

The Washington Post Magazine

MARCH 21, 2021

A Pandemic Education

17 students, kindergarten through high school, on what they learned about their schools, their teachers, their families and their country during the past year

INTERVIEWS BY MARIN COGAN



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• Art With a Point

Title: "Turning Over a New Leaf"

Artist: LA Johnson, Washington, D.C.

From the artist: Students encountered huge setbacks and roadblocks to their education over the past year, and their mental health has suffered. My goal was to convey strength and resiliency here: The student is able to break free from the dark isolation of the pandemic and build a better future.

On the cover: Photo illustration by Gluekit

What I Learned During the Pandemic

17 students — from kindergartner to high school senior — reflect on their schools, their teachers, their families and their country. **16**

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Opening Lines

Jeannine Mjoseth, 61, who wrestled professionally as “Mad Maxine” and “Lady Maxine,” has written a novel based on her experiences. Photograph by Edward Linsmier

Once, she was known as Mad Maxine. Now she's taking readers inside the wrestling ring.

BY RACHEL MANTEUFFEL

J eannine Mjoseth’s first journalism job was profiling residents for an in-house newspaper at a 16,000-person retirement home in Florida. She was surprised at how full and interesting their lives had been. But it bothered her that she didn’t have the time or space to really do those lives justice, and it made her restless for an adventurous life of her own. So she did what anyone would do: shaved herself a mohawk, sewed herself a leather leotard with human-hair epaulets and started wrestling strangers for money under the tutelage of the Fabulous Moolah, the most famous female wrestler in the world. She’d get paid to work out, she reasoned, and have the kind of life you can write a book about.

She didn’t write it right away — instead, she had a 30-year reporting and research career culminating in science writing for the federal government, never bringing up her flashy past. *She wrestled?* she imagined her National Institutes of Health colleagues saying. *How smart could she be?*

Plenty smart. The book’s here now, two years after she left that job writing for the National Institute on Aging. “The Chronicles of Mad Maxine” is a novel Mjoseth says is about 70 percent true to her life in the ’80s, when she was in her mid-20s. It tells the story of a young journalist named Pippi who travels to South Carolina to learn the secrets of professional wrestling at a special school for women run by Moolah, one of the first big-time female wrestlers of the ’40s and ’50s.

Mjoseth, who in the ring went by the names Lady Maxine (as the “good guy”) and Mad Maxine (as the heel),





From left: Mjoseph today near Melbourne Beach, Fla. Publicity stills of her alter ego Mad Maxine. Photographs by Edward Linsmier

despised Moolah, who died in 2007. In the book, Moolah skims money from her students, ignores their injuries and pimps them out to her friends, which Mjoseph says was true. Moolah, whose real name was Mary Lillian Ellison, controlled a big enough piece of the female wrestling industry that she could devastate the career of any woman who complained. (In 2018, World Wrestling Entertainment took the Fabulous Moolah's name off a battle royal planned in her honor because of statements from Mjoseph and others that Moolah had abused her trainees physically, financially and sexually.) This is a system Pippi eventually breaks out of with three friends who have learned to use their wrestling powers for good, culminating in a carload of female wrestlers driving cross-country to beat up a rapist.

Along the way, Pippi learns how to get a mohawk to stand up even if your hair is naturally fine, how to perform a believable "keister bounce" and how to defeat the Ku Klux Klan. The book is self-published, but the story is told with skill and panache.

It took Mjoseph more than 30 years to finish the book, in part because she didn't want to sell out wrestling's secrets. When she wrestled there was less widespread awareness that pro wrestling is faked — though, as she describes it, it's more choreographed and cooperative than fake. Yes, she says, the winner is predetermined and the wrestlers exaggerate how much pain they're in, but real punches are thrown, real slaps are slapped, and the thud of body against body is real. "It hurts," Mjoseph says.

"She came in to wrestling with her own look, her own gimmick, and it was very ahead of its time," says Dan Murphy, co-author of "Sisterhood of the Squared Circle: The History and Rise of Women's Wrestling." The Moolah system usually involved years of training and dues-paying, but Mjoseph "immediately got a look from the WWF. They were looking to cast her in the Hulk Hogan wrestling cartoon, until the relationship [between Mjoseph and Ellison] went sour."

When she wrestled, Mjoseph had two rules for herself: Don't sleep

with people in the business, and don't let your costume come off. "I did not want to be talked about in the locker room," Mjoseph says. She did make one exception for Rule No. 1, she says, "but he was a Polynesian prince."

After about two years of wrestling, Mjoseph had enough for a book and was looking for a sign to get out when her dressing room was burgled. Moolah had taught Mjoseph to keep her money in her boot, but her camera, journal and costume were stolen. She had a match the next day and had to fashion a costume fast, so she duct-taped on a majorette outfit. In the match, the outfit fell off, and she flashed the crowd, topless. Wrestlers can help each other out when this happens — block the crowd's view — but her opponent, Dark Journey, did not help Mad Maxine. In retaliation, Mad Maxine hit Dark Journey too enthusiastically. "I potatoed her," says Mjoseph. Then Dark Journey kicked her really hard in the crotch.

Dark Journey, Lynda Newton, remembers it the same way. "It might not have been a fair fight," she says, but as the smaller fighter, she was supposed to resort to a trick that would turn the tables: The script called for Newton to win by kicking Mjoseph but minimizing actual pain. That wasn't the kick she delivered.

By that point, Mjoseph had had enough. The wrestler ran away to become a science writer, thinking there would always be an interest in health news. She moved to the D.C. area near family in 1987 and lived her creative and professional lives side by side: working at NIH but also curating an erotic art auction at Chief Ike's Mambo Room (RIP) in Adams Morgan.

Still, her adventures in the ring will always be a part of her. "At 61, I am exactly who I am," she says over Zoom from her house near Melbourne Beach, Fla. Recently, Mjoseph has interviewed a MacArthur Fellowship recipient and wrote about an invention that would allow any smartphone to perform an ultrasound. She's also working on the audiobook of her novel with her husband, Steve Hilmy, a former professor at George Washington University.

In her spare time, Mjoseph is making prototype costumes for the one-woman show she hopes to produce for Edinburgh's Fringe Festival, when that resumes. Plus, she's still got the fauxhawk headdress and a spiked mask she made out of a bra ready to go.

Rachel Manteuffel is a Washington Post editorial aide.



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"The death and killing and unjustified abuse of Black people should not be tolerated. In a just democracy, there's nothing controversial about that."

Bryan Stevenson

INTERVIEW BY JOE HEIM / PHOTOGRAPH BY ROB CULPEPPER

Bryan Stevenson, 61, is a lawyer and the founder and executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative, which advocates for death-row inmates and a fair criminal justice system. The film "Just Mercy," based on his memoir, was released in 2019. He lives in Montgomery, Ala.

You've been working for four decades defending death-row inmates as well as children who received life-without-parole sentences. Are we significantly closer to a just system now than when you began?

I don't know that I would say "significantly closer," because we still have this obscenely high rate of incarceration in America, and that's going to have to change dramatically before we can claim significant progress. But, you know, for the first 15, 20 years of my work, no one seemed to care. No one paid any attention to the wrongful convictions, the racial disparities, the botched executions, the excessive punishment of children. It was an environment where everyone was competing with each other over who could be the toughest, who could articulate the most extreme punishment. So I think in that respect, we have turned a corner.

I wonder if in the widespread protests last summer following George Floyd's death, you saw that as a sign of some reckoning?

For me, it was more an acknowledgment that it's time to stop the long history of violence. What I think we saw last summer is that with the continued indifference to the victimization of Black people by police violence, the disparities, you know, that we saw during the pandemic, all of these things just made it clear that if we keep doing what we've been doing for 400 years, if we stay silent as we have been taught, then this problem will continue generation after generation. I think what a lot of people said is that we don't want to do that anymore. And that is the beginning of creating a space for actual reckoning. It's not the reckoning itself, but it creates that space.

What do you think it is about the three words "Black lives

matter" that generates so much antipathy and anger among some White Americans?

I think it's just a misunderstanding, to be honest. What's powerful about those three words is that it is a simple, basic, noncontroversial affirmation that the victimization of Black people should not be ignored. The death and killing and unjustified abuse of Black people should not be tolerated. In a just democracy, there's nothing controversial about that. It speaks to the way in which we have been indifferent to victimization of Black people for a very long time, which is evident from things like no one knowing anything about the history of lynching, few people understanding the history of slavery.

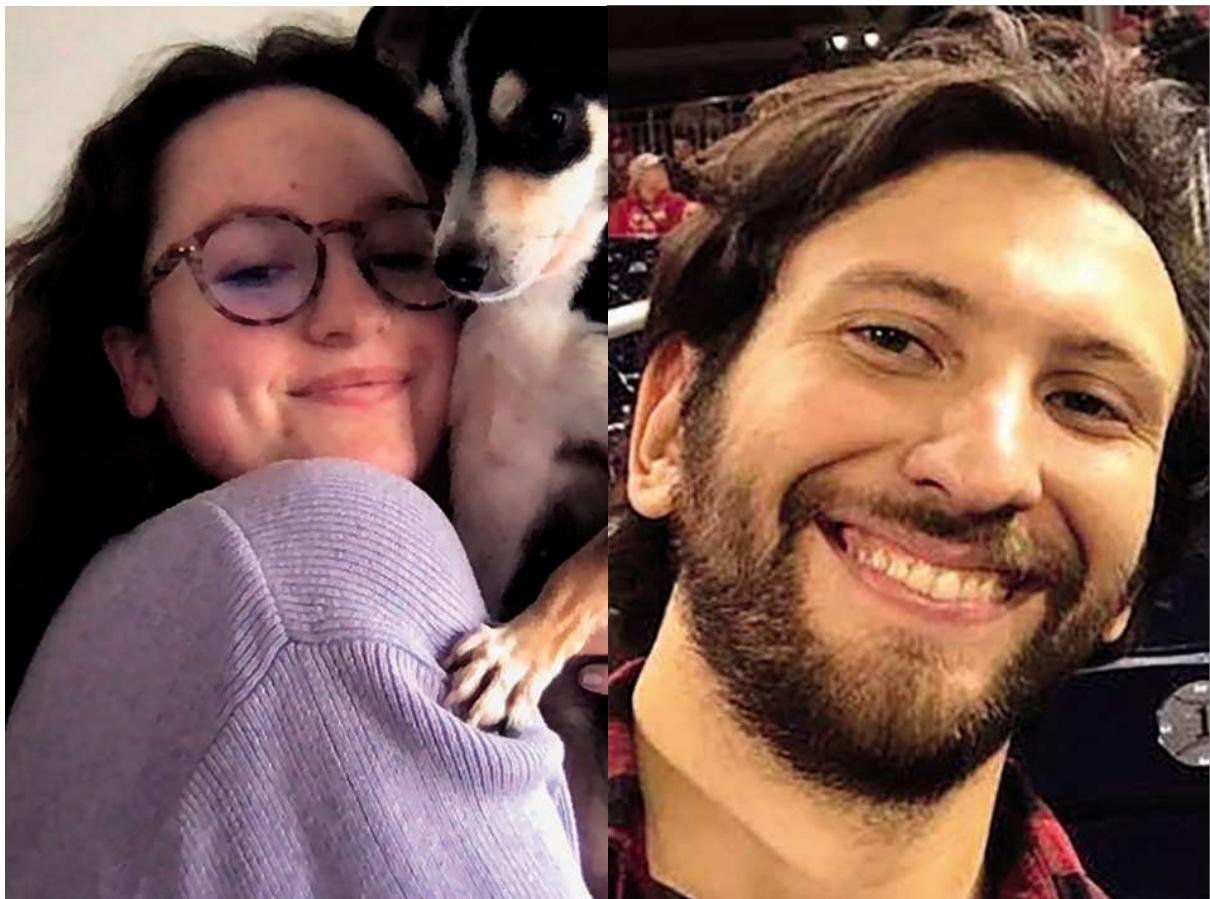
It's interesting because there's really nothing inherently controversial or complicated about the idea that you shouldn't devalue some lives because of their race, because of their color. Where it becomes controversial is that when that statement is attended by activism that tries to push institutions and systems to recognize the ways in which they are not valuing Black lives, people resist, people don't want to do it, and then people assign their own meaning to the words. They assign their own purpose and motive to that assertion. And I just think if you look at those three words, there's nothing inherently, in my view, controversial or complicated or challenging or provocative.

What brings you peace of mind?

Oh, wow. Peace of mind. That's a good question. I don't know that I get peace of mind. I am sustained and energized and hopeful when I see new ways, new opportunities to contribute, to fight, to challenge things that I think are unjust and unfair. And I guess I'm grateful that I've been able to be open-minded about what should happen next. What gives me a peace of mind more than anything is that I really feel like we've been able to remain responsive to the needs of the people we serve, the clients, the communities we work, the issues that are emerging in our nation.

This interview has been edited and condensed. For a longer version, visit wapo.st/magazine.





Claire Goldberg is 24 and works in communications at a progressive nonprofit. She describes her type as someone who wears glasses and is funny.

Ben Dobkin is 26 and an analyst at a tech company. He is seeking someone who “can match my wits but is also willing to make a fool of themselves with me.”

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After the date, she had one burning question

As a dating coach, I know first dates are always awkward, but when you add being aware that your words will appear in The Washington Post, it can take a little longer to shake that uncomfortable feeling. In the case of Ben Dobkin, a 26-year-old analyst at a tech company, and Claire Goldberg, who is 24 and works for a progressive nonprofit, it took about half of the 90-minute date to settle in to a natural flow.

Without even realizing it, Ben leaned into some of the tips I give my clients for virtual dates. First, he cleverly found out in advance the kind of food that Claire would be ordering so he could order something similar. A detail that he found a little embarrassing but I read as thoughtful and charming. I advise clients that ordering the same meal is an excellent way to create a shared connection on a distanced date. Fortunately, they are both fans of Italian food, and coincidentally (or not) both ordered burrata ravioli.

The next thing I advise is to let your curiosity drive the conversation while being a good listener. Ben demonstrated this by noticing an interesting museum print behind Claire. She shared that it was from a trip to Paris, which dovetailed into a

conversation about Ben’s adventures in Tanzania, in addition to his love for the Berkshires and his desire to settle one day in western Massachusetts.

One of the most important qualities my clients look for is a shared sense of humor, and that is where the conversation turned next. Ben’s and Claire’s TV-watching habits vary greatly, but they did engage in a conversation about “Saturday Night Live.” They agreed that SNL is no longer funny but debated about the exact moment when it last was actually funny. According to Ben, they landed somewhere between when they were both in high school or college and never.

All the while, Claire’s Chihuahua, Pistachio, whom she had rescued just a couple of days earlier, sat peacefully in her lap. A lifelong dog lover, Claire had to know if Ben was a dog person or a cat person. “Neither,” Ben replied. He went on to explain that he liked animals but he never grew up with them so he didn’t have a particular preference. He did reveal, however, that he just adopted a pet rock. His name is Doug, and he has his own Instagram account. Claire seemed to gloss over this detail, and when I asked her why, she responded, “I thought it was weird.”

Intelligence is another quality that most of my clients put on their must-have list, and Claire was impressed by Ben’s Ivy League education. Leave it to a Princeton man to ask his date what she’s reading. Claire mentioned that she was reading a collection of short stories by Kurt Vonnegut. This was music to Ben’s ears, as

Vonnegut is his favorite author. Somehow this translated to Ben as "We both shared the same favorite author," but Claire wouldn't quite take it that far.

For years I've told my clients to avoid talking about politics on the first date, but in D.C., and in a year like this one, that's somewhat impossible. Plus, for Claire, who worked on the campaigns of Kamala Harris and Hillary Clinton and is passionate about progressive issues, where someone lands on the political spectrum is very important. So, she flat-out asked him, "Who did you vote for in the Democratic primary?" Ben stammered a bit. He revealed he admired Andrew Yang's ideas but didn't end up voting in the 2020 primary. As Liz Lemon would say, "That's a dealbreaker" for Claire.

By this time, the conversation had started to drag and Pistachio needed to go outside to do her business. Ben asked for Claire's number and texted her while they were still on the date to make sure she received it. A few minutes later, they said good night and signed off. Ben wasn't sure he felt sparks, but because of the awkwardness of a first date, he was willing to give it a second chance.

Claire had a burning question that couldn't wait: "I had to know what he thought of Andrew Yang running for New York City mayor." She texted Ben that one question after the date.

Not surprisingly, as part of the Yang Gang during the presidential race, Ben declared his admiration for Yang and confidence that he could be the right person to run the city. Then he followed up with, "Totally fair question but only if you share your thoughts as well." Feeling that there are many other candidates (in particular women of color) who would make better mayors, Claire was put off again by Ben's politics and couldn't bring herself to reply.

"Even though we disagreed on things, it was a fine date," Claire later admitted to me. Yet this last text exchange confirmed that she couldn't give a second date a vote of confidence.

RATE THE DATE

Ben: 4.25 [out of 5].

Claire: 3.5.

UPDATE

No further contact.

Damona Hoffman is a certified dating coach and host of the "Dates & Mates" podcast.

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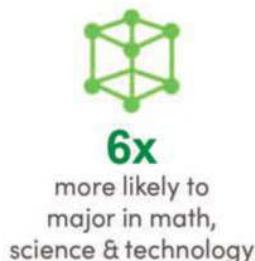
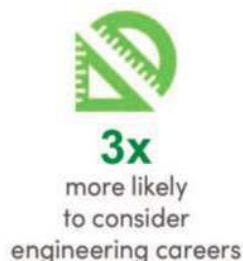


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Silver Linings – Private Schools in the Time of Covid



I

t was March 11 of last year when the World Health Organization declared covid-19 a pandemic, and the world went into a tailspin. Parents weren't sure how to handle having kids at home all day, particularly when they were working from home themselves. Kids suddenly didn't know when—or even if—they would be returning to their classrooms. Schools everywhere were forced to completely reimagine the learning process—practically overnight. Now, a year later, faculty at local private schools are saying that this year of reflection and change has brought some surprising new benefits with it.

Brooksfield School

"We first received notice to close on March 13, and we thought that after spring break we would come back and reopen," remembers Mary Anne Duffus, Founder and Director at Brooksfield School, a Montessori school in McLean, Va.

"We grew with the news as it arose - as each new thing came our way we adapted, brainstormed and moved on."

Most importantly right away, remembers Director of Operations Alexis Adkins, was the idea of reopening the school as soon as possible.

"We thought of the many things we



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needed to do to prepare," she says. "We wanted to open as soon as we could and as safely as we could."

But the news didn't stop coming, recalls Family Support Specialist Carlie Cooney.

"There's no blueprint on how to open safely. CDC guidance would change literally by the day."

As 2020 went on, however, significant longer-term changes began to take shape. Parents working from home often needed additional support. Cooney was there to connect with them through bi-weekly Zoms, offering parenting tips and suggestions

on navigating their new reality.

In August 2020, parents stopped coming into the school building, and only drop off kids instead. Classes of 24 became classes of 18 and Admissions Director Sarah Krawchuk took her walking tour of the school online. Gardening and outdoor specialist programs took on greater importance in the curriculum.

"The kids are really in touch with the outdoors and how they're a part of nature," Duffus says. The connection to the Earth is really deeply rooted in these kids – the sheer magic of them being outside most of the time has been transformative."

"They're outside no matter what," says Cooney. "Snow, rain, outside sledding - everyone's healthy. Kids don't see weather as a deterrent to being outside."

"Our commitment to the outdoors has been enhanced and will continue as we see our students thriving," says Duffus. "They love coming to school. Digging in the dirt and planting your vegetables is just as empowering as learning to read."

Rochambeau French International School

At Montgomery County's Rochambeau French International School in Maryland, Primary School Director Yvan Tabellion said the school had one primary concern in regard to the pandemic.

"The main question was: How could we assure some pedagogical continuity with a medium no one at the primary level ever used?"

The answer: Training.

"We did intense training for two days to be sure to be able to provide relevant experience," he says. "We also decided to start with reachable goals and eliminate all technical difficulties from the equation—not all families or teachers had the same access/knowledge around technology."

"So, we provided direct help from the IT department, for instance. After three weeks or so, this was solved and we were able to be more ambitious in our goals without leaving anyone behind."

In late May, Tabellion and his faculty decided they needed to do more for their younger or more fragile learners.

"We hired enough teachers to have smaller classes in the 1st and

2nd grades. In September, it allowed us to offer unimodal—online or on-campus only - classes for these grades, while other grades are in hybrid."

Another move that worked well for the school was moving to what Tabellion called a "flipped model" in terms of learning style—instead of having a teacher introduce the lesson in class, the student is given the lesson to view and learn at home via a video module. The student then asks him- or herself questions about the lesson before it is explored in the virtual or real classroom.

"As a bilingual school, with almost half of our families from a non-French speaking background, guaranteeing the same, or close, level of exposure to French was the No.1 challenge and the creation of small groups, dedicated to hone oral skills daily was one way to do it that worked well," he says. "We also created a lot of bilingual resources that were available offline at any moment for our families."

For Rochambeau, Tabellion says, more good has come out of changes required by the pandemic than anyone expected. New uses of technology among

students and teachers are now routine, and adaptations to different teaching contexts have been facilitated. Because students have autonomous use of the technological tools, implementing activities is easier. Tabellion also is proud of his faculty, who demonstrated adaptability, dedication to teamwork and the willingness to learn new skills.

Foxcroft School

Cathy McGehee, head of school at Foxcroft School in Middleburg, knows she's very fortunate to be able to sum up the school's response to the pandemic in one sentence.

"Not a single student on campus has tested positive for covid to date," she says.

That, however, is about the only thing that hasn't changed at the school in the last year. When faced with covid, McGehee and her faculty asked themselves what were the most important outcomes for learning. They adapted their teaching methods, created a new schedule, and mulled what learning would look like in the future.

What the discussion came down to was an equal emphasis on skills



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Foxcroft School students in the Literature and Expository Writing class take a nature walk with their teacher through the Middleburg campus for creative inspiration.

distance-learning from home. The amount of content was reduced, but a higher priority was placed on skills and collaboration that help students succeed later in life—those that encourage them to be lifelong learners.

"Before covid, in a History or English class, we might have read the same novel, in lock step together, and at the end the teacher would have given a test," McGehee says.

"Now, we might be asking students to understand a theme and demonstrate research skills to create a podcast. Students are now at the center of their own experience, rather than having the teacher hold all knowledge and information."



and community.

"Teenagers need to be together," McGehee says. "They're social creatures."

Since those early days, class schedules have been readjusted to allow students to have more synchronous time, whether they're in the classroom or

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The Resurgence of Summer Camps

In-person summer camps, a life-saver for busy parents when school lets out in June, also fell by the wayside during the pandemic. But camp staff are hoping for the best this year and making the arrangements to help kids explore all kinds of interests. Round House Theatre Camps in Bethesda is putting optimism first, offering camps that inspire creativity, exercise imaginations, and promote artistic risk-taking, while developing critical thinking, cooperation, and confidence.

Round House Theatre Camps

Summer camp is probably on this summer at Round House Theatre in Bethesda, says Director of Education Danisha Crosby.

"Last summer, our long-running camps program had to shift to be all virtual, and it was a remarkably successful summer of synchronous learning with our staff," she says. "We were surprised, because most kids were pretty tired of virtual school at that point—but they would sign up for a week and participate, and then come back and sign up for more weeks."

Despite the success of virtual camp, however, Crosby is hoping camp will be back in person this summer.

"People are just sort of hitting the wall in terms of being locked up in their homes," she says. "We're working with county and state regulations to see how many kids we can welcome safely and how we can do our best. We'll be back in person, assuming there isn't some big shift in the world again."

Even if camp is an in-person experience this summer, however, it will only be open to half the usual number of campers. But lower numbers of participants can be a good thing, Crosby notes, with each child free to focus on their particular interests.

"We put a really high priority on not trying to turn out the next great actor," Crosby says. "We focus on helping kids to learn creativity and collaboration,

on using and being able to articulate their imaginations.

"When you have a shy kid, the idea of theatre camp can be terrifying, but then it can turn out that the shy kid likes nothing more than being able to draw fanciful, cool costumes," she says. "Kids here have a lot of great things to grab onto, which is really important. They're having a great time, but also being better kids." ●



2019 Summer Camp students at Round House Theatre.

PHOTO BY DANISHA CROSBY

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EDUCATION ISSUE

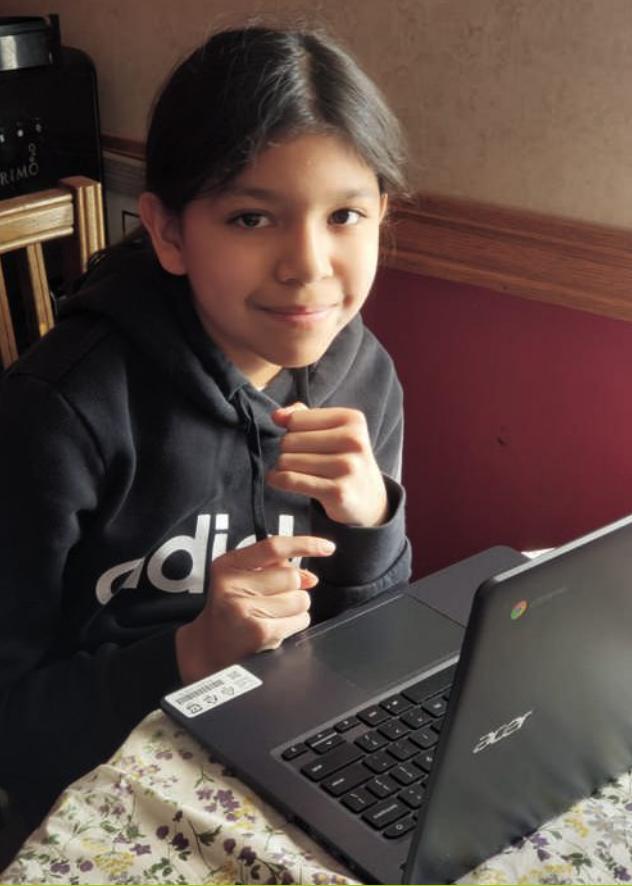
What I Learned During the Pandemic

17 students — from kindergartner to high school senior — reflect on their schools, their teachers, their families and their country

INTERVIEWS BY MARIN COGAN



These pages clockwise from top left:
Olivia Mashiana making sushi for culture day at school; Amora Bernabe in February; Graysen Lopez shares a seat with little brother Ignacio Sylvester Durkin Lopez; Liya Gebremeskel at school; Joaquin Gallinar at home.



Over the past year, millions of students found themselves in uncharted territory.

Many were forced, practically overnight, to adjust to a new reality, one in which the adults — parents, teachers, administrators, all of us — struggled to figure out what to do.

Today, many of those students remain in virtual learning, and there is much uncertainty about when that might change. The data suggest that getting students back to the classroom needs to be an urgent priority, especially for Black and Hispanic students, and students from low-income backgrounds.

Recently, we interviewed students from across the country about their educational experiences, and their lives, during the pandemic. Some of our questions were about school, but others were about what students have learned more broadly — about themselves, their families, their teachers and their country. The students we spoke to have struggled with virtual learning or socially distanced classrooms, but they've also learned to adapt — in some cases, better than the adults. And parents: As much as they're driving you nuts, you're making them crazy, too.

Interviews have been edited and condensed. Marin Cogan is a writer based in Washington.



Joseph Powell, 6, kindergarten

Full-time in-person at Wood Elementary, Tempe, Ariz.

What do you know about the coronavirus?

That we can't go anywhere fun.

Do you stay home, or are you able to go to school normally?

I'm able to go to school pretty normally.

What's your favorite thing about school?

My favorite thing about school is doing math.

What do you want to be when you grow up?

I want to be a dad and a teacher. I look up to my dad, and I look up to my teacher.

Why do you look up to them?

Because they love me.

[Joseph's dad asks]: Does it bother you wearing a mask all day at school?

Uh, kind of. Look at my mask! It's "Star Wars."

That is so cool! Where did you get that mask?

My nana and dada made it.

If you've got to wear one all day, it better be a really cool one.

Do you want to ask me any questions?

My favorite animal is wolves.

Why do you like wolves?

Because we are the wolves. *[Dad: That's our school mascot.]* That's our school mascot.



Vivaan Pai, 7, first grade

Full-time virtual at Bay Meadows Elementary, Orlando

Can you tell me about your school?

You can go to the cafeteria and buy stuff from it. Like, you can go into the kitchen and get chocolate milk and uh ... I forgot, because it's been a long time. In coronavirus, I've forgotten all this stuff.

What can you tell me about the virus?

It's really dangerous. Like for some people, they've died. My mom and dad told me that. I hear it on the news sometimes, too.

Do you prefer in-person learning or virtual?

I prefer going in person, but the reason I don't go to school is because wearing a mask, it's hard to do for six hours.

Is there anything that you feel you missed out on, being out of school for the last year?

My tooth, it was wiggling one day when I was at home. It came out. I was in kindergarten and my teacher had a chart of how many people lost their teeth. I wish I was in school so I could tell her.

Billie Null, 8, second grade

Full-time virtual at Takoma Park Elementary, Takoma Park, Md.

How has coronavirus changed the way you attend school?

I've been doing a pod with my best friend, and that's been really fun. My parents set it up, and they hired a college student every day to watch us. I really prefer in-person school, but, I mean, it could be worse. I do have a pod. Otherwise, I'd be really lonely.

What have you learned about yourself over the last year?

I've learned that I really like skateboarding. [My dad] got me a skateboard, and he actually built me a ramp in the backyard so I can skate on that.

What have you learned about your family?

Well, one of the things I've learned is that I can get very angry with them, because I'm with them, like, maybe, I don't know, 20 hours a day. [Laughs.] But I've also learned that my dad really likes getting us hot chocolate.

How do you feel about going back to in-person school?

I think I'm doing really good in school, but I think for kids my age, it is really important for us to be able to interact with kids. And I think the sooner, the better. But if we go back to school and we're all on computers, just doing Zoom learning anyways with the kids at home, I don't think it's worth it. Of course, some parents have to send their kids to school because they may have in-person jobs. But my mom works from home and I think what we're doing is working out great.

Have you thought about what you want to be when you grow up?

I want to be a child therapist, actually. It's something that not a lot of kids my age really think about. But I'm having trouble being at home so much that I want to help kids.





Allyson Rodriguez, 8, second grade

Full-time virtual at James Elementary, Kansas City, Mo.

Do you prefer learning in person or at home?

I like learning from home. But I still miss my friends.

Tell me why you like learning at home better.

I feel much more safe. I don't want to get sick from covid-19. I think it's really, really dangerous for kids.

Do you know anyone who has gotten sick from it?

My grandma, but she survived.

What do you like about being at home?

I don't have to wait for my parents to come pick me up, and I don't have to miss them.

How do you feel about going back to school in person?

Well, for now, I want to stay home until covid-19 is, like, totally gone. I want to go back to school when they make a vaccine for kids, because I think it's not really fair that they have a vaccine for adults but not for kids.

Do you have any questions for me?

I asked my mom if the president is going to see this.

Maybe. Is there anything you want to tell him?

What I want to tell him is that he's really good. He's very nice. And you know about the people that, like, don't have papers? I liked when he wrote the law, and he changed it.

And my mom also told me about when there is a family trying to get, like, let's say from Mexico to the United States, to Missouri. If one of the guards catches them, my mom told me that if they had kids, they would take them away from [their parents] and they will put them in cages. And [the guards] would say to the people that they feed them, that they've done really good. But the kids say they've done really bad. I want to tell the president that he's made much better decisions than the other president.

Graysen Lopez, 8, third grade

Full-time virtual at Astor K-8, Portland, Ore.

What's the hardest thing about learning virtually?

There are a lot of glitches. Some people don't have that good of a computer. Some people don't have computers at all. So schools have to, like, get computers and give them to the kids. And first of all, I think that it's cool that they are doing that. Second of all, people have tech issues, like sometimes [the teacher] gets kicked off the meeting and then everyone just goes crazy, like: "The teacher left! What do we do?" Two or three minutes later, they all scream, "She's finally back!" So there's a lot more chaos.

Is there anything you missed getting to do in person last year?

The talent show, definitely. Because we still got to do a talent show, but it was on something called Flipgrid, and we couldn't go onstage. I did hula-hooping. I did it to a song, and my little brother — it was a while ago, so he wasn't a year yet — but he just had his little butt shaking in the background, just wiggling.

Are there any advantages to learning virtually?

I have ADHD, and sometimes I'm like, oh, I just need to do something. I can do that now and then go back on screen and get back to task. It's very helpful. When our class calls are over, I can dance. I don't think I could do that [in school] or I'd have to do it in front of a lot of people. That would be awkward.



Michelle Gallegos, 9, third grade

Full-time virtual at Astor K-8, Portland, Ore.

Where do you set up to do your schoolwork?

Well, I'm usually in my room, but when I don't have any Internet, I go to my mom and dad's room.

Does the Internet act up at your house a lot?

Yes, like, I was in the middle of a test yesterday, a really big test, and I lost connection. I was very mad.

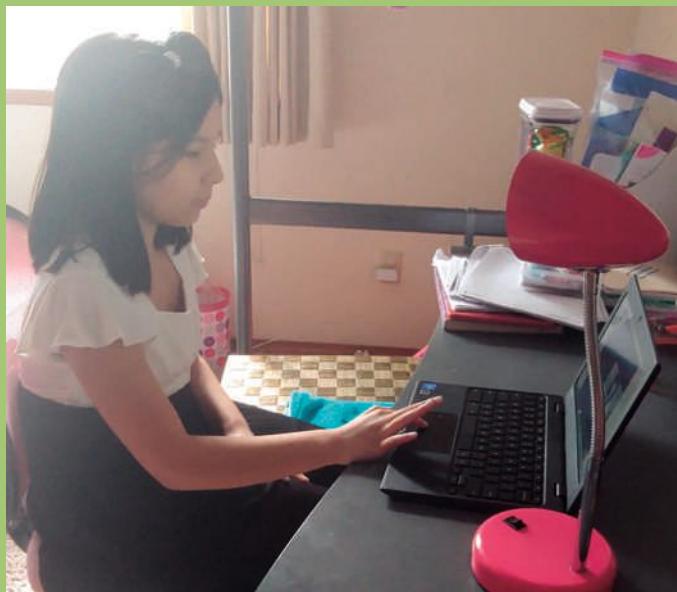
How do you feel about virtual learning?

I really like it because you get to see whoever is taking care of you almost every day. Sometimes you don't because they're at work, but my dad's also doing online working, so I really like it.

The only thing that I don't really like about not doing face-to-face is I really miss my friends.

What have you learned about your teachers over the last year?

They're really smart, and I'm glad that they're making me smart.



David Chevez, 9, fourth grade

Full-time virtual at Bradley Elementary, Boston

Are you going in to school?

I'm staying at home because we're really scared about covid right now.

How do you feel about the idea of going back to school in person?

I feel a little bit scared and nervous about it. But I feel a little fine, because I know we're always going to be wearing a mask. It's not really a problem for me, wearing a mask all day long. When I'm outside, I always have to wear a scarf since I have asthma.

What have you learned about yourself over the last year?

What I've learned about myself is that I like reading a lot more.

What have you learned about the country?

That it's not always easy to have, like, a little sickness, and some people are struggling with it.





Joaquin Gallinar, 11, fifth grade

Full-time virtual at Mesita Elementary, El Paso

What does learning at home look like for you?

It's a lot boringer, because you have to, like, sit down all day. Before covid it was fun. I liked recess, like most kids. I liked learning in person.

What do you miss the most?

I miss playing basketball with my friends in the freezing cold morning. Because that was just really fun.

What did you learn about yourself this year?

That I just need to slow down. I can have a lot of stuff going on, but I just need to slow down and have, like, today — not in the future, not in the past. Today, you know?

Was that something you struggled with at the beginning of this?

I was watching, like, three movies a day on the couch, because I was so bored. And then I started to pick up [that] nothing's really happening. And so I had to be creative, not on the screen all day.

What did you learn about your family this year?

They can be really annoying but also funny at the same time. My sister plays her flute all day because she has band, and my dad is like [laughs] — he's trying to be funny, but, like, he's just being annoying. My mom, she's not really annoying. She just asks me to do chores and stuff, normal mom stuff.

What are you most looking forward to, when this is over?

I'm looking forward to middle school, to getting the feel of middle school — if it's bad, like the movies say it is, or if it's good. My sister says it's good.



Amora Bernabe, 12, sixth grade

Full-time virtual at Our Lady of Lourdes Elementary, Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, Porcupine, S.D.

How has school changed for you since the start of the pandemic?

It's changed a lot because I can't see my friends. I can see them virtually, but they're kind of scared to turn on their cameras.

Why are they scared to turn on their cameras?

Since we start so early, they don't want to, like, really show their faces because they're still tired. And, I don't know, they're afraid that someone might judge them because they're in their pajamas or something.

Do you know anyone who's been personally affected by covid?

In October, me and my family got covid, but we didn't get it as bad as a few other people I know that had gotten it really bad.

How do you feel about the idea of going back?

I'm excited. I'm just ready to go. Like, I would actually go to school if they let me in a heartbeat because I miss it.

Because you miss your friends?

Yeah. I miss having them make me laugh.

What have you learned about your family?

I've learned that they are really funny. They're smart and kind of, like, courageous. I'd say that because I know they're all trying to do something to keep us safer, you know?

What did you learn about your teachers over the last year?

I think they're lonely themselves, because, I mean, I know they spend time with the other teachers, but all my teachers keep saying, "I can't wait to see you guys." And I kind of feel like they're lonely.



Ellie Jones, 12, seventh grade

Full-time in-person at Oxford Middle, Oxford, Miss.

How does your day begin?

When I get here, I get my temperature checked and then we have the school check-in thing where we have to fill out this health form. It asks you if you had a fever, if you've traveled and if you've been, like, around people who have had [covid].

Has any part of it been difficult?

Sometimes I get a little mad because my friends don't have their masks on properly. I try to keep my mask on all the time just for other people. A lot of people don't think it's as important. And I just kind of let them do their thing.

One time, I accidentally clicked something [on the health form] and they called me to the nurse. So I guess if you have symptoms or something, you get called to the nurse and she asks you questions about it.

Is there anything you feel you've missed out on because of the pandemic?

This year, they canceled the school dance, and it was going to be my first dance. It feels important to me. I'm a very social type of person, and I always looked forward to school dances because I watch a lot of TV shows.

What have you learned about your teachers over the last year?

They actually get frustrated. [My mom] teaches all high school students, ninth grade. So if I was talking about my mom, I've learned that there's a lot more work that had to be done during the pandemic outside of school because she had a lot of stuff to do.

Kylie Shulman, 13, eighth grade

Full-time virtual at Tyee Middle, Bellevue, Wash.

Does it feel like you're doing more or less work now?

There's a huge workload, which is really rough because a lot of teachers probably assume that because you're spending all day at home that you have a lot of time. But it's kind of the opposite this year. Everything feels more stressful.

Sometimes I feel like I don't know how to interact with people socially anymore. Do you ever experience that?

Yeah. Sometimes I'll be on a walk with my family and I'll see someone that I know, and they'll say hello. I just freeze up because I don't know how to respond. [Laughs.] Because, yeah, it's very different than just typing "hi" in the chat. Like you have to say it with your mouth and use hand gestures, but you don't really know how to do that anymore.

What did you learn about the country this year?

I learned that if we just all stop for a second, we can join together and we can make real change, and that Gen Z is a pretty powerful generation. We have changed a lot in the world.

Over the summer, everyone was posting stuff about Black Lives Matter. They were going to protests, they were signing petitions. They have been advocating for what they know is right and making sure that change actually happens, and that it's not a trend to say "Black lives matter," it's what is happening and what needs to happen.



Jaxon Balmer, 15, ninth grade

Full-time virtual at St. Tammany Parish Public Schools, Mandeville, La.

What did you learn about yourself this year?

Ever since [in-person] school ended, I just grew a lot lazier when it came to a lot of things. I used to be a lot more of a go-getter. And I guess I just didn't really care anymore and just kind of did whatever I wanted to do. And so I've recently been changing that.

What kinds of things did you feel like you were giving up on?

One of them was talking to my friends. I guess everyone noticed that the only person I really talked to during the pandemic was my girlfriend, because we had met right before it all started. And since we're long-distance and stuff, we only are allowed to talk on FaceTime anyway.

Was it hard starting a relationship in a pandemic?

I think it actually made it a lot easier for us to, like, build our knowledge of one another. Because if the pandemic wouldn't have been here, she would have been doing something else with her friends. I would have just been at home doing whatever. We kind of took that time and we talked to each other.

Has the virus affected you or anyone you know?

My mom actually had it back in October. It really affected her. My step-grandparents had it too. But they didn't seem to take it as bad as my mom did. She's fine now.

What did you learn about the country this year?

I've learned that our country is not the best place to be. Nowhere in the world is really a good place to be anymore, but I was really hoping that America could pull through and be kind of a symbol for what we can be doing right in the world. But I realized that's not the case.



Connor Shaw, 15, ninth grade

Full-time virtual at Preble High, Green Bay, Wis.

How do you feel about virtual learning?

It's easier because it's more at your pace, but I definitely want to be back in school. I don't like being away from other kids or teachers.

Is there anything you feel like you've missed out on?

I missed spring sports and fall sports. But I also missed being able to talk to other people.

Do you feel like it's important to have a "normal" high school experience?

Yeah. I'm fortunate that it's only my freshman year, and I'm glad that it's not my senior year and I'm missing the end of high school. I can't wait to get the actual high school experience.



Serenity Corbin-Banks, 15, 10th grade

Full-time virtual at Cristo Rey Philadelphia High, Philadelphia

How has school changed for you in the last year?

We're not in the building anymore. And I never thought I would miss the building so much, oh my gosh. It's a little bit harder to connect with my teachers because I'm not physically there. So it's like: Hey, I have a question; okay, I have to send you a private message in a chat. I'm a people person, so that was definitely my biggest, hardest thing.

Can you tell me more about what you miss?

Definitely the building. I love this building. I hated walking to the fourth floor because the steps would kill you — it felt like a horrible workout. But I miss it. I would give so much to do that workout at 7:55 in the morning right now.

How do you feel about going back to school in person?

I feel like my grades are a little bit better in a virtual setting. The way covid is going right now, I feel a little bit safer in the house with my own personal setting, and I feel like I have more control. I have time to plan my lessons, and that's just a little better for me because I'm a control freak.

What are you most looking forward to this school year?

I'm looking forward to it ending. I loved my sophomore year — it's been great to me — but I'm looking forward to my junior year.

What did you learn about your family this year?

That they are annoying, but I still love them. I love that they are annoying. [Laughs.]

PHOTOS ON OPPOSITE PAGE FROM LEFT: NGINA SHULMAN; ROBYN SOMERHALDER.

PHOTOS ON THIS PAGE FROM TOP: THERESA SHAW; SERENITY CORBIN-BANKS.

Jourdan Duncan, 17, 11th grade

Full-time virtual at Benjamin E. Mays High, Atlanta

Is there anything coming up this school year that you hope you can do in person?

Well, first of all, of course, going back to school normally. Second of all, I'm looking forward to taking the SAT and the ACT in person. I'm looking forward to just coming back to school and interacting with my classmates, because I am the junior class president. So I just want to get back and get things running.

What have you learned about yourself over the last year?

I had a mind-set when the pandemic began and we started virtual learning that I won't have to do this, I won't have to do that, and it kind of sidetracked me. But of course, as time progresses and you get different types of classes, it motivates you to want to actually do more work and get it done before you have to worry about it at a later time.

What are you most excited to do when the pandemic is over?

One thing, of course, is just experiencing senior year. I just want to get that full senior experience.



Liya Gebremeskel, 17, 12th grade

Two days in person, three days virtual at Greeley West High, Greeley, Colo.

What's been difficult about the shift to virtual learning?

My mom goes to work at JBS [meat-processing facility] at 3 a.m., or 2. So in the morning, I've got to wake up, make coffee for her and make breakfast while I'm learning online. **Who's in the house with you when you're doing virtual learning?**

I have two younger brothers, and I have a little sister. It's hard. We only have two rooms, and all of us are learning online. I try to be in my room, and my sister is taking classes there, so she'll say, "Oh no, you have to be over there. My teacher can hear you." I am like, then where do you want me to be?

So the last time I had a presentation I literally presented to my class in the bathroom because I did not have a room to do it. And then my brother came in. I was like, "What are you doing? I'm trying to present!" He was like, "I'm trying to use the restroom." I'm like, "You guys just literally kicked me out from the room." It's hard. That's why I really want to go [full-time] in person.

What are you looking forward to in the future?

I just want to graduate and then go to college. So I really have to apply for a scholarship. If I get a scholarship — that's so exciting! — I can go to college and learn.

What have you learned about the country over the last year? [Gebremeskel came to the United States as a refugee from Ethiopia about four years ago.]

One thing I like about America is the school. Because back in Ethiopia they teach you, but it's hard. They literally hit you with a stick if you don't do your homework. And it was way too expensive. And here you just get to learn, but you don't have to pay.

If my dad was here it would be good, so he could see me graduate from high school. That's all I want. But he's not here. It's been two years since we started his case. I'm so sorry I'm crying.

[Liya turned off her camera for a long moment.]

I try not to cry, but it's really sad, because my dad's not here and he's by himself back home and he misses his children. He always calls to ask us if we're okay. There is a lot happening back home. The president of Ethiopia is having a war with the Tigray people. It's not really good, what's happening. I can see through social media what [the president is] doing; people getting killed, children are going hungry. And then my dad still tells us he's okay because he doesn't want us to feel bad. He said, "Oh, I'm fine, Liya." Yeah, it's a lot.

Olivia Mashiana, 17, 12th grade

Full-time in-person at Unalakleet School, Unalakleet, Alaska

How did school change for you in the pandemic?

In school we have to wear masks. Our desks are separated pretty far apart. We can't go into certain parts of the school at certain times just to, like, avoid congregating and mixing with the middle-schoolers and elementary kids.

Sports have changed a lot. And traveling. Basketball is super big here. And now they can't travel and people can't travel here, and that's like the whole point, to compete, and they can't do it now. *[Mashiana's school district is one of the most remote in the country. Sports teams travel to away games by plane.]*

Does your school feel different than it was before?

Our school has always been a chaotic space, lots of people moving around, everybody going to different places, and now it's just sort of quiet, mellowed out. Everybody keeps to themselves. A lot of kids have issues wearing masks in school.

Are you able to have prom this year, and what happened last year?

Last year, we did not have prom. They set up the whole prom court and they voted on the radio, but everybody did their own thing on prom night. This year I think we're going to have prom because now they set a regulation of how many people can be in the gym, and it's 80 people and only 40 to 50

people go to prom. So I think it's going to happen. I'm not 100 percent sure. I hope so.

Are you worried about missing milestones?

I'm definitely scared to not have the full graduation experience, because my adviser is talking about having a virtual graduation ceremony. And I don't know, I've always looked forward to having the big, like, community-is-watching-me graduation. I hope that still happens. But I do think I'm missing out on some things. The seniors are super celebrated in our school, and lots of activities happen surrounding graduation and senior prom and stuff like that, so I hope things go back to normal soon.

Do you have plans for after you graduate?

I would like to — God willing that I'm accepted — go to the University of Washington.

What have you learned about the country?

I have seen so many things kind of fall apart so quickly and easily, and it just amazes me how people can go into a mind-set of chaos in a matter of days and not think about how it's affecting other people. It's saddening and disappointing to see how easily things went downhill so quickly. I'm hoping that things are getting better. But I had a lot more faith in the American people, and they sort of let me down.

SPICE KRAFT INDIAN BISTRO 2607 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria, 703-836-6363. 1135 N. Highland St., Arlington, 703-527-5666. spicekraftva.com. Open for takeout and delivery, indoor and outdoor dining 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and 5 to 8:30 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday (Alexandria) and 11:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday (Arlington). Prices: lunch-only bowls and wraps \$9 to \$13; appetizers \$4 to \$7, entrees \$13 to \$24. Delivery via DoorDash, Grubhub and Uber Eats, or through the Arlington restaurant (within a 5-mile radius). Accessibility: The Alexandria foyer is tight; double doors and/or steps in Arlington make wheelchair maneuvers difficult.



Indian, with some otherworldly influences

The siren call of Amazon, specifically the opening of its second headquarters in Northern Virginia, is changing the landscape in ways small and supersize. Legions of interested parties hope to meet the needs of an influx of workers who want places to live, shop, relax and refuel near Arlington. That's where the e-commerce giant (whose founder and CEO, Jeff Bezos, also owns The Washington Post) plans to complete the 2.1-million-square-foot project by 2025.

From their perch at Taaza Indian Cuisine in Roanoke, several years ago, business partners Anthony Sankar and Premnath Durairaj saw an opportunity to move to a bigger market and extend their brand of Indian hospitality. Friends since they met while working at the Taj Coromandel hotel in Chennai, in southern India, they rolled out Spice Kraft Indian Bistro in Alexandria in 2019, then followed last

The lamb shank josh at Spice Kraft puts the slow-braised meat on top of a turmeric potato mash, shown here with a blueberry chutney martini.

September with a second location in Arlington.

No need to buy any tandoors. Clay ovens were already part of the real estate acquired by the entrepreneurs, whose bistros replaced Bombay Curry Company in Del Ray and Delhi Club in Clarendon. Sankar and Durairaj say they were attracted to the family-oriented neighborhoods and the chance to fill some gaps in dining options. As in, no one else nearby is offering curry wraps or chicken tikka

Clockwise from top: Chef Premnath Durairaj says he puts his own twists on dishes such as mango-and-ginger-glazed crispy chicken and spinach pakora chaat with yogurt and tamarind sauce.

sandwiches, among the bistros' lunchtime offerings, or desserts such as coconut pineapple bread pudding.

The young restaurants share the same menu created by Durairaj, who, unprompted, tells me that he "never followed the way" the Taj instructed him, preferring instead to push the envelope with his Indian cooking and "give it some twist."

Customers can taste what he means by asking for some grilled shrimp. The most Indian thing about the seafood is the fact it's cooked in a tandoor. Otherwise, everything dressing up the tender kebab — crushed olives, crumbled feta, a drizzle of balsamic reduction — suggests you're in a Greek taverna. (Yes, there's cumin powder in the sauce, but *still*. And yes, the entree is a score.) "I like sweet and spicy," says the chef, whose mango- and ginger-glazed chicken backs him up. The fried nuggets of boneless chicken also pulse with spices (cumin, coriander, turmeric) that the chef grinds fresh several times a week. Elsewhere on the menu, grilled salmon gets topped with a slice of charred pineapple, red and zesty with chile paste. What a tease!

Palak chaat, the dish made Peloton-popular by chef Vikram Sunderam at the esteemed Rasika in Washington, is a must at Indian restaurants with aspirations. Durairaj makes a respectable version of the fried spinach appetizer, which he personalizes with juicy pineapple.

Spice Kraft is a welcome compromise for bubble mates with different views on meat, which is to say, vegetarians and carnivores can go their own ways on the list and both have fun.

The bistro serves one of the biggest, and best, samosas around, their mashed potato centers green and herbal with a mint and cilantro paste. Eating a whole, thick-skinned samosa feels like dinner. Lentil soup is a lighter, but no less luscious, launch. Yellow lentils emphasize the sunny warmth of the dish, which relies on coconut milk as its base and turmeric for shade. (If you forgo the soup, be sure to include a side of yellow lentils, sharpened with fresh ginger and garlic, in your order.) I've made meals of just the smoky mashed eggplant, onion and tomato shot through with green chile and coriander, among other enhancers.

The grandest meat, on the other hand, is braised lamb shank. Marinated in garam masala and finished with a brown onion gravy, it's a high-rise of soft red meat paired with mashed potatoes made great





Lentil soup is made with yellow lentils, coconut milk and curry leaf.

and gold with turmeric and mustard seed. Even when served in a carton, the entree looks impressive and tastes ambitious.

The restaurant allows customers to mix and match, making it especially attractive to customization-seeking millennials. A roster of “proteins” — paneer, chicken, salmon, lamb, etc. — is followed by sauce options ranging from korma (onion, nut pastes, turmeric) and chettinad (black pepper and curry leaf) to saag (green with spinach) and vindaloo (warm with chiles). The one thing the meals share is basmati rice.

Spice Kraft’s lunch bowls are apt to sustain you through the dinner hour. Look at what amounts to a buffet in one day’s platter-size bowl: chunks of salmon in a sunset-colored “homestyle” coconut milk sauce shored up with sunny yellow rice and a scoop of curried chickpeas and other vegetables. A sail of crisp papadum adds to the largesse. The Indian wraps suggest burritos; curried lamb, slightly sour Amul cheese and diced vegetables pack the inside of my choice bundle, wrapped in (fusion alert!) tortillas.

The chef says the abundant portions are partly because buffets, a staple at many Indian restaurants, are frowned upon since the pandemic.

Spice Kraft jumps on the chicken sandwich bandwagon with a ground chicken patty lit with a roll call of Indian spices; a spread coaxed from cilantro, mint and mango powder; lightly pickled vegetables; and mayonnaise tinged with mild Kashmiri chiles. The sesame-seed bun says “America,” but the interior of the whopper places you squarely in India. Alongside the eyeful sits a mouthful of potato straws, dusted with chickpea and rice flours and crisped in the fryer. The delicious heap is whittled down to crumbs between bites of the sandwich.

The 48-seat dining room in Alexandria retains the straightforward look of its predecessor. The 60-seat space in Arlington, facing the Clarendon Metro, is fetching with gold-trimmed blue wainscoting, handsome brown screens and an ornate pressed tin ceiling. Both bistros come with modest patios.

Like the company that inspired them to head for greener pastures, the owners of Spice Kraft say they plan to grow. Their third location, expected later this year, will be in D.C. or Maryland.

Some unsolicited advice from an admirer: Make everyone happy and open a bistro in each.

KEY TO THE PREVIOUS SECOND GLANCE MARCH 14



1. New plate
2. Missing iris
3. No shadow
4. Lost foreground
5. Reversed
6. Lost circle
7. No lighting fixture
8. Turned down
9. Spiky hair
10. Red roof
11. Shorter pillow
12. No blinds

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE “BIG LITTLE LIES,” MARCH 14

I	M	S	E	T	O	F	F	C	S	T	M	A	G	D	A
S	Q	U	A	R	E	M	A	L	A	M	O	E	O	L	E
E	S	T	E	R	I	T	E	R	A	T	E	L	A	M	A
A	C	T	R	E	T	R	E	T	R	E	T	D	M	M	A
M	O	I	A	L	T	A	L	T	A	L	T	K	L	Y	I
E	R	E	C	S	E	A	R	I	B	B	I	O	S	D	E
D	E	N	O	T	E	D	S	I	T	T	A	L	O	N	E
B	O	P	R	D	E	C	E	I	T	A	L	O	N	E	D
A	N	Y	T	O	Y	O	R	A	N	G	E	P	O	S	T
L	E	A	N	O	N	E	L	E	M	O	N	S	E	T	R
S	I	O	S	O	L	E	N	E	R	A	T	C	U	E	R
A	T	T	O	L	E	N	A	R	O	T	R	R	A	S	P
A	L	T	O	T	E	M	A	Z	E	A	N	T	S	A	T
H	I	S	S	R	E	M	A	D	E	S	T	I	R	S	T
C	E	L	I	A	C	A	V	A	L	O	N	S	P	A	D
A	U	B	E	R	T	A	L	A	T	E	T	T	I	D	E
W	O	D	I	N	K	N	E	X	T	O	A	T	R	U	S
A	S	U	D	E	V	A	T	E	H	E	M	S	B	U	N
K	E	N	D	O	E	M	U	S	G	M	E	W	A	L	E
E	S	T	I	N	R	A	C	R	A	N	A	I	M	E	
S	T	Y	L	E	T	U	N	E	O	N	S	P	A	C	E



Pottery shelf

BY RANDY MAYS

Find the 12 differences in the photo of ceramics in Troy, Va., in December.

PUZZLE ANSWERS

See them online now at washingtonpost.com/secondglance or in next week's issue of the magazine.

SEE YOUR PHOTO

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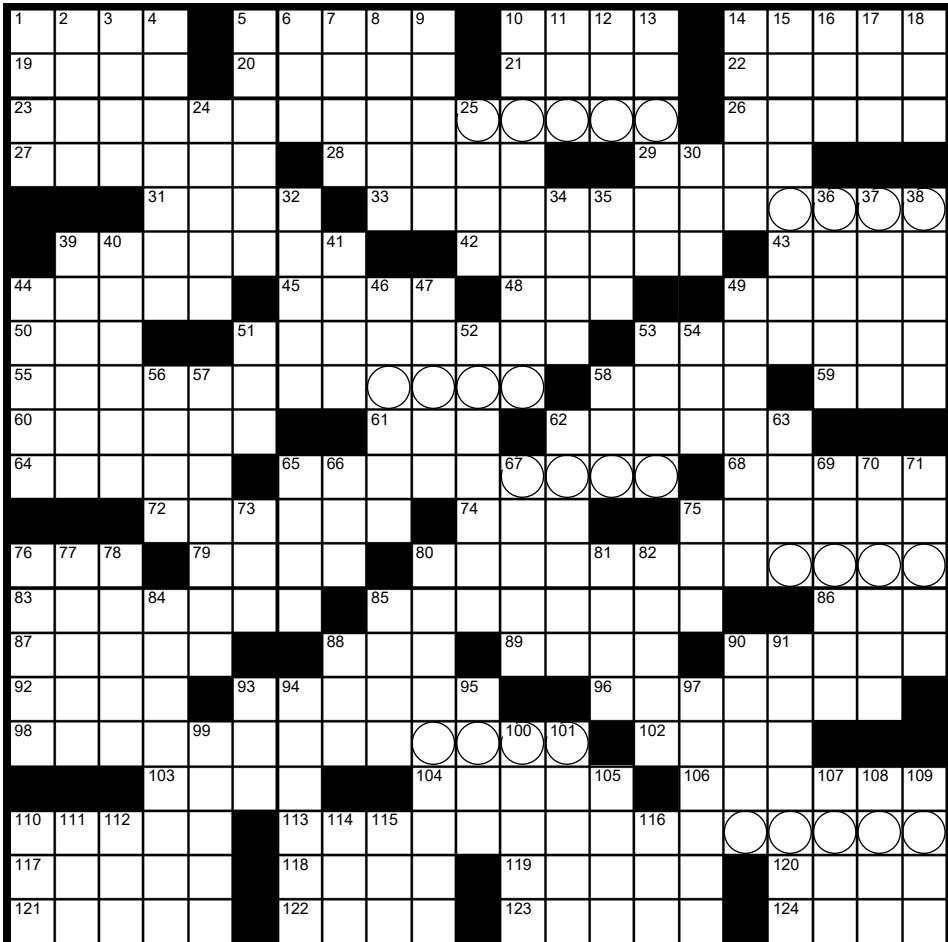


Crossword

"DISTANCE LEARNING" BY EVAN BIRNHOLZ

ACROSS

- 1 Whimper like a kitten
 5 Chicken-serving bar?
 10 "Water for Elephants" author Gruen
 14 Derby's edges
 19 "By Jove, dear chap!"
 20 "The promise of ____ is truth" (line from the Koran)
 21 Horse's brisk gait
 22 Game summary
 23 Animated arguments over the issues (Maine)
 26 Chung who launched her own fashion label
 27 Hot, like a basketball player
 28 Meat appetizer on a stick
 29 "Toodle-oo!"
 31 Emmy-winning Reiner
 33 Existing (New York)
 39 "I'm sick of this!"
 42 Build something that can be cracked, say?
 43 Dishonest practice
 44 "1984" worker
 45 Metal for an alchemist
 48 Wander (about)
 49 Like many games available for play at the Internet Archive
 50 Bath room?
 51 They may be examined on slides
 53 One who may be far from campus while distance-learning, spelled out in the first letters of this puzzle's theme answers
 55 Higher level (North Carolina)
 58 Nasty
 59 Tint, as an Easter egg
 60 Enthusiastic reply to a preacher
 61 Mutual ____ (community-powered form of assistance)
 62 Bamboo forest critters
 64 City where the Asahi Shimbun is published
 65 "Not with you on that" (Oregon)
 68 Needle with insults
 72 Part of a robe
- DOWN**
- 1 Soup with dashi stock
 2 Network providing fantasy football updates
 3 Dickensian character
 4 Expressive and poetic
 5 Ones assigning stars
 6 Cry to flamenco dancers
 7 With "the," slang description of one's parents
 8 "Is there anything to ____?"
 19 Like desolate landscapes
 26 Admit, with "to"
 27 "Dimes," in Texas hold 'em lingo
 30 Actress who co-starred on the series "Let's Stay Together" (New York)
 33 Institutions found in this puzzle's circled squares
 35 Drew into a trap
 36 One having bed time during the day?
 37 Article of clothing not worn during an undie run
 38 "____ chance!"
 39 Verb in many a chemistry lab manual
 40 Window shade
 41 Tons
 42 Basketball player who averages 30 points per game, e.g.
 43 Greyhounds' track event
 44 "Whatever the cost, I'll pay that" (Texas)
 45 ____ freak (cleanly sort)
 46 Parks depicted in a sculpture at the National Statuary Hall
 47 Floor installation worker
 48 Show somebody?
 49 Like Tom Waits's voice
 50 Cherished recollection (Georgia)
 51 Cold season outburst
 52 "The Apu Trilogy" music composer Shankar
 53 Microorganism's hairlike organelles
 54 Paradise for 115 Down
 55 Lets the tears flow
 56 Like 24-hour pharmacies
 57 Typed (in)
 58 In a few minutes or so



- 8 Egyptian president from 1970 to 1981
 9 Angle symbol
 10 Remaining at home
 11 Forte for Agnes Martin, aptly contained in AGNES MARTIN
 12 Wade's 1973 opponent
 13 Ready to breed, as a thoroughbred
 14 Sources of sass
 15 Fell back into bad habits, say
 16 "Let's kick some ____!" (pun from Mr. Freeze in "Batman & Robin")
 17 Highest setting, briefly
 18 Hydromassage locale
 19 Seeing red
 20 Apt rhyme of "cake"
 21 Hairy swinger
 22 Pale violet shade
 23 Future draft picks' org.
 24 Translation of 20 Across from 69 Down
 25 Emulated theater majors
 26 1980 film featuring sideshow performers
 27 Show joy in a show, say
 28 Cellphones not finding any service and mirror-based jump scares, e.g., in horror films
 29 Excitement from hype
 30 Python pro's field, briefly
 31 Observatory discovery of 1930, or an animated pooch created in 1930
 32 Taste ____
 33 Base phrase
 34 "Where the Crawdads Sing" author Owens
 35 Incur charges from shots
 36 Sweeten the deal?
 37 2011, 2014 and 2020 NFL MVP Aaron
 38 Gmail button
 39 Insufficient amount
 40 Fraternal order with an antlered beast in its logo
 41 House vote broadcaster
 42 Florida city where the Triple Crown winner Affirmed was bred
 43 ____ Penh, Cambodia
 44 Put on a show, say
 45 Far from moist
 46 "Great blue" bird
 47 Frozen treat with a Major Mango flavor
 48 Posse member Wyatt
 49 First word of FWIW
 50 100 Year Starship project leader Jemison
 51 Indoor sunbather
 52 Croat's neighbor
 53 Bears' burrows
 54 RN's body piercings?
 55 Comes down outside
 56 Language from which "sofa" is derived
 57 Peaceful and quiet
 58 Abolished
 59 Sinuous sea creature
 60 Taste ____
 61 House vote broadcaster
 62 Florida city where the Triple Crown winner Affirmed was bred
 63 ____ Penh, Cambodia
 64 Put on a show, say
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 118 Abolished
 119 Sinuous sea creature
 120 Taste ____
 121 House vote broadcaster
 122 Florida city where the Triple Crown winner Affirmed was bred
 123 ____ Penh, Cambodia
 124 Put on a show, say

Behold a real nightmare scenario

According to news reports, there is within the Pentecostal and charismatic Christian movements an increasing willingness by pastors to interpret people's dreams as revelatory experiences — in essence, religious prophecies, especially if they confirm the pastors' political beliefs. One of the more common current prophecies is that Donald Trump will somehow Rise Again as president, possibly as early as this month.

Though I am an atheist, I am not without respect for people of faith — even fanatics, who despite some shortcomings have an impressive zeal. Tomás de Torquemada, for example, may have burned, stretched, hanged and disemboweled unbelievers, but he had nice hair and everyone agrees he was impressively persuasive. So I decided to give this charismatic dream theory a shot, using my own recent dreams, which tend to be stultifying, anxiety-soaked, self-loathing and embarrassingly banal. For a week I kept a pen and notepad next to my bed, for instant retrieval before the dreams disappeared from memory.

Here is my true report, followed by my prophesies.

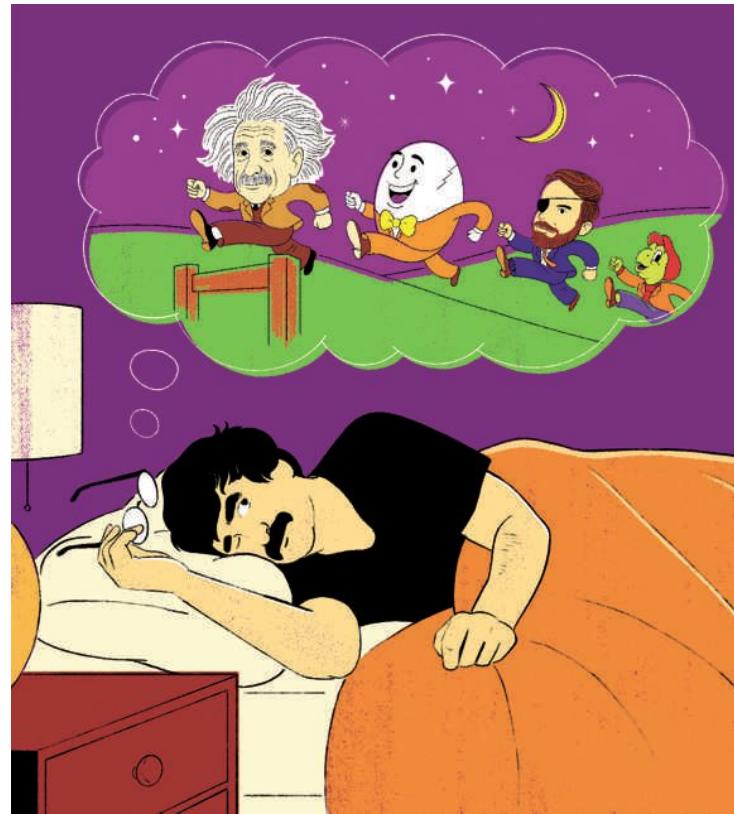
Day 1: I was a student at Harvard on the first day of a semester, and was at the registrar but was confused by the process and signed up for classes I didn't want, in ballet and gastroenterology. Then I tried to find my dorm room but got lost and wound up in a bad neighborhood, heckled by scary-looking street people who made fun of my mustache.

Day 2: I was at a county fair with Bill Hader, the snarky former SNL star. When I looked down, I realized, apparently for the first time, that I had a prosthetic right leg. It had been amputated below the knee. I was also missing my left pinkie finger. This troubled me greatly, but Bill just laughed at my predicament, cracking wise. "I see that you're stumped," he said.

Day 3: I realized to my horror that my son had shriveled to the size of a hamster and was near death because I had forgotten to give him his baby formula for two months. I woke up in a cold sweat, until I remembered my son is 36.

Day 4: I was at a butcher, ordering my favorite cut of meat, tri-tip steak. He took out a slab and, before I could object, whacked off every morsel of fat. Indignantly, I told him fat was the tastiest part and I wanted one with the fat still on, but he told me, apologetically, that he could lose his "license" if he gave it to me because eating fat was now against the law in the District of Columbia.

Day 5: I was back at Harvard, this time as head of the journalism department. I confronted the president of the university, reporting that my department was vastly underfunded and that I needed an infusion of resources or would leave. It was an impassioned plea for the future of journalism. The man took this all in, patiently, nodding, and then said that he regretted he could not help me because I had apparently mistaken him for the president. That's



when I saw that beside him he had one of those cleaning carts, with a mop. He was a janitor.

Okay, those are my actual dreams, as best I remember them. Here comes the prophecy.

We start with Day 5, about a president who isn't a president. It couldn't be clearer; a Usurper is in the White House. The pastors' previous prophecies suggested Trump would return. But this clearly isn't happening. So who will save us? Bear with me.

Day 4, at the butcher, is about cutting fat, a clear signal that God feels government has gotten too bloated. Day 2, my amputations, is about cutting bone, meaning the cuts must be deep. Where will they come from? This, too, is clear: from entitlements, as revealed in Day 1, because nobody is more entitled than a White kid going to Harvard who feels threatened by street people.

But who will lead us to these ends? I was, indeed, "stumped" for a while. But then I got it, plain as day, in Day 3. My son is named Dan! The most prominent up-and-coming hard-right Republican pol in the country is also a Dan — Rep. Dan Crenshaw of Texas. Crenshaw opposes abortion in almost all circumstances, including rape and incest. He opposes gun control and has promoted the AR-15 assault rifle for self-defense in the home. He favors much stricter border controls, like Trump's border wall, and hates "sanctuary cities." He thinks Trump's response to covid-19 was just dandy, and, possibly best of all, he is opposed to "politicizing" comedy and entertainment.

Crenshaw 2024. It's *obvious*.

Email Gene Weingarten at gene.weingarten@washpost.com. Find chats and updates at wapo.st/magazine.

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