

# DATELINE

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## Walk2Vote leads Gators to polling locations for Texas local elections

BY DIANA AMBROSIO

The Student Government Association’s annual Walk2Vote returned this year on Oct. 21 after the pandemic halted this event in 2020.

The Walk2Vote leads people into a walk with others down to the polls closest to the campus during early voting. This year’s walk covered the Nov. 2 Texas local elections.

Weeks prior, the SGA showed people how to register to vote on campus.

There was even an informational class on Oct. 19 which showed people what would be on the ballot.

SGA Chief of Staff Janelle Jones said that there is a “barrier for students, because they do not know how

to register to vote and do not know where to go to vote.”

The purpose of these voting events is to teach people how to get involved in the democratic process.

Local elections are just as important as national elections because the person closest to home is the one that is representing you in Washington D.C.

Another goal of the event was to be a convenience to students, faculty, and staff. By going to the polls together, people are shown where they can go the next time they vote.

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SGA Chief of Staff Janelle Jones (left) and SGA Vice President Michelle Duvall (right) hand out food and voting merchandise at the UHD South Deck on Oct. 21. Credit: Diana Ambrosio.

## UHD Librarian Bridget Dew works to expand book accessibility

BY DIANA AMBROSIO

Meet one of our UHD librarians, Bridget Dew. Dew has been with UHD since March of 2020. She was an English teacher before becoming a librarian. She holds two master’s degrees, one in education and the other in library sciences.

Dew advocates for diversity and inclusion. In the library, she tries her best to make sure that the books are diverse and reflective of the student body. She stated that roughly 3% of librarians are minorities.

“If only 3% of us have the buying power, we are not

represented.”

Dew would like for that to change. She recommends bibliotherapy. According to the New Yorker, “bibliotherapy is a broad term for the ancient practice of encouraging reading for therapeutic effect.” Having the ability to find a character that is relatable to oneself allows for some people to find a healing value.

Dew is motivated by giving the opportunity to help students see themselves represented in books, especially those provided by the UHD library.

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UHD Librarian Bridget Dew poses with her “shelf help” book display on the fifth floor of the W. I. Dykes Library. Credit: Diana Ambrosio



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FIND US ONLINE!

## 40,000 Windows Cafe commemorates lives lost to COVID-19

BY SHAHERYAR KHAN

UHD remembered those who were taken by COVID-19 through a memorial service on Oct. 27.

The memorial was in the 40,000 Windows Café, on the fifth floor of the W.I. Dykes Library in One Main Building.

Since the pandemic first emerged, the whole world has adapted to the “new normal.”

There have been lockdowns, facemask mandates, toilet paper shortages, and over 5 million deaths until now, according to a study conducted by The New York Times.

Many people can relate with someone who has died due to the virus, or with someone who was unable to see their loved ones due to quarantine. With this in mind, UHD has offered

a serene atmosphere on campus to display a memorial to honor the ones who are gone.

English Associate Professor Kathrine Jager organized the memorial service. Her goal was to have the members of the Gator community recognize the loss and sadness that the pandemic has caused.

Before the formal opening of the memo-

rial, members of the Gator community filled out a form distributed through email, where individuals shared the name, photo, and a fond memory of the person who passed away.

President Loren Blanchard walked towards the wall where people shared the memories of the deceased. He shared a memory that he said will stay with him forever.

“I will always remember you sitting in the backyard singing Marvin Gaye,” Blanchard said.

No one in the room knew the people on the wall personally, but everyone was there for their commemoration. Blanchard addressed the crowd and stated that the memorial showcases a wall of beloved people.

“The stats will increase,” Blanchard said, regarding the number of people who have died from the virus. What he wants is for everyone to acknowledge the “people behind the stats.”

Jager recited a poem towards the end of the service by Marie Howe called “What the Living Do.”

The poem ends with: “I am living. I am you.”



English Associate Professor Kathrine Jager reads the poem “What The Living Do.” Credit: Shaheryar Khan



Attendees view the COVID-19 memorial walls. Credit: Shaheryar Khan

## UHD concludes Hispanic Heritage Month with Latin fest

BY MONICA GOMEZ

UHD’s Center for Latino Studies hosted Latin Fest on Oct. 20, an event that showcased folkloric music and traditions of Latin America to conclude the university’s month-long celebration of Hispanic heritage. There was a great mixture of people that included UHD’s students and the general public.

UHD’s drumline kicked off the fest along with other featured acts including Tango Argentino, Aire Flamenco, Danza Azteca, Callet Folklórico and UHD Mariachi Los Caimanes.

These acts celebrated countries such as Spain, Argentina and Mexico.

Along with the performances, some refreshments included popular Latin snacks, such as pan dulce, chicharrones, and churros.

UHD’s drumline member Ariel Suarez said performing at the Latin Fest meant a lot. Suarez is a freshman at UHD and identifies as part of the Latin community.

“It helped me to see I’m not alone at UHD,” Suarez said. “It felt like I mattered being part of UHD.” The event was a “recognition” to other students that identify within the Latin community and feel “included” attending UHD.

Attendees also expressed the event

exposed them to Latin culture. UHD’s Los Caimanes member, Mia Norfleet, highlighted the importance of this event to her and other communities that attend UHD.

“The fest gives a spotlight to...Latinx. It gives other communities the chance to learn more about the Latinx community,” Norfleet said. “I have a deep respect for the Latinx community, and this fest gave me an opportunity to give a spotlight to my Latinx members.”

The event attendees got a chance to engage with the performers.

UHD student Edwin Mendez mentioned that the Spanish and Argentine performances

greatly interested him. Mendez got an opportunity to “learn and experience different cultures” and “get involved in the university and meet new

students.”

By the end of the event, Mendez highlighted that “all the individuals who showed up had a positive attitude.”

He looks forward to the next Latin fest celebration.



Aire Flamenco performs at the Latin Fest. Credit: Monica Gomez

# UHD administers COVID-19 booster shots



Nurses await students for their COVID-19 vaccines and booster shots at UHD's Welcome Center on Oct. 21. Credit: Edward Saenz

### BY EDWARD SAENZ

UHD hosted a vaccine clinic in partnership with HEB on Oct. 21, that offered COVID-19 booster shots for the first time on campus. Both doses of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines were also available. The Pfizer booster shot was only available for those who met the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's requirements.

A grand total of about 200 students and staff members received one of the available shots.

When asked why they were getting shots the answers fell into three categories.

Work required being vaccinated, a family member was in a high-risk category, or they just wanted the vaccine.

In September, the Food and Drug Administration

authorized the Pfizer booster shots, and a few weeks later the Moderna and Johnson & Johnson boosters were authorized. While the primary vaccines have been made available to all adults, the booster shots are still only available to high-risk individuals only.

For anyone looking to get their booster shots, there is a long string of criteria that need to be met. You must have gotten both your vaccine shots over six months ago and be 65 years or older.

Younger individuals must be over the age of 18; live in a long-term care facility or have an underlying medical condition or interact with someone who has an underlying medical condition. The CDC currently does not have a date on when the boosters

will be made available to everyone.

"They are all highly effective in reducing the risk of severe disease, hospitalization, and death, even in the midst of the widely circulating delta variant," said CDC Director Dr. Rochelle P. Walensky.

In an interview with CNBC, Walensky said the "evidence supported that all three vaccines were safe, and that over 400 million doses had been administered."

UHD plans to host two more vaccine clinics this year, on Nov. 18 and Dec. 15. COVID-19 tests are also available seven days a week from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. at a kiosk located just outside the Jesse H. Jones Student Life Center.

## Texas ranks No. 28 in vaccination rates

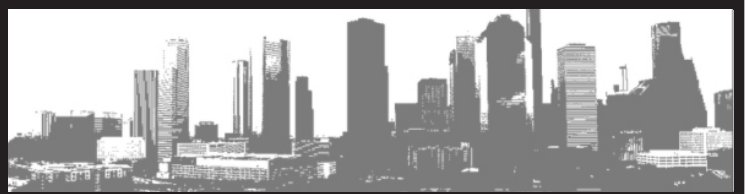
Over 53% of Texans are fully vaccinated and an even greater 62% have 1 dose.

Texas is behind the nation's vaccination rate; over 65% of the U.S. population is vaccinated

Texas alone adds nearly 6,000 more cases per day. National daily average is 86,000

Source: CDC as of Nov. 2

Credit: Edward Saenz



# THE DATELINE

University of Houston-Downtown  
1 Main Street, Houston, TX 77002  
Office: S-260 Phone: 713.221.8192  
editordateline downtown@gmail.com

## Fall 2021 Staff

Editor.....Indira Zaldivar  
Assistant Editor.....Aansa Usmani  
Social Media Manager.....Jema Pantoja  
Business Manager.....Ann M. Lummus  
Gator Life Section Editor.....Shaheryar Khan  
News Section Editor.....Gean Garcia  
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Faculty Advisor.....Joe Sample, Ph.D.

The Dateline is the official student newspaper of the University of Houston-Downtown. Since its first issue in 1982, The Dateline is proud to be "Student Run since Volume One." We strive to meet the needs of a growing university as well as the growing metropolitan city that surrounds us.

## Submission Policy

The Dateline staff consists of students from UHD who complete all tasks required to produce the newspaper, which serves all UHD campuses. The opinions and commentaries expressed within reflect the views of the contributing writers. No opinions expressed in The Dateline reflect the viewpoints of UHD, its administration, or students.

The Dateline reserves the right to edit or modify submissions for the sake of clarity, content, grammar, or space limitations. All submissions become property of The Dateline and may not be returned.

All paid writers must be currently enrolled students at UHD. All paid writers must also complete vendor registration with the University of Houston System prior to contributing.

Press releases, story ideas, news tips and suggestions are always welcomed. We encourage all students to contribute. Any student interested in joining The Dateline staff may request more detailed information sending an email to Editor Indira Zaldivar at [editor-dateline downtown@gmail.com](mailto:editor-dateline downtown@gmail.com).

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## O’Kane Gallery hosts Faculty Art Exhibition

BY ABDULLAH SOLIMAN

The faculty in the Department of Arts and Communication showcased their artistic background at the O’Kane Gallery. The gone Faculty Art Exhibition displayed a piece unique to them.

The imagery and color contrasts in all the pieces decorated the vast room with such beautiful design.

Associate Professor Mark Cervenka, who teaches art at UHD, oversaw the Faculty Art Exhibition and shared his insight on the event.

“All of them [the professors] have different motivations and ideas about how they want to make their own art.”

The artists had different ideas and imaginations concerning how they wanted to portray their art.

Cervanka also said that different art styles were another motivating

factor that contributed to the art pieces created. Some artists were painters, photographers, sculptors and two-dimensional media artists.

These different art forms contributed to the reason different pieces were made. The artists took their time to express themselves differently than others due to the type of media they were associated with.

“I am always really excited and surprised to see what it is they bring,” Cervenka said. “It’s just really nice to see the breath and the creativity that the artists have. And that’s of course one of the great things that they bring to the classroom.”

Their art was like a magnet that drew others who walk by it. Their art was somewhat of a breathtaking adventure that has yet to be explored.

Something new and exquisite is a really effective way to describe the exhibit. One of the art pieces present at the exhibition was a sculpture made from a

used car part, sculpted by UHD art Professor Mason Rankin. These art pieces always manage to surprise Cervanka year after year. These are things they find

precious and want to share it with the public outside.

Whether it is problems in humanity or problems in society, the O’Kane Gallery

served as the platform to portray the things UHD’s very own artists held dear and found extremely important.



UHD art Professor Mason Rankin sculpted this popular piece using an used car part. Credit: Monica Gomez

## Walk2Vote continued

FROM PAGE 1

For this year, there were a few local positions on the ballot which vary based on the constituent’s residence.

In addition, there were eight propositions on the ballot which deal with constitutional amendments.

A proposition is a proposed piece of law that people vote to decide whether it will be enacted or not.

Other student and community organizations prepared students for this election.

The UHD Honor Society of Social Policy, in honor of National Voter Registration Day, tabled outside of the UHD Bookstore to register people to vote on Sept. 28.



UHD student poses with Walk2Vote t-shirt on Oct. 21. Credit: Diana Ambrosio

The League of Women Voters of Houston also tabled outside of the METROrail entrance on the third floor that same day.

## UHD librarian continued

FROM PAGE 1

She wants to provide access to books that you may not be able to find in other places because access is empowering.

“It’s all in how you market it and how you are rolling this out.”

For example, Dew imported many books from Arte Publico Press, located at the University of Houston. Arte Publico Press is the oldest and most accomplished publisher of contemporary and recovered literature by U.S. Hispanic authors.

Providing access to the books of diverse authors, according to Dew, grants readers a medium to learn unfamiliar ideas and concepts about differ-

ent cultures and backgrounds. Secondly, it makes reading relatable to people who share the same culture or similar background as the author.

The library staff started a new project that aims to catalogue every book to make books easier to find by keywords. For example, Dew explained that if a Black author wrote a book, the book might be cataloged as “African American voices.” If a Latin author writes a book, it would be cataloged as “Latin voices.”

Dew even asked students for their input on what is the best word to describe Latinos. Terms discussed included Latinx, Hispanic, Latin American, etc.

She understands that reading is a personal activity. Everyone has different likings in things. She believes that no one can truly dislike reading, for it is just that a person has not found the appropriate book for themselves.

“When you’re just in between classes, and you don’t have something to do, grab a book,” Dew said.

Dew is also deeply knowledgeable about what it takes to become a librarian. She knows the ins and outs and would be more than happy to talk to people about the process and which schools are better for which reasons.

## New art exhibit illustrates Ukraine's resilience through crisis



“If It Walks like a Duck” is one of Lydia Bodnar-Balahuttrak’s paintings displayed at O’Kane Gallery. Credit: Shaheryar Khan



“Pandemic Lamentations” is displayed at the O’Kane Gallery through Dec. 9. Credit: Shaheryar Khan

### BY SANDRA BECKMEIER

Lydia Bodnar-Balahuttrak’s artwork is influenced by her Ukrainian heritage, as her parents were World War II refugees from Ukraine.

As an artist, Bodnar-Balahuttrak probes individual identity and cultural ties, piecing together text fragments and figuration, and creating a visual narrative to share with others.

Recently, she spoke with The Dateline about her show now hanging on campus at the O’Kane Gallery.

“I can be open to diversity yet present my own particular narrative that resonates with viewers and perpetuates a healthy discourse about the issues we all share as human beings,” Bodnar-Balahuttrak said. “After all, making art is an important discipline within the humanities.”

Born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio, Bodnar-Balahuttrak’s received a bachelor’s degree in art education from Kent State University and a master’s degree in fine arts from the George Washington University and the Corcoran School of Art in Washington, D.C. In 1977, she and her husband moved to Hous-

ton, where she began lecturing and teaching studio art – drawing and painting at the University of Houston Clear Lake campus, and most recently, the Glassell School of Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

Her two-dimensional installations depict the complex socio-political nature of nations. In particular, her Ukrainian heritage and the Soviet Union’s effects on the country are prominently illustrated in her work.

“What binds all the work together are my familial cultural ties, my desire to bear witness to pivotal events in history, and my process of building a layered visual narrative through text and metaphoric imagery,” she said.

Since her first trip to Ukraine in 1991, she has been creating work dedicated to “bearing witness” to critical historical events in Ukraine and America.

Her series of works have referenced the Holodomor – a Stalin-orchestrated famine-genocide of 1932-33, the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear explosion, the 2014 Revolution of Dignity, the Russian takeover of Crimea, and invasion of Eastern Ukraine, and now the COVID-19

pandemic, a worldwide crisis.

“As a child I learned to speak, read, and write in Ukrainian alongside English, and now I freely navigate in both,” she explained. “Under Soviet rule, the Ukrainian language was banned, while Russian was the only permissible language.

As for art, Soviet Realism was the official art form in Soviet Ukraine, she said. Any other art voice, such as 20th century Modernism, remained unheard, silenced by the censorship of an oppressive political system.

In 1991, she was privileged to visit Ukraine for the first time. Shortly afterwards, the Soviet Union dissolved and Ukraine declared her sovereignty and independence. It has been 30 years since Ukraine has been an independent country. Bodnar-Balahuttrak has visited several times.

“Ukraine’s reclamation of its history and identity and my American-Ukrainian frame of reference continue to inform my creative work.”

Her smaller, more intimate works of individual animals, act out very human or political dramas,

forming parables whose titles are clues to their meanings. In her more recent work, “Pandemic Lamentations,” she addresses societal, governmental and individual responses to a health crisis of staggering reach that has caused the deaths of millions.

When asked about her response to the pandemic, she offered, “of course hearing and watching the horrible news of the pandemic, I grieved for those who were ill, for the many deaths and losses, and this led to the “Pandemic Lamentations.”

“Part 1” begins with the first impeachment of President Trump and links up with the beginnings of the pandemic and exponential infections, and the rampant spread of misinformation and outright lies about the virus.

“Part 2” centers on May 2020, marking the then incalculable human toll of 100,000 deaths in the U.S. from the coronavirus.

Poet T.S. Eliot’s words are worked into the hazy, fragile terrain, with flickering flames of fire and prickly branches meant

to burn and nick at our consciousness. The last iteration, “Pandemic Lamentations, Part 3,” is featured in this show. The midsection of a gate image is set into a corner of the gallery.

“The Ties that Bind” is displayed through Dec. 9, at the O’Kane Gallery, Monday through Friday, 10 a.m.- 5 p.m., and Saturday 12 p.m.- 5 p.m. Exhibit will be closed during university holidays.

The artist will speak inside the gallery on Nov. 6 at 2:30 p.m.



“And Europe Was Silent” is displayed at the O’Kane Gallery through Dec. 9. Credit: Shaheryar Khan

# Land Bridge makes Memorial Park better for all

BY EDWARD SAENZ

Construction of Memorial Parks Land Bridge and Prairie Project is in full swing.

Set to be complete sometime in late 2022, the project is one of many steps in the city's Master Plan to perfect Memorial Park.

After Hurricane Ike in 2008 and a massive three-year drought, Memorial Park was left in disarray.

In response, the Memorial Park Conservancy, Houston Parks

and Recreation Department, and the Uptown Development Authority created a 10-year plan to transform Memorial Park. In 2015, the Master Plan was approved.

It will be very enjoyable for people, a new amenity for people," Memorial Park Conservancy President Shellye Arnold told Click2Houston.

"They won't even know they're crossing Memorial Drive."

The Land Bridge is designed to connect to the north and south

sides of the park and will add over 45 acres of new land. The new park is being built over two massive tunnels that will run under the park and serve as the new Memorial Drive Road.

Of the many goals with creating the land bridge, the biggest is safety. As of now, park visitors and wildlife must cross Memorial Drive to see the other side of the park.

The Land Bridge will join the two sides of the park together into

one massive park and make the crossing for wildlife and people safer and more enjoyable.

Alongside is the Prairie Restoration Project, which plans to re-introduce various forms of endangered native Gulf Coast wetlands to both sides of Memorial Park.

Trees currently located in areas set to be destroyed will be marked and eventually moved to the new park area.

A network of new trails and wetlands will

be created on top of the bridge to provide safe crossing and living for both people and wildlife.

The bridge and restoration projects are one part of a much larger plan to revitalize Memorial Park into a beautiful wetland oasis getaway from Houston's concrete jungle.

The Master Plan is to return the park to its natural state, with fewer buildings and structures.

"This new park-land will symbolize the

triumph of 'green over gray,' healing the divide created by Memorial Drive half a century ago," Arnold said.

Altogether the entire project will cost \$70 million, and the Master Plan will cost \$205 million. Construction of the Land Bridge and Prairie Project is currently ongoing.

It is expected to be completed sometime in late 2022.



Construction banner advertising Memorial Park's initiative. Credit: Edward Saenz



A closer look towards the tunnels. Credit: Edward Saenz



Ongoing construction on the Land Bridge. Credit: Edward Saenz

# Houston launches composting pilot program to reduce waste

BY EDWARD SAENZ

Houston is launching a six-week-long program to gather composting materials. The program will give Houstonians an opportunity to not only divert any organic waste from landfills, but also learn about the powers of composting.

Composting is an eco-friendly process of using household ingredients to fertilize and improve the soil. The items that can be used in composting fall into two categories: greens or browns

Greens are nitrogen-rich food items like fruit and vegetable scraps, bread, and grains, spent coffee and tea grounds, and eggshells to name a few.

Browns are carbon-rich materials that include paper products such as bags and cups, newspapers, old flowers, paper napkins, wood ash, animal and human hair, and utensils that are labeled as compostable.

Composting has a ton of benefits. It is a

terrific way to repurpose all the organic waste that people generate at home.

Food scraps make up over 28% of what is thrown into the garbage. Municipal solid waste is the third-largest source of greenhouse emissions, specifically methane, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

That is because landfills lack the proper airflow, moisture, and other conditions necessary for waste to break down.

Waste costs a surprising amount to process. In 2019, the average cost of processing organic waste was \$55 per ton, with a total of over 267 million tons of organic waste nationwide.

“Expanding composting opportunities in Houston aligns with the city’s Climate Action Plan and the Solid Waste Department’s draft long-range plan,” Mayor Sylvester Turner said at a press conference at Herman Square on Oct. 20.

“Whether it’s in our homes or our farms, composting helps to reduce organic wastes, which helps to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases.”

Originally proposed in June by City Council member Sallie Acorn, the program will have three locations across Houston: Historic Heights Fire Station, Kashmere Gardens Multi-Service Center, and Houston’s Botanic Garden.

Anyone bringing compostable materials is encouraged to save up over several weeks and bring a full collection of appropriate items to any of the three stops. Two composting collection companies, Moonshot and Zero Waste Houston, will be onsite to retrieve the materials.

People will not even have to get out of their cars. The program will run from Oct. 20 through Nov. 27. The composting program is free for residents to use.



Credit: Edward Saenz

# Miami Police Department terminates ex-Houston police chief

BY SERGIO PRESA JR

Houston former police Chief Art Acevedo was terminated by the Miami Police Department mid-October after being sworn in as their new police chief in April.

His firing comes after being suspended by Miami City Manager Art Noriega.

Noriega said in a statement that Acevedo’s relationship with the police department

had “become untenable and needed to be resolved promptly.” He mentioned that the relationship between Acevedo and the department as well as with the community “has deteriorated beyond repair.”

He served as chief of police of the largest police department in Texas for more than four years.

Acevedo gained national attention when he called for nationwide standards on police use

of force, and when he marched with protesters after George Floyd’s death.

Acevedo transferred from the Houston Police Department to Miami earlier this year. His suspension came after penning a letter to Miami Mayor Francis Suarez and Noriega on Sept. 24.

Acevedo’s letter accused three city commissioners of interfering with a confidential internal investigation and

reform efforts. During his suspension, Acevedo was barred from issuing any commands or orders as well as removing or destroying existing city records.

“The relationships between employers and employees come down to fit and leadership style,” Noriega added.

“Unfortunately, Chief Acevedo is not the right fit for this organization.”

Acevedo’s immediate suspension will be in

place for five days until city commissioners take up his termination.

“Instead of taking the time to first commit yourself to developing and fostering truth both within the department and the community, you were brash and hasty in many of your comments and actions,” Noriega wrote in a letter to Acevedo.

Noriega expressed in the memo that after three incidents where Acevedo seemingly

supported a COVID-19 vaccine mandate for officers, he had “lost the confidence and trust of the rank-and-file.”

The suspension and termination are a big blow to Acevedo’s 35-year-old career in law enforcement.

A native of Cuba, he was the first Latino to lead Houston’s police department, and Miami’s mayor referred to him as the “Tom Brady or Michael Jordan of police chiefs.”

## District B's town council discusses environmental hazards

BY SASHA SMITH

Concerned parents, friends, members of the Environmental Protection Agency's Environmental Justice Advisory Council, and citizens alike gathered to express serious unease in response to housing, health, and economic stability.

The panel discussion concerned citizens' rights and its recent implementation within their countries.

Comments poured from Sunnyside, Fifth Ward, Acres Home, and South Side residents.

These individuals brave enough to speak for those who cannot are faced with mass amounts of air pollution, homelessness within their population, and lead poisoning cases from their water.

These staggering and undeniably tragic environmental discrepancies facing these minority-based communities begged the question "why us?"

Houston is home to a number of environmental hazards: the creosote contamination of a railyard in Fifth Ward, oil refineries, chemical plants, and more.

These environmental hazards put people at higher risk for health problems. For example, the cancer risk in Harrisburg Manchester, a predominantly Latino super neighborhood, is 22% higher than for all of Houston.

One of the panelists, Robert D. Bullard, is deemed the "father of environmental justice." Bullard is an award-winning author and one of the most influential people in climate policy.

The Biden Administration appointed him to the Environmental Protection Agency's Environmental Advisory Council to offer input on how to address current and historic environmental injustices.

Bullard said that the EPA looks for two factors in terms of environmental justice: proportionality and vulnerability.

"This proportionality goes back to the fact that some communities in the United States, have and still receive more pollution, than other communities," Bullard said.

He spoke on a system that had a eleven

facets which was entitled an EJ Screening, this allowed for coverage on 11 environmental indicators in each extreme.

"There's only eleven because EJ Screening has to cover the entire United States," Bullard explained.

This resource allows for communities widespread to understand the distribution and discrimination that comes with each allotted area and how citizens can combat this inequality.

The panelist speakers concluded with how citizens can get involved.

"Media, as we all know, has a very short attention span on issues," he said. "Having different points that you can make and keep their interest on a particular issue, [will keep] something in the public eye."

He told attendees to "keep applying pressure on elected officials to do the right thing."



Credit: Aansa Usmani

## General Colin Powell, first Black secretary of state, dies of COVID-19

BY SERGIO PRESA JR

Former secretary of state and chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, General Colin Powell, passed away due to COVID-19 complications. Powell was fully vaccinated, but he was battling multiple myeloma, which is a cancer in the body's plasma cells that can suppress the body's immune system, as well as Parkinson's disease.

"We have lost a

remarkable and loving husband, father, grandfather, and a great American," Powell's family said. Powell was a Vietnam veteran, and during the end of the Reagan Administration, he became the first Black national security advisor.

When Powell served under President H.W. Bush, he was not only the first Black chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, but also the youngest. In the

mid-'90s, Powell was thought of as a leading contender for becoming the first Black U.S. President. His national popularity was due to the outcome and U.S. victory during the Gulf War.

Powell's reputation was tainted when he gave faulty intelligence to the United Nations, advocating for the Iraq war. He called that taint a "blot" on his record. In 2001, after being sworn in as secretary

of state under former President Bush, Powell became the highest-ranking Black public official to date in the country.

"I think it shows to the world what is possible in this country," Powell said during his Senate confirmation hearing.

Although Powell was a Republican, he grew dissatisfied with the party's swing to the right. He began to use his political influence

to help get Democrats elected to the White House.

During the final weeks of his 2008 campaign, Powell endorsed Barack Obama for president. The endorsement was a strong propelling force for the former president's candidacy, given his widespread popularity and his status as one of the most successful Black public servants.

He is survived by his three children and

his wife, Alma Vivian whom he married in 1962. Bush referred to Powell as "a great public servant." Bush also said Powell was "such a favorite of presidents that he earned the Presidential Medal of Freedom twice."

"He was highly respected at home and abroad," Bush said. "Most important, Colin was a family man and a friend."



# Warner Bros announces much anticipated films at DC FanDome event

BY JAMES JUREWICZ

The DC FanDome is back in 2021 with another virtual experience, showcasing the next wave of DC Comics content.

Films, television shows and video games were announced with a plethora of trailers and behind the scenes' clips. Everything was presented in a one-day online special on Oct. 16.

The largest announcements focused on the new film "The Batman," the upcoming HBO Max show "Peacemaker" and the Ezra Miller helmed film "The Flash."

Robert Pattinson takes up the mantle of the next Batman. On March 4, 2022, audiences will see director Matt Reeves' vision of "The Dark Knight."

"For some reason Batman has always stood out as one of the major characters of the 20th Century," Pattinson said in an interview with Entertainment Weekly.

The actor clearly understands the responsibility of portraying such an icon. Previously Ben Affleck was going to direct and star in a solo Batman film but was replaced by Reeves and Pattinson after dropping out of the project.

"The Batman" was filmed in Great Britain in London and Liverpool. Set in Batman's "Year Two," the film is not an origin story but instead a representation of a Batman already established in the fictional Gotham City.

Pattinson will face the Riddler and Penguin. Paul Dano

portrays the Riddler and Colin Ferrell is unrecognizable in his role as Penguin/Oswald Cobblepot. Farrell wears an accenting body suit, is adorned with facial prosthesis and his Penguin speaks in a heavy American East Coast accent.

Not much is known about Dano's Riddler aside from his creepy admiration for voice-masking technology and duct tape. Dano's Riddler will most likely ditch the gaudy lime green outfit from the comics. Zoe Kravitz will portray Catwoman/Selena Kyle, and Andy Serkis will appear as Alfred Pennyworth. "The Batman" film will be released on March 4, 2022.

DC's action-comedy series, "Peacemaker," on HBO Max is produced by James Gunn

and stars John Cena as Peacemaker/Christopher Smith. Cena is reprising his role from the 2021 film "The Suicide Squad," also directed by Gunn. Peacemaker is a DC Comics villain/anti-hero who believes himself to be a pacifist. He keeps "peace" by inflicting lethal harm to those who threaten that peace. The trailer makes the show look violent, bloody, and hilarious.

Cena is a talented actor and has the comedic chops to anchor his own series. The John Cena led "Peacemaker" will air on Jan. 13, 2022, on HBO Max.

"The Flash" is the most intriguing film on the list due to the complicated yet fascinating premise. Ezra Miller will reprise his role as The Flash/Barry Allen. In the film, Barry attempts to bring his

mother back to life by using his powers of superspeed for time travel. Traveling through time in the cinema is problematic, and this film is no different.

Barry messes with the timeline and everything goes all "Back to the Future" upon his return to present day. Multiple versions of Flash and Batman are brought together to face the dysfunction of the altered present.

A comparative example of this is the 2018 Oscar-winning animated film "Into the Spider-Verse."

Ben Affleck and Michael Keaton will share screen time and dialogue as their respective versions of the hero Batman/Bruce Wayne. There are three versions of the Flash character as shown in the most recent trailer. "The Flash"

will be the final time that Affleck suits up as the Dark Knight so the studio ordered extra scenes with the actor.

Conversely, Warner Brothers has mentioned that they intend to work with Keaton in the future as the character of Bruce Wayne/Batman. "The Flash" will release on Nov. 4, 2022.

The 2021 FanDome was fantastic and the lineup for the next few years at DC Comics, Warner Bros. and HBO Max seems to be highly promising entertainment. "The Batman," HBO's "Peacemaker," and "The Flash" all look like they will be welcome entries to the superhero genre.

Perhaps, DC Comics will finally be able to keep up with the success of Disney's Marvel Comic Universe.

## Tiger Sugar introduces brown sugar trend to Houston

BY MEGAN TRAN

Brown sugar boba variations are popping up all over Houston's Chinatown with Tiger Sugar as a front runner.

Located at Bellaire Food Street, they are famous for their brown sugar and "black sugar" iterations of the drink.

Brown sugar is a combination of molasses and refined white sugar. Molasses is a by-product of sugar cane and is added back into the white sugar while it is being refined, creating a more mature sweetness.

Black sugar is like brown sugar, but the natural molasses is not taken out of the sugar cane during the refining process. The difference lies in the gentle caramel notes.

Tiger Sugar has capitalized on the popularity of brown sugar and

has even gone beyond the drink format. They have various snacks that play off the brown and black sugar trend. Their most iconic store snack is their Black Sugar Boba Milk Ice Cream Bar.

They also have a Black Sugar Salted Egg Custard Rice Ball and a sesame version as well.

This has resulted in different companies hopping on the trend as well. ShoaMei's Brown Sugar Boba Popsicle is a popular copycat example. There are more unique snacks as well, such as Binggrae's Samanco Brown Sugar Boba flavor.

This popular ice cream dessert brand created a limited-edition flavor to take advantage of the trend.

Brown sugar boba originated from Taiwan. This drink has

recently made it over to the states within the decade. The delicious flavor and Instagrammable brown gradient made this drink the perfect upcoming trend.

The trend seems to be at an all-time high. Cookies, cakes, and mochi have all been spotted having brown sugar boba variations.

With the flavor being so versatile, many more treats can be made.

If you ever get the opportunity, take a taste and see if it is worth the hype.



Admiring the beautiful gradient of Tiger Sugar's Milk Tea. Credit: Megan Tran

# Reviews

## 'Dune' has a diversity issue that leaves heavy workload for sequel

BY VARAH THORNTON

"Dune" is a misguided attempt to bring an epic suited for a small screen to the big screen. There are numerous issues within the story itself. Aside from the main character being a Christ-like savior, the inclusion of a more diverse cast brings the problems of the original novel to the forefront.

For context, "Dune" is about two powerful houses, House Atreides and House Harkonnen, in a universal empire that are ancient enemies. House Atreides is gifted the planet Arrakis (Dune) to mine a precious mineral known as the spice melange. The former fiefs of Arrakis, House Harkonnen, previously held the planet and mined the spice for nearly a century before this sudden upheaval.

A trap laid by the emperor sets up the main plot of the story wherein we see the

emergence of Paul, son of Duke Leto and Lady Jessica. It is through Paul's journey that we get the familiar white savior trope that audiences of color have raised concerns about for decades.

Director Denis Villeneuve does due diligence to start the film from the perspective of the native peoples of Arrakis, the Fremen, who see the empire and their mining as obtrusive and disrespectful to their world. In Frank Herbert's original novel, we view everything from the perspective of Paul. By starting from the view of the oppressed, Villeneuve gives the appearance of a more balanced view of the story, but this is a false lead.

Chani (Zendaya) appears infrequently as visions to Timothee Chalamet's Paul who is awakening to the power inside of him that has been carefully culti-

vated by his mother. Chani narrates most of the film from Paul's visions, acting as a chorus for the audience. But in attempting to create a more diverse cast, Villeneuve elevates the problems of the film's origin.

Many actors and writers of color, specifically Black writers, have long pointed out that representation on-screen is about more than just being present. It also matters which roles actors of color are being cast in. Though there are numerous notable actors on screen, many actors of color have been placed in roles that are either limited or quickly killed off.

Many of the Fremen in the film are portrayed by actors of color, including Chani and Jamis. Save for Chani, who will play a much larger role in the sequel film, all the other actors of color meet a quick

demise or will never be seen again. This new stylized portrayal of the classic novel conjures comparisons to 1962's "Lawrence of Arabia."

Paul is thought to have been influenced by T.E. Lawrence. They are both outsiders embedding themselves into native people to deliver them from the injustices of a war started and fought by outsiders on their lands.

Herbert draws influence from Arabic language and Middle Eastern culture which have led some to question if his epic is a form of orientalism.

A lot of these issues will be determined by the direction Villeneuve takes in the sequel. The epic of "Dune" spans a total of 15 novels, but many believe Villeneuve will be pulling from the first three, "Dune," "Dune the Messiah," and "Children of Dune."

The first novel is

over 800 pages long and does some serious world building to set the scale of what is at stake. Villeneuve gives the audience glimpses of what may come in the sequel through Paul's prophetic visions that did not come to fruition by the end of the first film.

Fewer than half of the main cast is expected to return for the sequel which has already been guaranteed by Warner Brothers after a successful opening weekend between streaming and theaters. Despite this guarantee, the film felt too big for

its own good. Dune was one of the first large epics that inspired the likes of "Star Wars," "Alien," and "Star Trek." Many thought it would have been better suited for a "Game of Thrones" treatment to better explore its complex universe.

There is great potential for Villeneuve to better expand the onscreen portrayal of actors of color without making them appear as token diversity fillers.

Dune is currently streaming on HBO Max and in theaters.



Courtesy: Warner Bros.

## 'Music of The Spheres' uplifts spirits but fails to meet expectations

BY CAROLINA VALDEZ

Coldplay's newly released album, "Music of the Spheres," radiates positivity and is currently No. 4 on the Billboard 200 chart. Popcrave reported it as the band's ninth No.1 album since it's No.1 debut on the Official U.K. Albums Chart. The British band has stayed fresh and relevant through their long music career by tweaking their sound with every album. This one manages to have an electronic and ethereal sound.

The most popular song on the album is "My Universe," featuring K-pop supergroup BTS. Selena Gomez, another heavyweight name, is also featured on the album in "Let Somebody Go." The band has not featured an artist on their albums since 2011, when they featured Rihanna in "Princess of China."

In an interview with Lisa Wilkinson on "The Project," bandmembers Chris Martin and Jonny Buckland described the success of "My Universe." They

said it is like running a race while "piggybacking on Usain Bolt." They playfully admit that BTS's star-power elevated the song to the top of the charts. But their songs with features are not the only stars to shine on this celestial-themed album.

The lead single for the album "Higher Power" comes in strong as the second song on the album, following a short interlude. It has a fast paced '80s sound and can make anyone come out of a bad mood. The melody

and motivational lyrics make for a very lifting song. A neat bit to the album is the interludes that are all named after emojis. The four interludes are a nice break from what would have been an optimism-overload of an album.

Being purely instrumentals, they make for nice background music to clear the mind.

StereoBoard's Jacob Brookman describes the album to "lack political teeth," but I would disagree with that. "People of the Pride" stands apart from

the rest of the songs as a spicy rock anthem. The lyrics are politically strong and the tune jump starts a fire in listeners. "Biutyful" is another gem on the album. Contrasting "People of the Pride," this song gives listeners a hug and tells them that everything will be alright.

It's a great album but it isn't Coldplay's greatest album. Overall, there is a uniformity among the songs and it oozes positivity and boasts catchy tunes, but it is tame coming

from Coldplay. The songs are fun, but they are not transformative like "Viva la Vida" or "Paradise," the band's biggest hits. Coldplay has never had a problem producing mainstream pop music with depth and freshness, but this is just not that.

The band will be going on tour next year in North and South America as well as Europe. They will be performing here at NRG stadium on May 8, 2022.

# Reviews

## 'Halloween Kills' maintains its original mythology but misses the mark

BY JAMES JUREWICZ

"We're gonna hunt him down and put an end to this," says Allison, one of the returning main characters in the most recent iteration of the "Halloween" series. "Halloween Kills" is a 2021 horror reboot sequel released on Oct. 15.

The "Halloween" series focuses on the relationship of the serial slasher Michael Myers and his sister Laurie Strode (Jamie Lee Curtis), a survivor of Michael's homicidal rampage on the last day in October. The most recent films have incorporated Laurie's extended family into chaos.

"Halloween Kills" jumps right into the action and starts on Halloween night, 1978 with Michael loose and rampaging and the police combing the streets. The audience is introduced to different

people who encountered Michael in some form or another that fateful night.

The film then skips to 40 years later, taking place directly after the events in the 2018 "Halloween." A group of survivors and angry Haddonfield residents form a posse to hunt Michael and put a stop to his bloodshed. The mob is led by a maniacally hilarious Anthony Michael Hall as Tommy Doyle. It becomes apparent that the angry mob may be more dangerous than the lone killer.

Judy Greer is back in her second Halloween franchise film as Laurie's daughter Karen Nelson. Karen (Anti Matichak) is the mother of Alison, another character that returned for the sequel.

The film's acting is adequate though it is Hall who is one of the standout characters. His

portrayal of Tommy Doyle as the ringleader of the angry townsfolk is a treat to watch and the best part of "Halloween Kills." His excitement for the hunting of Myers gradually elevates and he even initiates the mob chant of "Evil dies tonight!"

"Halloween Kills" was directed by David Gordon Green. Green is also known for directing "Pineapple Express" in 2008 and the first film in this most recent "Halloween" series in 2018. The reboot did a great job in continuing the story creatively while maintaining the mythology of original film.

The audience witnesses how the horror experienced in '78 affected Laurie's life. The trauma was severe enough to encourage her to stockpile firearms and boobytrap her doomsday-prepper style compound. Introducing

her skeptical daughter and loving granddaughter add to the film's tension by giving Laurie people to feel protective over.

This is a film for fans of the "Halloween" franchise and people who love horror movies. Those looking for a scary horror film will be disappointed. "Halloween Kills" is a sequel of a reboot.

What does work well for the film is the return of the family dynamics between the grandmother, mother, and daughter. When they share screen time, the three generations all work believably as relatives. The practical effects are also impressive as usual being a Blumhouse production.

While there was wiggle room left for another sequel everyone would really be better off if the "Evil dies tonight." The original film in 1978 had

11 subsequent films. Heavy Metal musician and filmmaker Rob Zombie remade the original film in 2007. Zombie's "Halloween" was well made and did its part to expand the mythology behind the horror icon.

Zombie's characters captivate the screen and are extreme in their dialogue and actions. Eventually a sequel was produced to capitalize on the success of Zombie's hit. "Halloween 2" had its moments but was overall a confusing, uninspired mess. Zombie missed the mark.

This most recent sequel also misses the mark. Upon reflection, the only great Halloween films are the first of a series. The "Halloween" films released in '78, '07 and '18 are the three best of the 12 existing today.

An online petition on change.org was kickstarted in order to

alter or delete the scene in the film where Michael kills the firefighters. The petition's cause was that first responders should not be subject to unnecessary violent mayhem on screen.

There are nearly 500 signatures on the petition so far. A line in the film seems like it was added after the petition was posted. "Eleven dead bodies, they're all first responders," Tommy Doyle mentions before they begin the hunt for Michael.

"Halloween Kills" is 105 minutes long and is now available to watch in theaters or freely on the NBC's Peacock streaming service.

## 'Fearless (Taylor's Version)' depicts freedom

BY JEMA PANTOJA

Taylor Swift's album "Fearless (Taylor's Version)" released on April 9, is artfully done and showcases her growth as an artist. "Fearless (Taylor's Version)" got rereleased 13 years after her original "Fearless" album. The album is a sentimental work of art that reflects on Swift's younger self while illustrating her growth as an artist.

The 26-song album includes six never-before-released songs such as "From the Vault," which includes collaborations with Keith Urban and Maren

Morris. Swift decided to rerelease original and new songs due to the drama with her former manager Scooter Braun back in 2019.

Swift and Braun were publicly feuding because, according to Taylor, Braun was exerting control over her first six albums.

In late 2019, it was made public that Braun had purchased and sold Taylor's masters without her consultation and consent. This stirred up a lot of trouble because Taylor was not allowed to purchase her masters. It meant that Braun had total con-

rol of her music. After months of feuding and mistreatment, Swift re-recorded her music and parted ways with Braun and her former label Big Machine Records.

Taylor's fans throughout the whole ordeal were supportive and loving towards her and could not wait for her to reach the light at the end of the tunnel.

UHD student Gean Garcia is a fellow Swift fan and admires her resilience through the difficulties.

"She is brave, and she has matured as an artist," Garcia said.

"Fearless (Taylor's Version)" is well done in that they sound so close to the original version, however the sentiment in her voice has changed.

In the original album, Swift had just gotten over a breakup so she sang more earnestly. In the rerelease, Swift instead invokes a reflective mood on her past relationships that the music entails.

The first few songs of "Fearless (Taylor's Version)" were the music from her original album followed by the new songs "From the Vault." As the listeners



Courtesy: People.com

are taken throughout the record song by song, we experience Swift throughout the years singing about everything from heartbreak to hope. As the

album art suggests, Swift is now free.

The song is now available on Apple Music and Spotify.

## Bad Bunny does not quite live up to the hype

BY CAROLINA VALDEZ

Puerto Rican rapper Bad Bunny is a mega-star in the music industry whose success relies heavily on the efforts of others. Bad Bunny is also a fashion icon and, according to Ricky Martin, a “queer icon” for the Latin community. It is his image, his connections, and public persona that sells his bland music.

Bad Bunny is a perfectly crafted machine with a team of producers and PR personnel that keep him squeaky clean. Of course, he is not the only artist that is guilty of this as all A-list celebrities have large teams, but Bad Bunny’s art this past year has been lacking the shine he started out with.

Bad Bunny made the ambitious feat of releasing three albums in 2020. This move marks where his stardom began to fade. Much of his music’s success relies on the production of the beats and instrumentals of his music. In “Afterglow,” a publication for the University of Texas in Austin, Alany Rodriguez explained the success of Bad

Bunny’s latest album, “El Ultimo Tour del Mundo,” that reached No. 1 on Billboard’s 200 albums ranking.

“Whether the meaning behind Spanish lyrics is understood by English-speaking audiences or not, it is evident that sound stands at the heart of these multi-cultural alliances,” Rodriguez said.

People love the overall sound of his music, something that cannot be entirely credited to the rapper’s talents. Another crutch for his success is his use of featured artists. Bad Bunny told Apple Music that he made a conscious choice to limit his featured artists on “El Ultimo Tour Del Mundo” because he wanted to “demonstrate versatility and bring something fresh to the fans.” Despite this, “Dákiti” and “La Noche de Anoche,” two of the only three songs on the album that feature an artist, are also the most popular.

“Dákiti” is a cool song but when I listen to it, I find myself ignoring most of the words and waiting for

the chorus. I really only like the beat,” fellow UHD Gator Yesenia Luviano said.

The appearance of Spanish singer Rosalia in “La Noche de Anoche” is the only reason I like that song. Collaborations are a staple in Latin hip-hop and pop music, especially in recent years as more crossovers are happening, but both artists should carry the song. It may be Bad Bunny’s song, but Rosalia does the heavy lifting.

Overall, Bad Bunny is a very likeable celebrity and perhaps that is why he is so beloved by music fans. His Instagram account documents his fashion evolution over the years as he became a force to be reckoned with. His use of eccentric sunglasses and painted nails set him apart from other male rappers as he stepped outside of gender-normative fashion.

He has also been a vocal LGBTQ+ ally since the murder of Alexa Negrón Luciano, a homeless transgender woman in Puerto Rico last year. He wore a shirt that translates to:



Credit: Giselle Oviedo

“They killed Alexa, not a man in a skirt” for his performance on “The Tonight Show starring Jimmy Fallon” and he dressed in drag for his “Yo Perreo Sola” music video.

These choices brought him much praise from his fans but not without backlash about his allyship being performative. André Wheeler wrote in the Guardian about the issues with a straight man

being labeled as a “gay icon.” Wheeler stated that audiences should be more skeptical about praising celebrities that make certain moves that, “lead to higher record sales and Twitter trending topics.”

“If Bad Bunny really wanted to dispel homophobia within reggaeton music, he would use his large platform to feature the queer and trans artists that are frequently silenced

and ignored within the genre,” Wheeler stated in his article.

Bad Bunny is a façade of all things cool. His career is carefully calculated and he has put on such a performance of likeability that his music does not have to be good anymore. His lackluster music, his reliance on superior artists, and his performative LGBTQ+ allyship is why I think he is overrated.

## The S/U system needs to remain an option

BY AANSA USMANI

Since March 2020, UHD has offered the satisfactory/unsatisfactory system allowing students to opt-out of receiving traditional letter grades. This tactic has helped students struggling with coursework and the transition to virtual learning.

However, as more students return to campus this semester, the administration decided to pull back the option of S/U system for this

current semester. Not allowing this choice will further detriment students’ success and its growing population for future semesters.

The current circumstances have caused many obstacles for the UHD student population.

Some have been directly impacted by the pandemic, whether contracting the virus or knowing individuals who still suffer from its long-term impacts.

Others may have been laid off due to the pandemic, causing loss of income and further personal tensions.

As a result of either situation, some have withdrawn or altogether dropped out to support their family. Considering these aspects, an option such as the S/U system will accommodate those impacted by the pandemic.

This system has benefited many individuals, knowing that their grades will not negative-

ly impact their cumulative GPA, regardless of their personal life or a difficult adjustment to virtual learning. Not only would it alleviate academic stress, but it also allows individuals to focus on their mental well-being, especially during these tumultuous times.

This pandemic has taken a personal toll on many livelihoods and has changed their college experience.

When asked about his opinion on the S/U

policy, Edward Saenz, UHD student, said that while he never had to use the policy over the past 18 months “knowing it was an option if I was struggling with a class gave me piece of mind.”

Peer socialization and partaking in college events have already adapted to the rigid pandemic-era rules. These steps aim to curb the further spread of COVID-19 and growing case numbers.

These changes take into account the potential risk factors for students, hoping that their participation will not succumb them to the virus or further academic concerns.

Abolishing the S/U system will further hinder students’ academic well-being and success, especially in a transitional semester.

Changes like these will only cause further discontent and mental anguish among the student population.