

Houston Surge  
Fills Hospitals  
With the Young

Race to Find Bed Space  
Before the Peak Hits

By SHERI FINK  
HOUSTON — Melissa Estrada had tried to be so careful about the coronavirus. For months she kept her three children at home, and she always wore a mask at the grocery store. She and her daughter even stitched face coverings for relatives and friends. But over the weekend Ms. Estrada, 37, was fighting the virus at Houston Methodist Hospital after a week of treatments that included an experimental drug, steroids, intensive care and high doses of oxygen. She probably contracted the virus while attending a dinner with relatives who had also been cautious, she said. Within days, all four adults and several children who had been at the gathering tested positive for the coronavirus. “It was really, really scary,” Ms. Estrada said of her illness. She worried constantly about leaving her children motherless. “You hear about it and you think it’s the older people or the people with underlying issues,” she said. “And I’m healthy. I don’t understand how I got this bad.”

Coronavirus cases are rising quickly in Houston, as they are in other hot spots across the South and the West. Harris County, which includes most of Houston, has been averaging more than 1,100 new cases each day, among the most of any American county. Just two weeks ago, Harris County was averaging about 313 new cases daily. Measures to cope with the surge and to plan for its peak were evident over the weekend at Methodist, which called nurses to work extra shifts, brought new laboratory instruments on line to test thousands more samples a day and placed extra hospital beds in an empty unit about to be

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WILLIAM DESHAZER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES  
Delirium overtook Kim Victory during a 3-week hospital stay.

As Body Fights,  
Virus Splinters  
Patients’ Minds

By PAM BELLUCK  
Kim Victory was paralyzed on a bed and being burned alive. Just in time, someone rescued her, but suddenly, she was turned into an ice sculpture on a fancy cruise ship buffet. Next, she was a subject of an experiment in a lab in Japan. Then she was being attacked by cats. Nightmarish visions like these plagued Ms. Victory during her hospitalization this spring for severe respiratory failure caused by the coronavirus. They made her so agitated that one night, she pulled out her ventilator breathing tube; another time, she fell off a chair and landed on the floor of the intensive care unit. “It was so real, and I was so scared,” said Ms. Victory, 31, now back home in Franklin, Tenn. To a startling degree, many coronavirus patients are reporting

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CHANG W. LEE/THE NEW YORK TIMES

50 Years of Pride

People celebrated a milestone for Pride in the pouring rain, though festivities were scaled back because of the pandemic. Page A13.

Obama Is Drawn Back to a Political Battlefield He Wanted to Quit

By GLENN THRUSH  
and ELAINA PLOTT

Just after Donald J. Trump was elected president, Barack Obama slumped in his chair in the Oval Office and addressed an aide standing near a conspicuously placed bowl of apples, emblem of a healthy-snacking policy soon to be swept aside, along with so much else. “I am so done with all of this,” Mr. Obama said of his job, according to several people familiar with the exchange. Yet he knew, even then, that a

conventional White House retirement was not an option. Mr. Obama, 55 at the time, was stuck holding a baton he had wanted to pass to Hillary Clinton, and saddled with a successor whose fixation on him, he believed, was rooted in a bizarre personal animus and the politics of racial backlash exemplified by the birther lie. “There is no model for my kind of post-presidency,” he told the aide. “I’m clearly renting space inside the guy’s head.” Which is not to say that Mr. Obama was not committed to his pre-Trump retirement vision — a

Tougher Line on Trump  
Marks New Phase in  
Unique Retirement

placid life that was to consist of writing, sun-flecked fairways, policy work through his foundation, producing documentaries with Netflix and family time aplenty at a new \$11.7 million spread on Martha’s Vineyard. Still, more than three years after his exit, the 44th president of

the United States is back on a political battlefield he longed to leave, drawn into the fight by an enemy, Mr. Trump, who is hellbent on erasing him, and by a friend, Joseph R. Biden Jr., who is equally intent on embracing him. The stakes of that re-engagement were always going to be high. Mr. Obama is nothing if not protective of his legacy, especially in the face of Mr. Trump’s many attacks. Yet interviews with more than 50 people in the former president’s orbit portray a conflicted combatant, trying to balance deep

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Flynn’s Lawyer  
Enlisted Allies  
In High Places

This article is by Mark Mazzetti,  
Charlie Savage and Adam Gold-  
man.

WASHINGTON — Sidney Powell, a firebrand lawyer whose pugnacious Fox News appearances had earned her numerous private phone conversations with President Trump, sent a letter last year to Attorney General William P. Barr about her soon-to-be new client, Michael T. Flynn. Asking for “utmost confidentiality,” Ms. Powell told Mr. Barr that the case against Mr. Flynn, the president’s former national security adviser who had pleaded guilty to lying to the F.B.I., smacked of “corruption of our beloved government institutions for what appears to be political purposes.” She asked the attorney general to appoint an outsider to review the case, confident that such scrutiny would justify ending it. Mr. Barr did what she wanted. He appointed a U.S. attorney six months later to scour the Flynn case file with a skeptical eye for documents that could be turned over as helpful to the defense. Ultimately, Mr. Barr directed the department to drop the charge, one of his numerous steps undercutting the work of the Russia investigation and the special counsel, Robert S. Mueller III. The private correspondence between Ms. Powell and Mr. Barr, disclosed in a little-noticed court filing last fall, was the first step to

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ROGELIO V. SOLIS/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Retiring a Flag in Mississippi

State senators embraced after passing a bill to remove an emblem of the Confederacy. Page A19.

Does N.Y.P.D. Get Too Much? Perhaps It’s Asked to Do Too Much

By MICHAEL SCHWIRTZ  
and ALI WATKINS

When someone in the grip of a mental health emergency behaves erratically in New York City, it is the Police Department that is often called in. When there are serious disciplinary problems in the schools, or when homeless people are found sleeping in the subways, police officers are asked to take over.

The Police Department’s purview is so vast that elite officers trained for hostage situations sometimes find themselves assigned to animal control duties, chasing a runaway deer through the Bronx or corralling an escaped boa constrictor, as they did recently at the height of the coronavirus pandemic. For decades, a succession of city governments have turned to the department as a catchall fix

Money to Fight Crime,  
and to Chase Deer

for many of society’s ills, outside of traditional crime-fighting. That has meant deploying a force of 36,000 officers with a paramilitary approach that at times can be unnecessarily confrontational. Now, after weeks of protests

against police brutality spurred by the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, a political movement has gathered momentum to curtail the New York Police Department’s size and mission creep. Calls to “defund the police” have resonated with the City Council, where the speaker has proposed cutting \$1 billion from the department’s \$6 billion budget

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‘They Did It to the Chief’

The Indigenous leader and activist Allan Adam’s beating by the police spurred outrage in Canada. PAGE A9

India Grapples With Colorism

Worldwide racism protests have focused attention on the country’s long-held biases over skin tone. PAGE A10

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Trump Retweets Racist Post

The president later deleted the tweet, which showed a heated exchange between retirees, with one Trump supporter yelling “White power!” PAGE A15

Leveraging Judges

President Trump has used judicial appointments to his advantage. Should Democrats run on the courts? PAGE A15

TRACKING AN OUTBREAK A4-8

‘Scary’ Surge in Florida

A fivefold increase over two weeks prompted officials to impose limits for the coming July 4 holiday. PAGE A7



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Hoping for Magic

Florida workers are nervous as Disney World and other destinations start to reopen amid surging infections. PAGE B1

737 Max Will Get Test Flights

The flights, which could begin as soon as Monday, are a major step in getting Boeing’s plane flying again. PAGE B1

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A Season Under Dark Clouds

Major League Baseball is set to have a 60-game schedule. But that is not likely to help with labor strife or with questions of a sport’s relevance. PAGE D1

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He Captured Horrors in China

Li Zhenheng’s powerful photographs remain a rare visual testament to the brutality of Mao Zedong’s Cultural Revolution. He was 79. PAGE B10

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Jamelle Bouie

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Change at the Ballot Box

A new documentary followed the campaigns of female politicians of color and found much reason for hope. Above, Representative Rashida Tlaib. PAGE C1



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