attendants issued a dire statement:
“In our risk adverse industry, we cannot even
calculate the level of risk currently at play, nor
predict the point at which the entire system
will break. It is unprecedented.” Because of the
shutdown, the FAA can’t hire or train people.
The system is strained given a staffing shortag e
which would cripple the system. The safety
of airspaces is “deteriorating by the day” they
warn.

US Coast Guard
Jan. 15 was the first time in U.S. history that
members of armed forces were not paid because of
lapses in funding. “Shipmates, thank you for
continuing to stay on the watch.” On Jan. 24,
day 34 of the shutdown, Commandment of
the Coast Guard, Admiral Karl Schultz, with
Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard,
Jason Vanderhaden, released a video update
with some sobering words about the shutdown.
“We’re 5 plus weeks into the anxiety and stress
of this government lapse in your none pay. You
as members of the armed forces, should not
be expected to shoulder this burden.” While
the community has been stepping up support,
Admiral Schultz stated that “Ultimately,
find it unacceptable that US coast guard men
and women have to rely on food pantries and
donations to get through day to day life as service members.” Affected coast guard
employees could access to the Coast Guard
Mutual Assistance, an independent non profit
charity for people assisting the Coast Guard
family (in recent years, often for hurricane
relief). Trump points to drug trafficking to
justify a wall, but according to U.S. authorities,
the Coast Guard seized three times more drugs
transported by sea than by land.

Border Patrol
On Jan. 16 U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials held a press briefing, calling a
barrier “the backbone of the system” that prevents illegal entry, adding that a barrier is
“not as effective without technology or without
access roads.” Border patrol agents are among
the lowest paid in federal law enforcement.
The agency has difficulty with staffing and
turnover.

US Dept of Treasury Alcohol and Tobacco Trade Bureau (TTB)
This federal agency approves labels before booze
businesses can sell new products. Now, there’s
a big backlog of brews up for label-approval.
Local winemakers and brewers are concerned
about deadlines for distributors and they don’t
want to miss out on peak sales season.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
The EPA is an independent agency that is
not a Cabinet department, but it also ran out of
funding during the shutdown. On day 25,
there were about 800 EPA employees working
without pay, including those who work on
Superfund sites, polluted locations that need
long term clean up. The agency is responsible
for inspecting drinking water and regulating
pesticides, but these services were limited
during the shutdown. Newy interviewed
Felicia Chase, an environmental scientist for
the EPA. She was feeling the financial squeeze
of the shutdown, but voiced concern for
government oversight causing a public health
crisis like the one in Flint, Michigan. Chase
oversees companies installing injection wells for
deep oil and gas drilling. “What I do is ensure that the drinking water in these communities... where these underground disposal wells are, are following the regulations and are not contaminating people’s drinking water source.”

But, hey, New Seasons is offering 15% off
to unpaid federal workers with federal ID.
The Oregon Zoo offered free admission and
Movie Madness offered free rentals to federal
workers affected by the shutdown. However,
these benefits probably don’t make up for the
toll the shutdown has taken on the country and
its federal workers’ lives. Even after the
government reopened, workers are skeptical
that the government might not remain open
after the three week window passes.

Day 34, Jan. 24, 2019
The Senate rejects two competing bills. The Republican-backed bill that
called it “hostage taking.”

Day 35, Jan. 25, 2019
Affected workers miss their second paycheck. Trump and congressional leaders agree to a short-
term spending bill that funds the government until Feb. 15th. Most
furloughed federal workers will receive back pay but workers con-
tracted by the government will not. The Washington Post estimated
that there are 10,000 companies that contract with the government,
but the number affected by the shutdown is still unclear.
The Plastic Problem

by M. Saqif Maqsud

illustration by Josh Gates
Before plastic polluted our oceans and landscapes, the use of modern plastic began with Bakelite, first invented by the Belgian American chemist Leo Baekeland in 1907. At its time, the invention was considered revolutionary because it could be used in electrically powered machinery. Today the word “plastic” belongs to a large family of synthetic or semi-synthetic organic compounds that can be shaped and molded into physical objects.

The popularization of synthetic organic compounds started some years before Bakelite, with the 1862 invention of Parkesine by Alexander Parkes. Parkes was the first made public at the Great International Exhibition in London. Parkes made this material from the cellulose found in the cell walls of plants. Initially promoted as an inexpensive replacement for rubber, Parkesine was moldable, transparent, and maintained its shape after cooling. From Parkesine to PVC and Polyester, the family of plastics were introduced as an alternative to other expensive resources at the time. The intentions for plastic were both commercial and practical. Born and tailored for good intentions, the material now poses a threat to the planet due to its trademark feature: it does not decompose.

Once an extremely popular friend, plastic is now one of the most dangerous pollutants out there. Its durability and cheap production costs have caused plastics to be present everywhere. According to Surfers Against Sewage (SAS), 8 million pieces of plastic are entering the oceans every single day. When discussing plastic pollution, it almost always concludes with the ocean being the last and biggest victim. This is because most of the plastic comes from land as litter and ultimately gets washed down rivers and streams then out into the ocean. To put a number on how much plastic the ocean harbours is shocking. SAS estimates that our oceans contain “approximately 51 trillion microscopic pieces of plastic, weighing 269,000 tons.” And since plastic decomposes at such a slow rate, it often gets consumed by marine creatures—and if we follow the food chain, our supper might end up containing a bit of synthetic plastic garnish. It’s in our oceans, and in our food chain, and in our bodies, without us even realizing it. Scientists just don’t know what effects it will have on our long-term health.

Despite the dangers plastics pose to the environment, there seems to be a buffer zone for humanity. It’s as if we care only until we feel like it, or in some cases we simply do not. A major factor that allows for this perspective is scale. For instance, one might think that no harm is going to come from throwing a plastic straw down a river; it would seem like adding a drop of water to the sea. But the scenario would look deadly when there are a million other people who think the same way. That is how the problem of plastic magnifies. Because of how little damage people think they are doing, the true gravity of the problem becomes much more terrifying. Through selfishly choosing to not care about smaller amounts of plastic pollution at an individual level, we allow the problem to amplify on the much bigger national and global scale.

The act of not caring tends to be a result of two different processes of thought. On a global perspective, western countries have this problem of plastic ending up in the wrong places, but there are also steps being taken against that. People are aware, to an extent, that a plastic problem exists and that measures and initiatives that are being conducted are proving fruitful. For example, some restaurants have stopped giving out plastic straws, unless one is asked for, or only offer plastic straw alternatives. The pollution still exists but it is controlled, managed, and supervised.

On the other side of the planet, the relationship with plastic is rather different. Industrialized countries in the East, like Japan, Australia, and Singapore also deal with plastics in their environment. With many modernized countries, there exists this balance of pollution and cleaning up, acknowledging that there is a real threat. However, a bigger picture of the plastic problem can be seen in countries in the Indian subcontinent. The degree to which people have abused their relationship with Mother Earth is frightening. I am a citizen of Bangladesh and I have visited a few Asian countries nearby. I have witnessed for myself this unhealthy attitude people have with plastics. Countries like Bangladesh did not always have a plastic problem. But over time, our low labor costs attracted foreign manufacturers, and industrialization took over rapidly. This, however, does not mean we weren’t using plastic before, but now we mass produce it. Before that, Bangladesh used to use jute and fabric as a substitute for plastic.

Unlike western countries, waste management is a big problem in cities like Dhaka (capital of Bangladesh), Mumbai, Delhi and many more. There are fewer awareness movements and the consequences of abusing nature with plastic are never highlighted. Therefore, dumping plastic anywhere has become a crime without a punishment. It is not that people cannot understand what the damage will be. The problem is that people simply do not care. If there was a way to trace and punish people for polluting in countries like these, I believe cleaning up the Earth would be a much quicker process. Thankfully we are seeing measures being taken and the situations addressed in these countries. A great example is the Sonali Bag, a jute fibre bag that does not harm the environment. Developed by the Bangladeshi scientist, Dr Mubarak Ahmad Khan, he named the discovery that took six years as “jute polymer.” According to an article in The Daily Star, its unique future is that it is water resistant, decomposes within three to four months under soil, and support weights one and a half times more than what polythene can bear. Apart from scientific breakthroughs like this, countries like Bangladesh receive generous donations and aids to tackle problems in pollution.

While some scientists are discovering cheap biodegradable bags, others are finding bacterial species that eat plastic. According to an article by the The Guardian, a team of Japanese researchers described a species of bacteria that can break the molecular bonds of one of the world’s most-used plastics, polyethylene terephthalate, also known as PET or polyester. The team in charge carefully studied lots of PET debris until the bacterial species was discovered. Dr. Tracy Mincer, a researcher from Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, commented that “This is the first rigorous study—it appears to be very carefully done—that I have seen that shows plastic being hydrolyzed [broken down] by bacteria.”

I believe that since most of the plastic ever produced is still somewhere on the planet, we really don’t need any more. The very first step in tackling the plastic problem is addressing the consequences and reducing the production of plastic. In the time we live in, there are many other, better alternatives to plastic. Even if that means rising costs, I believe that would be a price we should all be happy to pay. Not doing anything and just watching the world suffocate in our plastic waste is, perhaps, a much higher price anyway.
LILIES OF THE FIELD, A FLOWER IN THE HAND

Seeking religious truth beyond dogma.

BY VAN VANDERWALL

People generally conceive of religion as sets of competing—and mutually exclusive—metaphysical and ontological claims. Propositions such as the existence of an omnipotent and omniscient being, a substance or essence separate from the physical body that survives death, and one or more realms to which this nonphysical essence travels after death cannot be proved or disproved. Despite their continued popularity, other doctrines—such as the earth being six thousand years old, the geocentric arrangement of the solar system, and coexistence of human beings and dinosaurs—are demonstrably false, and have been so for generations.

Religious institutions have traditionally urged (with great force and violence for most of human history) adherents to accept these doctrines on faith. When I spoke with Swami Chetanananda of The Movement Center in NE Portland, he emphasized this history of religion as a form of social control. According to Swami, the major religions of Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism were codified by empires to support their own power structures. Much as the Romans adopted and promulgated Christianity as a state religion, so too were the other great religions systematized and propagated by their respective imperial advocates. Under the guise of speaking with divine approval, religious institutions of all kinds continue to direct and control life around the world.

Given the problematic political origins and history of the major religions, a bit of skepticism regarding their usefulness seems in order. Rinzan Pechovnik, osho of Portland’s No-Rank Zendo (a group of which I am a member), says that every major religion “can become so lost in its myths and rituals that it becomes fanatical.” However, there is “an expression of deep truth” in each one. The purpose of religion, after all, is to use “rituals and rites, myths and icons to point the mind to a higher power.”

Instead of continuing to pit one set of metaphorical assertions against another, let us instead ask the question that is hardly ever asked: how can we look past doctrine to experience “deep truth”?

Not only can we never finally and decisively prove that there is or is not a soul separate from the body (or any other similar claim), but it is not at all clear that it matters. Would definitive proof of a soul end war and bring peace in our time? Or, regardless of the objective truth of the matter, would forcing every living person to agree to believe in the same conjectures alleviate human suffering?

According to the Majjhima Nikaya, a text in the Pali canon of Theravada Buddhism, the Buddha refused to respond to questions about the eternity of the universe, the existence or nonexistence of a soul, and a number of other queries; these are known as the unanswered questions. That these questions were just as familiar and vexing two and a half millennia ago as they are now ought to give pause for thought. Perhaps we are fooling ourselves into thinking syntactically correct propositions and questions are not only sensible and possible to answer, but that the answers matter.

The answers do not matter. This was the Buddha’s position, and the view of many mystics, skeptics, freethinkers, agnostics, and doubters before and since his time. We have become caught in elaborate word games that purport to refer to the nature of reality, but in fact refer to nothing other than themselves.

Although the questions (and proposed answers) are irrelevant, the urge to ask is clearly an intrinsic part of being a sentient being, a human.

Who am I?
What is this life?
Why?

Treat these conundrums not as problems in need of solutions, but as questions in need of continual asking, of ongoing meditation. This brings us beyond metaphysical propositions, to the original impulses at the heart of all the religions. Before the terrorist attacks, crusades, witch-hunts, and all the other unsavory aspects of institutional religion there existed one impulse: to point toward the absolute.

Each tradition names the absolute differently: God, the Void, Buddha-nature, the Absolute, the Beloved, Ultimate Reality, Christ, I Am that I Am. These terms act merely as a finger (or fingers, for the ecumenically minded) pointing at the moon; the finger does not hold, or even touch, the moon—it simply directs attention. Much of religious practice since the advent of writing has focused on the finger—God’s name, how many aspects he or she has, the nature of afterlife realms, characteristics of proper attire for the clergy, and so on—when really the finger is only a tool to turn toward the moon.

This old analogy uses the moon as a symbol for the reality of life, without reference to anything else. When I interviewed Kakumyo Lowe-Charde, co-abbot of Dharma Rain Zen Center in NE Portland, he spoke of the “sacredness of the mundane.” He summarized the importance of appreciating every aspect of life in a few words: “This really matters.” Relying only on immediate and direct experience unmediated by doctrine will provoke uncertainty. Kakumyo stressed the importance of tolerating ambiguity. Only when we allow ourselves to tolerate paradox and ambiguity in our investigation of the mystery of existence do we truly appreciate the wonder and beauty in all of creation.

Let us, then, turn away from the finger and all its tyranny of thoughts and doctrines; to the moon, and the state of non-knowing, let us look. •
JUST BY THE NATURE OF OUR BIRTH WE ARE ON A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY.

—THOMAS KEATING, IN A RISING TIDE OF SILENCE
The Stonewall Uprising did not start the fight for LGBTQ rights, but it did both lay the groundwork for that movement, and spark the initial boom of open queer activism in the early 1970s. Because of this, Stonewall, despite not being the true conceptual moment of the LGBTQ rights movement, exists as a symbolic beginning. In the years since, the uprising has been mythologized in various ways by the queer community. For example, the unrelated death of pre-Stonewall era “gay-icon” Judy Garland, a week before the start of the uprising, is widely considered a metaphorically important aspect of Stonewall. Furthermore, various accounts credit different people as the individual who started the uprising. Marsha P. Johnson, Stormé DeLarverie, and Silvia Rivera are all contenders. However, rather than view these different accounts as historical discrepancies, they are all accepted the way apocryphal variations of a mythology are accepted; the point, after all, isn’t who started the uprising, but that it happened. So though it remains a well documented and paramount historical event, The Stonewall Uprising, alongside its historical importance, has also achieved culturally iconic relevance.

Last month, I stressed the importance of queer individuals and allies having a continued willingness to live their lives openly—an importance emphasized in the work of Ugandan activist Kasha Jacqueline Nabagesera. Openness allows society to see people for more than who they are perceived to be, and debunks the misconceptions of fear society holds in the idea of “the other.” One way queer individuals are able to express their identity, while simultaneously demystifying themselves to their surrounding societies, is through art. In the United States, art addressing queer subject matter is becoming increasingly accepted by mainstream audiences, take for example the 2016 best picture nominee Moonlight, or the acclaimed 2013 interactive novel / video game Gone Home. But this ability for LGBTQ people to use art openly is mostly a post-Stonewall phenomenon.

Queer identities were not absent from mainstream American art prior to the 1969 uprising, but the few present identities were often shrouded in a thick code of subtext and innuendo, presented so shallowly as to merely serve as an easy punchline, or simply ignored outright. The Stonewall Uprising helped create a desire to use art as a means to more deeply, directly, and honestly explore queer topics in culturally influential ways—it helped queer art come out of the closet. We in the United States are lucky to have communities that are accepting of queer art, but this reality is one many LGBTQ individuals around the world have in only limited capacity, or do not have at all. Because of this, greater recognition is needed for queer individuals who commit to art in places around the world where it is not always safe to do so, individuals like Abhina Aher.
Abhina Aher, opening doors in India

The mythologies, histories, and ancient works of art in India are populated with a variety of queer identities, often in ways that would strike modern observers as being obvious. For example, the hero figure Shikhandi is born female, but takes on masculine roles, enters into a heterosexual relationship with another woman, and in some version of the myth, exchanges physical gender with a benevolent male spirit. In light of such stories, it isn’t surprising that India has long recognized the existence of gender identities outside of biological males and females; in 2014, India even passed The Rights of Transgender Persons Bill, which offers greater freedoms and rights to transgender and third-gender individuals. However, transgender and gender non-conforming people continue to face discrimination and be viewed as less-than by much of current Indian culture; despite improvements in legislation, there remains a divide between queer peoples and the greater society—a divide Abhina Aher, a transgender activist, knows first hand.

Aher was born biologically male in Mumbai, India. Even at a young age, she* recalls feeling an affinity for the traditionally feminine, as well as a fascination with the professional dancing her mother did to earn extra income. As a child, Aher would hold performances of self-choreographed dance routines for friends and neighbors. However, these feelings and interests were strongly discouraged at home by her mother, and, as Aher grew into adolescence, by her society. Eventually, Aher began to suppress these expressions of self. She began to further repress her feelings and interests after a group of male students forcibly stripped her and both verbally and physically abused her while on school grounds. Aher reported the incident to the school, but was herself ultimately blamed for the attack. In an interview with NPR, Aher recounts, “[A teacher] said to me, Your friends are doing this because you are behaving in an extremely feminine way and that’s what is an issue.”

The school ultimately did nothing about the incident.

Despite feeling a deep discomfort with a masculine identity, Aher began to live her life according to traditional male roles as a way to appease her family and her society. But Aher found this way of life too oppressive to keep up long term. Shortly after she graduated from the 12th Standard (equivalent to high school), Aher attempted suicide at the age of 19. Aher walked out into the ocean and tried to drown herself, but was rescued by passersby who witnessed the attempt. At this time, Aher came to the conclusion that she would need to live life as who she was, regardless of the consequences she knew she would face. It was at this moment that Aher fully embraced what she felt to be her true identity.

Aher and her mother both openly admit to having a severely strained relationship for about 10 years after Aher came out at 19. Aher clarifies that her mother, aside from the shock of Aher coming out, was also facing the strong social stigma of having a queer child. Along with the strain of her relationship with her mother, Aher was also unable to find consistent work because of her transgender identity. Because of this, she eventually found herself in sex work. In her later activism, Aher would emphasize how common it is for transgender people in India to work in the sex industry. Sex work, alongside begging, is one of the only ways, despite background or level of education, that transgender individuals in India can earn consistent income. However, Aher was able to free herself from sex work after finding a support system in the Hijra community. The Hijra community in India dates back to antiquity, and is a community comprised of transgender and intersex people, who are culturally and legally recognized as a third gender.

In 2009, with the help of other members of the Hijra community, Aher founded Dancing Queens. Dancing Queens is an organization that both employs skilled transgender people who are having trouble finding work, as well as helps its transgender members learn trade skills that will help them find jobs in their communities. It’s primary focus however, as the name suggests, is dance. Dance had been an integral part of Hijra tradition for centuries. Aher realized that this already inherent art form of the Hijra community could be used not only as a space for transgender individuals to create meaningful connections with one another, but also explore their identity and struggles through a medium of art that they could, in Aher’s words, use to “bond this [transgender] community with the larger society.” Dancing Queens has since become known for its use

*When speaking English, Aher prefers feminine pronouns, hence why they are used in this article. However, as a member of the Hijra community, Aher considers herself third-gendered rather than female.
of dance to explore both the struggles of transgender and queer individuals in Indian society, as well as the struggles that society itself must overcome in order to fully recognize and accept these individuals. For example, one of the dances the troupe performs explores the difficulties of coming out to one’s parents as queer, and the difficulties those parents often face in learning to accept their queer child; quite appropriately, the dance is usually performed by Aher and her real-life mother, Managala Aher, who has since become a strong advocate for LGBTQ rights.

Since its founding, Dancing Queens has performed close to 100 shows across the nation of India, and its performances have opened up conversations about queer issues in various communities. The troupe’s advocacy and art have made tangible changes in India, and laid the groundwork for Aher to become a nationally recognized LGBTQ advocate. Aher’s success with Dancing Queens allowed her to broaden her fight for LGBTQ rights, and she has since become a full-time associate director of sexuality and gender rights at the India HIV/AIDS Alliance. This position gave Aher the opportunity and resources to conduct statistical analyses of queer populations in India, which various organizations have been able to use in order to provide better care and resources for these populations. In 2017, she was recognized as a “Global Innovator” by the Human Rights Campaign. Aher continues to dance, and continues to use the medium of dance to positively change the lives of queer individuals and change the outlook of societies around India and the world.

Why we still need art
There are many aspects of a culture that work to define a culture, but none more so than art. Throughout history, art has played a significant role in all cultures, whether that culture be defined by borders, beliefs, identities, or diasporas. So, too, has this been the case for queer peoples. In the half century since Stonewall, queer communities in the United States have begun to create works of art that directly, rather than passively, explore what it means to be a member of such a community. Queer communities have even begun to give themselves features of mythology through emphasizing symbolic aspects of their history, as is the case with the Stonewall Uprising. And while art that belongs to a culture helps to identify and define that culture, art does something more than this—something many communities, especially queer ones, still need in this historical moment. Art opens doors.

Art is not only the best medium for communities to explore the narratives of their own lives, but the best medium through which to communicate a deeper understanding of those narratives to the societies of which these communities are a part. In doing this, art creates pathways between communities and society. Aher’s troupe Dancing Queens strives not only to give meaning and voice to the Hijra community, but also show that the Hijra community was and is a unique and positive aspect of Indian society. Similarly, queer art here in the U.S. has the ability to open the door between queer communities and the society that rejected them—the society that is still learning how to accept them.

“Why we still need art”

“What we have done is that we have put a foot inside a door, which is a door of hope, and we will open it—very, very soon”

—Abhina Aher
The Syrian Question: Is Withdrawal Necessary?

By Bryan Wolcott

Syria's Civil War started on the 15th of March 2011, and now has many groups and nations providing resources and fighters to aid different sides of the conflict. Beginning in 2014, there was a rapid rise in the area of the religious terrorist group, "Islamic State" (IS). The violent organization has since taken control of sections of Syria and Iraq. A coalition of nations, including the United States, was formed in order to deal with and remove their presence. In 2015, Barack Obama sent troops to Syria and Iraq, and utilized one of America's greatest military assets, the Air Force, to do what almost no one else would: provide systematic and tactical airstrikes against heavy targets, while at the same time providing air-dropped supplies to support allies and civilians alike. In coordination with the other nations, the coalition began air-striking captured territory in Iraq with the request of the Iraqi government. They also penetrating the sovereign airspace of Syria without permission. Fortunately, the Assad regime did not fire upon the United States aircraft, and thus the airstrikes continued.

However, as previously stated, airstrikes are not the only way the U.S. was operating in that area. Approximately 3,000 advisors and logistics personnel provided aid to Kurdish and Iraq security forces; special forces units were deployed on capture missions and hostage recovery operations. Over the two years from 2014 to 2016, the U.S. spent $7 billion on operations to combat Islamic State in Syria and Iraq: 50 percent of that was spent on airstrikes.

Overall, the strategy of combating Islamic State with airstrikes and well supported allies in the region is a strategy for fighting the terrorist group at its source. Throughout the modern history of the United States, we've constantly run into problems where bombing an insurgency group to dust has failed us—pick any major war since World War II. Whether we look at Vietnam or the recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, indiscriminate bombing only leads to more radicalized aggression. Our current strategy is designed not only to help eliminate the actual threat posed by the fighters on the ground, but also to discourage those who might be otherwise convinced into supporting the fighters and encouraging them to join our side.

The battle for ideology is a long and important one, but there still needs to be combat operations on the ground to help push back against Islamic State activities in the region. Thousands of bombing operations have been carried out since 2014, and continue to be carried out, leading to a massive loss of Islamic State infrastructure. With consistent airstrikes, the coalition of nations against Islamic State continues to drain Islamic State of resources and manpower, allowing allied forces to overwhelm them, secure cities, and free civilians under the terrorists' reign. This is all despite president Trump's December 2018 announcement of a withdrawal from Syria, in which he planned for U.S. troops to be fully out of Syria within a few months time.

With victory approaching, it would seem like the perfect time to begin a demobilization effort and to plan for the future, perhaps making Trump's withdrawal announcement rather timely; however, there is fear from our allies that the disease that is Islamic State has not been removed sufficiently enough, and should we take the pressure off of them, they would return with vengeance.

With so many resources being utilized in fighting Islamic State, there are definitely reasons why withdrawal is necessary and inevitable. The United States cannot continue violating sovereign airspace of a foreign power indefinitely, but this gets into another aspect of the issue that also must be examined when planning a withdrawal. When do our allies want to leave?

Part of executing a successful fight against terrorist groups on foreign soil is having a carefully planned withdrawal strategy. As previously mentioned, the US formed a coalition to fight this war, which means that withdrawal should be planned with our coalition, not over twitter. Sadly, the most vulnerable of our allies are the ones who would carry the brunt of the fallout, if we withdraw incorrectly. Our Kurdish allies in the region have been fighting Islamic State through its entire existence. They have also served as some of the most reliable boots on the ground for the coalition in its fight against Islamic State. Unfortunately, the concerns of the Kurdish people have often been overlooked and ignored as they do not have their own country but reside as a people group inside many different countries, including Syria and Iraq. Should the United States fully immobilize too hastily, the Kurds could find themselves yet again unaided and fighting for their survival.

Allied Iraqi security forces, both military and law enforcement, are also major groups who would suffer should The United States improperly withdraw from Syria. There is quite a bit of worry that, should Islamic State resurface, Iraq will yet again have to deal with incursions by Islamic State. And needing time to re-immobilize forces, Iraq would have to yet again try and stabilize its own region as best as it can.

In the end, withdrawal is inevitable; we cannot continue fighting this war forever, but we have to make sure the job is done before withdrawing, and we have to make sure that our allies are in a position where they will not be threatened again. Tragically, some Kurds had actually hoped that because Trump was such a radical president, he would pay attention to the needs of the Kurdish people and possibly support them beyond the war with Islamic State, helping them gain their own country. Unfortunately, this more nuanced thinking appears to be lacking in our current commander in chief.
As the Oscars approach, we take a look back at memorable movies of 2018

The Oscars are February 24th, 2019. To reflect on the movies released this last “Oscar-year,” Pacific Sentinel staff and contributors were asked to write about a notable moviegoing experience they had in 2018. It didn't have to be their favorite movie of the year—it didn't even have to be a good movie—but it did have to be memorable.
Roma
By Margo Craig

Roma is a semi-autobiographical film written and directed by Alfonso Cuaron (Gravity, Children of Men) about a domestic worker’s relationship with an affluent family in Mexico City in the 1970s. This may be the most colorful black and white film I’ve ever seen. So much is shown in this movie rather than told, as if you were a child witnessing this world—a delectable, textual experience—piecing the story together with the context you’re given. The scenes flow like water and often play out through panaromic shots. The visual and auditory imagery lure attention to the overlooked things in life, but also gently weave heavy social concepts into the undertow of the narrative. Considering the story elements, maybe it is no mistake that black and white emphasizes color afterall.

I overheard a conversation about Roma while at a coffee shop. One barista told another barista that she tried to watch it on Netflix, but fell asleep. “The 20 minutes I remember I really liked!” There is a lulling, meditative quality to this drama. It’s better suited for the big screen. Luckily, you can catch it at Hollywood Theatre.

Romá is sweeping awards. It’s won three Critical Choice Awards (Best Foreign Film, Best Picture and Best Cinematography); two Golden Globe Awards (Best Director and Best Cinematography). It’s in the running for 10 Oscars, including Best Picture; Yalitza Aparicio was nominated for best actress.

Black Panther
By Jake Johnson

The months leading up to the release of Black Panther felt exciting in a heart-overflowing kind of way. A Black superhero in a movie with a very Black cast. Literary powerhouses Roxane Gay and Ta-Nehisi Coates were writers of the franchise’s comics. It was empowering, a Marvel movie where Black kids could see characters that looked like them being heroes. A movie where Black girls could see themselves being both powerful warriors and brilliant, inventive scientists. There were movements to help sponsor Black children to make sure they could go see the movie. Stories about classes of predominantly Black kids around the country taking field trips to see it. The feeling it was important to buy tickets for opening weekend to try to tell the biz that this is a movie that we want to see more of.

I went to Detroit in August. We went downtown. We saw the Shepard Fairey mural. As we were walking down the street a swarm of dirt bikes started flying past. Police officers shook their heads as the dozens of predominately Black riders weaved in and out of traffic. Yeah it’s a little dangerous, but it looked like freedom. Maggie Master wrote about Baltimore’s urban dirrbikers for The Baltimore Sun: “In a city where so many black citizens feel disenfranchised by those in power, dirt bike culture offers more than just a pastime; it is a powerful act of resistance.” We got to a downtown plaza and hundreds of Black families were watching a movie in the park. They were watching Black Panther. It was a really beautiful summer evening.

The Kindergarten Teacher
By Zell Thomas

A remake of an israeli film by Sara Colangelo with one of my favorite actresses Maggie Gyllenhaal, The Kindergarten Teacher definitely stands out as one of the most evocative films from 2018. That is in regard to its overall treatment of the transcendence of words. At the heart of the film is a middle-aged kindergarten teacher named Lisa Spinelli who strikes us as a nurturing and compassionate mother. With a husband and two teenage kids, her life seems to be rather simple and uninvolved.

I recommend this film because it forces us to see how beautiful and pure children are. In their form they represent a sort of potential energy that Lisa Spinelli can’t resist. So much so, that the line between student and teacher here is transversed.

One of my favorite moments in the film is when the young child stares through a hotel window with Lisa his teacher at his side. Lisa says, as they stare deeply out the window into a landscape very similar to the ones we have here in Oregon, “It’s beautiful, so different than home.” In response, Jimmy replies with such sensitiveness, “It’s beautiful, and sad looking too,” to which Lisa says, “The sadness never goes away. Van Gogh said that before he died.”

Check out the film! You will recognize a few actors like Gael Garcia Bernal from The Science of Sleep and Michael Churny from the Amazon series The Patriot.
Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom
(Another reminder to just watch Jurassic Park)
By Daniel J. Nickolas

Fallen Kingdom? More like fallen franchise. The film's biggest problem is how it treats Jeff Goldblum like that useless bushel of parsley on a steak dinner (Goldblum should always be, at bare minimum, the side of mash potatoes). Additionally problematic is that this latest installment doesn't work for its thrills. The characters are one-dimensional to the point that I'm never sure I care about them (though actress Isabella Sermon, who plays the little girl, does surprisingly well with what she's given). Because of this lack of dimension, and lack of care for the characters, there is no genuine sense of danger; there are one or two suspenseful moments, but those moments are castrated by the viewers' assuredness that the "good guys" will absolutely survive this. Furthermore, whenever the movie wants to be suspenseful, it just relentlessly throws everything at the wall, hoping that it can distract the viewer from its overall boring execution. Volcano + the stampede scene from Jurassic Park + the bubble car scene from Jurassic World + the cliff scene from The Lost World = excitement, right? No. And that's another problem. The first half of this film borrows way too heavily from previous instalments, before doing a complete 180 and becoming a haunted house movie in the second half—though honestly, I didn't hate the haunted house feel of the second half If nothing else, it was different.

All and all, J.W.F.K. has nice special effects, but that's about it. The film already isn't great, but standing in the shadow of Jurassic Park, one of the greatest blockbusters of all time, it looks even worse. And for those of you wondering, and I know some of you are: no, Chris Pratt isn't cute enough to save this movie. When it comes to high-budget dinosaur films that ask existential questions about humanity's relationship with science, Jurassic Park has reigned for 26 years, and will likely reign 65 million more.

You Were Never Really Here
By Shane Johnson

In a year of many gorgeous, highly unique films (from Roma and The Favourite to Into The Spiderverse and Sorry To Bother You), I can't say You Were Never Really Here was my favorite film of the year. But it was undoubtedly the most memorable, affecting experience I had sitting in a movie theater in 2018.

Joaquin Phoenix plays a PTSD-ridden hired gun who is discreetly employed rescue the daughter of a state senator from sex trafficking. It is heavy material and the film treats it with respect without shying away from the effect it has on the characters. The film begins as an intense, somewhat predictable thriller, and about half an hour into its runtime goes completely off-the-rails, leaving the audience without a moment to breathe.

Phoenix is a wonderfully physical actor, silently conveying much of his character's heavy burden through his facial expressions alone. Lynne Ramsey's direction and script are sharp and powerful. You Were Never Really Here is very much a "show-don't-tell" film, with Ramsey's steady, beautiful camera work keeping the film grounded, aside from a few well-chosen moments of surrealism that heighten the drama.

Fresh of the glorious achievement of his primarily string-based score for Phantom Thread, Johnny Greenwood's electronic score is wobbling and disorienting, but the film's most notable aural achievement is its sound design. The cacophony of sounds that inhabit New York City's urban landscape feel as claustrophobic to the viewer as they do to Phoenix's character. We feel the effects of his PTSD with him, alongside occasionally catching brief, unexplained glimpses into his past traumas.

When the credits rolled, my friend Sydney's immediate reaction was, "That was awful." Not because it was a bad film, but because it was so effective at communicating its point. The movie engulfs you. We realized we couldn't think of another time we had cried after a movie, over the events of a film. You feel for the characters. Why did any of this have to happen to them? Why must it happen to anyone? Why is cruelty and abuse of power so unrelenting, in real life?
Annihilation and Film Distribution in the Age of Netflix

By Shane Johnson

Annihilation was undoubtedly one of the best movies I saw in 2018. It's a creative, nuanced exploration of self-destruction (among many other themes) within the framework of a science fiction thriller. It's led by a mostly female ensemble cast, centered around one of Natalie Portman's strongest performances in recent years. The film was written and directed by Alex Garland, a significant figure in contemporary science fiction filmmaking, and tells much of its story visually, through gorgeous, haunting images. But you wouldn't know that, looking at the film's rollout.

Paramount, coming off a difficult 2016 and 2017, secured a deal to let the streaming platform Netflix release Annihilation internationally, providing the studio some financial security at the loss of the film playing in theaters outside the United States and China. Unfortunately, this is a film that deserved to be seen on the big screen. Garland has said his reaction to the Netflix release was "disappointment," adding that, "it's got pluses and minuses, but from my point of view and the collective of the people who made it—it was made—to be seen on a big screen."

Esteemed critic Matt Zoller Seitz ranked the film his second favorite of the year, writing, "The last ten minutes may be...the only attempt at a 2001: A Space Odyssey-type of mind-blowing, conversation piece ending, post-Kubrick, that actually sticks the landing." But that ending may be part of the reason for the film's unconventional international release. According to The Hollywood Reporter, David Ellison, one of the film's producers, became concerned after a poor test screening and wanted to alter Natalie Portman's character and the ending to better appeal to mainstream audiences. Another producer, Scott Rudin, defended Garland's vision. Fortunately for the film, Rudin had final cut, but Paramount, with cold feet, decided to dump the film on Netflix internationally.

Annihilation opened in fourth place at the domestic box office, ultimately earning $32 million domestically and $10 million in China, apparently only barely breaking even of its reported $40-55 million budget with the Netflix deal taken into account. But there is an argument to be made the film could have reached a far broader audience, even in the United States. The uneasy studio promoted it minimally and lifted the press embargo only days before release (despite the fact that the film went on to be critically acclaimed, currently holding an 89 percent on Rotten Tomatoes). All this, because the studio did not know how to market this movie. Or worse, they did not care.

Zoller Seitz, with a touch of passive-aggressive sarcasm, wrote on RogerEbert.com that the Netflix deal allowed the film to be profitable, "while relieving Paramount of the burden of figuring out a clever way to build interest in a movie that didn't have any obvious hooks. I mean, aside from the fact that it's a haunting, hypnotically powerful film that seems to stir deep introspection in anyone who watches it with an open mind and brings their own point-of-view to the experience."

"Paramount left money on the table," Seitz concluded.

While studios see Netflix as a competitor in the theatrical space, Annihilation serves as a prime example of how the streaming company also presents an additional option for studios with films that they are worried about. To some studios, the high-spending Netflix is a way to guarantee they'll earn back at least some of a film's budget—a more notorious example being Paramount's decision to sell the disappointing sequel The Cloverfield Paradox to Netflix after concerns about the reception of the film.

It's becoming increasingly difficult to make smart, original genre fare in the contemporary studio system. As studios become increasingly reliant on tentpole blockbusters from familiar brands, and moviegoers have increasingly compelling options to watch at home, films like Annihilation will continue to struggle at the box office and perhaps more significantly, struggle to get there in the first place.

This is where Netflix has an opportunity to leverage the current state of the movie industry to their advantage—if they can figure out how to correctly navigate the theatrical releases that fans of movies and the people who make them still desire. Take the Oscar Best Picture contender Roma, for example.

"I would work with Netflix in a second. They have delivered way more than what they promised. I am so pleased," Director Alfonso Cuaron recently told Deadline Hollywood. "I made a movie that on paper seems very unlikely and very difficult. It's a drama, it's not a genre film, it's black-and-white, it's in Spanish and Mixtec. When it was presented, the actors were not recognizable. It was like something that could have ended in just one theater in LA, and one theater in New York, and one theater in several cities around the world. Does Netflix have anything to do with this presence? Yes they have a lot to do with this presence."

Netflix is still figuring out how to handle theatrical releases, with most major movie chains holding firm on traditional theatrical release windows that the streaming service will not go for. Roma in some ways forced the issue for Netflix, and in delivering the film to as many independent theaters as possible and acting more like a traditional studio in many ways, Netflix earned itself Oscar credibility and an ally in one of the most acclaimed auteurs of contemporary cinema.

It is yet to be determined whether streaming will be more of a positive or negative influence on the moviegoing experience. Netflix has the opportunity to promote more artistic risks as they engage with the theatrical space, or simply drive studios to take fewer risks as more consumers continue to stay at home. Regardless, after the troubled release of Annihilation, it is not too surprising that Garland's next project is an eight-episode television drama for FX. •

Illustrations by Josh Gates
"All this, because the studio did not know how to market this movie. Or worse, they did not care."
Our dive into the PSU Library archive reveals Lincoln Hall’s slow transformation

BY SHANE JOHNSON

Lincoln Hall is an architectural gem on campus, its historic brick and elegant detail matching the beauty of the music, theater, and filmmaking created within. But the building has a more storied and diverse history than most who walk among its halls may realize.

Lincoln Hall was built in 1911 as the home of Lincoln High School. Due to post-war Baby Boom children pouring into Portland schools in increasing numbers, Lincoln High School outgrew the building and, funded by a 1947 levy, relocated to a new building at SW 16th Avenue and Salmon Street in April 1949. PSU, then called the Vanport Extension Center, was currently located at the Oregon Shipbuilding Corporation building in St. Johns after the infamous Vanport flood destroyed its original building in 1948. In 1949, PSU acquired the building for $875,000 as part of the Wilhelm-Logan bill that also made PSU a permanent institution.

In 1952, PSU moved to Lincoln Hall, the first building of what would eventually become an entire University District, and opened for classes that Fall. Whereas Lincoln Hall is now associated heavily with the arts, during this time period, the building’s resources looked incredibly different. With the whole of PSU essentially housed within Lincoln Hall’s walls, Lincoln held a cafeteria, gymnasium and library. Lincoln Hall was PSU’s main building until State Hall (eventually renamed to the familiar Cramer Hall) was built in 1955.

In an oral history project conducted in 2014, three former emeritus faculty members of PSU’s now-defunct School of Health and Human Performance described life in the early days of Lincoln Hall, in which disparate programs shared office space and resources within the building. Alice Lehman described humorously cramped office spaces.

“My first office was in the School of Education main office... two bookcases that were sitting on top of the desks and leaning against the wall because there wasn’t room anywhere on the floor for them,” she said. “From that point, then, I moved to an office that they had built in the women’s locker room. It was a partition...
PSU has portals to its past, and we are all invited

Lives of Lincoln Hall

Two students share a laugh in the Old Main cafeteria, 1957

with two offices, and being in the women's locker room was being like in a zoo twenty-four hours a day because all of the students that were taking P.E. classes were running in and out, and we were in constant noise down there. If you really wanted to do anything with concentration you had to go somewhere else. My next office was in the hall of Lincoln Hall, on the lower level, and the back of it abutted the center of the whole ventilation system that went up to the top of the building.

“There was a stack in the center of Lincoln Hall, back in the day,” noted Chuck Becker.

The Physical Education department often had to use outside resources given the limited size of the Lincoln Hall gymnasium. “When we were in Lincoln Hall, our facilities were all over the place,” said Becker. “We went down to Duniway Park, down on the Willamette River, for football practice; we used softball fields around the city. We had a great relationship with the City of Portland in utilizing activities.”

Upon PSU’s arrival to the building, Lincoln Hall was originally called the Portland State Extension Center Building, before being renamed to Old Main in 1956. It finally found the name Lincoln Hall during its conversion into a Performing Arts building between 1972 and 1975.

The now-distinctive atriums that allow natural light to flow to the hallways of all three floors were uncovered during a major renovation in 2011, having been previously converted to storage in the 1970s. The 2011 renovation created the familiar interior we experience today alongside seismic upgrades, rooftop solar panels, energy-efficient windows, and other sustainable additions to make the building Platinum LEED-certified. Finally, the glass tower on the Broadway side of the building was added in 2014, completing the transformation of “Old Main” into the building we know and love today.
Students studying in the hallway, 1956 (above)
Martin Luther King Jr spoke at Old Main in 1961, as reported by *The Vanguard* (right)
Students socializing in the cafeteria, 1954 (below)
Now

January, 2019. photo by Sierra Clark

Then

Lincoln Hall's west entrance in Spring 1956, when Park Ave continued alongside the building.

Lincoln High School in the early 1900s, from across the park blocks, which were open to street traffic at the time.

The distinctive overpass between the buildings that were then known as Old Main and State Hall, in 1958.
WHO WE ARE

The Pacific Sentinel is a monthly student-run magazine at PSU. We seek to uplift student voices and advocate on behalf of the marginalized. We analyze culture, politics, and daily life to continually take the dialogue further.

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Netflix announces new series, The Chill Place.
Illustration by Josh Gates

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