

NASA LANDS GROUNDBREAKING PERSEVERANCE ROVER ON MARS

*A photo from Perseverance shows some of the Martian landscape.
Photo Credit NASA*

CHANGES SET FOR UPCOMING SPRING VOTE



PAGE 5

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INDEX

Editorial & Weather	02
Sports Wrap	03
World News	04
Town Watch	06
From The Pastor's Heart	12
Essex County COVID-19 Stats	13
Legally Speaking	14

HORRIFIC CONDITIONS AT HOMELESS SHELTER

By Lev D. Zilbermints

Drug addicts. Rape. Stabbings. Theft. Fraud. Freezing cold rooms. Spoiled or outdated food. Aggressive security taking out their issues on tenants. No police presence. Tenants being evicted without due process.

These are the alleged conditions at HELP Center, located at 224 Sussex Avenue, a homeless shelter that is known as "death trap" on the streets of Newark. Conditions at Urban Renewal

shelter, as it is officially called, are so bad that homeless people would rather sleep in the streets than go there. Multiple sources, both online and interviewed, have said that the shelter needs to be overhauled.

Safety concerns, violation of privacy, favoritism and more

On January 27, 2021 rlsmedia.com

(Continued on page 7)



Gov. Murphy holding the cannabis legislation he signed. Photo via Gov. Murphy Twitter

MARIJUANA LEGISLATION FINALLY PASSED

TRENTON - On Feb. 22, NJ Governor Phil Murphy signed historic adult-use cannabis reform bills into law, legalizing and regulating cannabis use and possession for adults 21 years and older (A21 - "The New Jersey Cannabis Regulatory, Enforcement Assistance, and Marketplace Modernization Act") and decriminalizing marijuana and hashish possession (A1897). The Governor also signed S3454, clari-

fying marijuana and cannabis use and possession penalties for individuals younger than 21 years old.

"Our current marijuana prohibition laws have failed every test of social justice, which is why for years I've strongly supported the legalization of adult-use cannabis. Maintaining a status quo that allows tens of thousands, dispropor-

(Continued on page 13)



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Turn to
PAGE 16



Editorial
Dhiren Shah
 Editor-In-Chief

Hello Readers,

President Joseph Biden is trying hard to find out the ways to expedite the process of vaccination. However, the coronavirus cases are slowly increasing in the United States. Texas, New York, California, Florida, New Jersey and some other states have a slight uphill battle with virus cases. The Biden administration is pushing hard to increase vaccinations to reduce the impact of COVID-19.

Biden's administration is sending masks to poor communities, thinking that they will use the masks. However, they should stop thinking about one community over the other. We should think of the United States as a whole, and think about how to control the virus within every part of the United States. Also,

even today, some communities think that the coronavirus is hoax, while other communities thinks that vaccinations are problematic. Plus, the African American community does not have great trust in mainstream medicine.

According to The Washington Post, "This history of medical racism is often shorthanded to a single word: Tuskegee. For 40 years the United States Public Health Service, working with the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, tracked the progression of untreated syphilis in poor Black men, even after effective treatments for the disease became available - an appalling ethical violation that cost Black people their lives. News coverage in 1972 drew attention to the study, and the resulting public pressure brought it to an end. But the Tuskegee study is just one of the more recent and well-known episodes in the centuries-long history of medical neglect, abuse and exploitation of Black Americans.

The exploitation of Black people in the future United States began the moment enslaved Africans first disem-

barked on these shores, and the medical abuse of the enslaved was inextricably linked to their bondage. Doctors plied their trade in the slave quarters of Southern plantations to protect the slaveholder's bottom line, rather than to ensure the well-being of the enslaved, and the cures they offered were often worse than the diseases they aimed to treat. In return, they got to practice their craft on non-consenting patients with no access to legal remedies should they be harmed in the course of treatment, as many were."

In the United States, up until February 22, 2021, there were about 65 million vaccines distributed. However, only 19.9 million doses have been used. So, only about 30% of the vaccines have been used. The Federal Government is distributing the vaccines, but the state distribution is under state, county and city control. I have talked to many people in different states, but the topic is only one now: vaccination. Every place is nothing but mismanagement by the states and local government. It was good that they made differ-

ent layers to get a vaccination, but without proper management they cannot keep up with the rules of the system. Those who make the system do not follow it, and their friends and family members get a vaccination.

On the other side of the aisle, African Americans are hesitant to vaccinate. I have about 14 doctors in my extended family and we talk about it many times. Some of the medical practitioners have stated that vaccination is good. Even though there is no guarantee that you would not catch coronavirus after getting vaccinated, at least you may not need to go to a hospital if you are positive. After a few weeks, the vaccine will give your immune system strength to fight the coronavirus. So, read about it and make a wise decision. If more than 70% of the population gets vaccinated, there is a chance that we may no longer need masks and other restrictions.

Have a wonderful week.

I'll talk to you next week.

STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS FOR LOCAL TALK WEEKLY NEWSPAPER

- Publisher & Editor-in-chief : Dhiren Shah
- Editors : Kristopher Seals / Anuj Shah
- Journalists / Writers : Kristopher Seals | Walter Elliott | Bro. Thomas Ellis | Dhiren Shah | William Hathaway Jr. | Dr. Daniel Louis | Ahmed Screven, Esq. | Anuj Shah | Lev Zilbermints | Kinjal Shah | Asha Shah | Akshat Shah, MD | Ivy Mahabir | Kalindi Bhatt | Dr. Robert Kennedy
- Photographers : Dhiren Shah | Kristopher Seals | Thomas Ellis II | D. Adams, Jr.
- Distributors : Larry Wright | Walter Elliott | Fred Simpson
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WEATHER FOR THE WEEK

<u>THURSDAY</u>	<u>FRIDAY</u>	<u>SATURDAY</u>	<u>SUNDAY</u>	<u>MONDAY</u>	<u>TUESDAY</u>	<u>WEDNESDAY</u>
Partly Cloudy	Sunny	Rain	More Rain	Morning Rain	Sun & Clouds	Rain Possible
HI 45	HI 43	HI 51	HI 49	HI 51	HI 40	HI 45
LO 28	LO 32	LO 40	LO 42	LO 30	LO 30	LO 35

SPORTS WRAP



By William Hathaway

On Feb. 22, Governor Phil Murphy announced there will be a limited number of people allowed to attend professional and college games in New Jersey amid the Coronavirus pandemic. Parents of college athletes will be allowed to attend games effective immediately, and venues with a 5,000 seating capacity or more will be allowed to have a 10 percent of that capacity at indoor games. This would include teams like the Devils and Seton Hall. However, Rutgers might be barred under Big Ten COVID-19 rules.

There is a 15 percent cap for outdoor events. For now, that means the New York Giants and New York Jets will be allowed to have fans at MetLife Stadium.

As for the Hall, a tough 81-75 loss at Georgetown has the men's team on the bubble for the NCAA Tournament. Mean-

while, the women's basketball team last week won a big game against providence 67-55. The Lady Pirates are 11-6 this season in the Big East Conference.

In local high school basketball, the University High girls' team from Newark has been ranked 8th in the state Top 20 with an 8-0 record. Some key victories include beating West Orange 41-27 and a 60-30 win over East Orange. In that game, senior Tara Johnson captured her 1000 point in her four years at UHS. Other games this week had Orange taking care of Belleville 46-12 and West Side slipping by Barringer 48-42.

Finally, golfer Tiger Woods was badly injured in a car crash while on his way to a tournament in California. It was a single car roll-over accident after 7 am local time, and he was removed from the wreck through the windshield. As of press time, no other details are available.

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BLACK LIVES - ANIMAL LIVES - ALL LIVES MATTER



By Michele Lowe

Hello everyone. This is just a little something I just want to converse about: Giving. So, I have decided to start

from myself. These photographs are the gifts I gave to friends and family to bring a smile on their face. It doesn't take much for happiness. The little things count too.

There is so much corruption and negative thoughts going around the world, and in our community too. When you're working together, you do not have to know one another. Be kind, respectful to one another; that's what matters.

Being supportive is great, and very helpful. Let's help each other, even your neighbors and sometimes unknown people too.

P.S. Don't forget about the furballs. Yes, the pets need love too.

Thank you all. Please take care and be safe.

Advertorial





UNITED STATES

Disaster Hits Texas

On If you thought that the winter storms that recently came through New Jersey were the worst, think again.

The state of Texas has been inundated with horrendous winter weather that has included heavy snow, ice, and extremely cold temperatures. However, the aftermath was actually worse, with the weather causing power outages and disruptions in the water supply. The lack of power and potable water meant no heat for millions in the state. Meanwhile, those who did keep the lights and gas on were hit by atrocious bills from their providers.

As this went on, U.S. Senator Ted Cruz came under fire for taking his family to Cancun while his fellow Texans were struggling. After dropping off his family, Cruz returned to hand out bottled water. However, he came under fire again for not quarantining for 14 days after returning to the U.S. from another country.

On Feb. 19, President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. declared that a major disaster exists in the State of Texas and ordered federal assistance to supplement state and local recovery efforts in the areas affected by severe winter storms beginning on Feb. 11, 2021, and continuing.

The President's action makes federal funding available to affected individuals in the counties of Angelina, Aransas, Bastrop, Bee, Bell, Bexar, Blanco, Bra-

zoria, Brazos, Brown, Burleson, Caldwell, Calhoun, Cameron, Chambers, Collin, Comal, Comanche, Cooke, Coryell, Dallas, Denton, DeWitt, Ellis, Falls, Fort Bend, Galveston, Gillespie, Grimes, Guadalupe, Hardin, Harris, Hays, Henderson, Hidalgo, Hood, Jasper, Jefferson, Johnson, Kaufman, Kendall, Lavaca, Liberty, Madison, Matagorda, Maverick, McLennan, Montague, Montgomery, Nacogdoches, Nueces, Orange, Palo Pinto, Panola, Parker, Polk, Rockwall, Sabine, San Jacinto, San Patricio, Scurry, Shelby, Smith, Stephens, Tarrant, Travis, Tyler, Upshur, Van Zandt, Victoria, Walker, Waller, Wharton, Wichita, Williamson, Wilson, and Wise.

Assistance can include grants for temporary housing and home repairs, low-cost loans to cover uninsured property losses, and other programs to help individuals and business owners recover from the effects of the disaster.

Federal funding is also available to state and eligible local governments and certain private nonprofit organizations on a cost-sharing basis for emergency protective measures and hazard mitigation measures statewide.

Robert J. Fenton, Senior Official Performing the Duties of the Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Department of Homeland Security, named Jerry S. Thomas as the Federal Coordinating Officer for federal recovery operations in the affected areas.

Additional designations may be made at a later date if requested by the state and warranted by the results of further damage assessments.

Barring any disruptions, President Biden said that he would visit the state on Friday, Feb. 26.

EUROPE

Unlocking a Lockdown

On Feb. 22, Prime Minister Boris Johnson has announced the government's roadmap to cautiously ease lockdown restrictions in England.

In a statement to parliament, he paid tribute to the extraordinary success of the UK's vaccination program and the resolve of the British public in following the lockdown restrictions, which has helped to cut infection rates and reduce the spread of the virus.

He also set out the latest vaccine efficacy data, with Public Health England finding that one dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine reduces hospitalizations and deaths by at least 75%. Analysis of the AstraZeneca vaccine efficacy continues, with promising early results.

Supported by the increased protection offered by these vaccines, the government is able to slowly and cautiously begin to ease restrictions in all areas across England at the same time, guided at all stages by data, not dates.

The roadmap, which has now been published on gov.uk, outlines four steps for easing restrictions. Before proceeding to the next step, the Government will examine the data to assess the impact of previous steps.

This assessment will be based on four tests:

- The vaccine deployment program continues successfully.
- Evidence shows vaccines are sufficiently effective in reducing hospitalizations and deaths in those vaccinated.
- Infection rates do not risk a surge in hospitalizations which would put unsustainable pressure on the NHS.
- An assessment of the risks is

not fundamentally changed by new Variants of Concern.

There will be a minimum of five weeks between each step: four weeks for the data to reflect changes in restrictions; followed by seven days' notice of the restrictions to be eased.

The Chief Medical Officer and the Chief Scientific Adviser have made clear that this will give adequate time to assess the impact of each step and reduce the risk of having to re-impose restrictions at a later date.

As the Prime Minister said, getting children back into school has been the top priority, and so from March 8 all children and students will return to face to face education in schools and college. By this point, everyone in the top four vaccine priority cohorts - as determined by the independent JCVI - will have received the first dose of their vaccine and developed the necessary protection from it.

MIDDLE EAST

Keeping An Eye on Iran

The UN-backed International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has reached a temporary deal with Iran so that monitoring of the country's nuclear program can continue, Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi announced at a press conference in Vienna on Feb. 21.

The IAEA chief was speaking shortly after arriving from weekend talks in Tehran to mitigate plans to reduce cooperation this week.

Iran's Parliament passed a law in December to partially suspend nuclear inspections if the United States did not lift sanctions imposed under the Trump administration. It goes into effect on Feb. 23.

(Continued on page 5)

CHANGES SET FOR UPCOMING SPRING VOTE

By Walter Elliott

NEWARK - Essex County election officials and workers here, along with affected municipal clerks and school board secretaries, are applying Gov. Phil Murphy's latest executive orders for the April 20 and May 11 elections while you read this.

Those changes may be seen in your mailbox, and maybe at your municipal voting machine polling station, on or around April 1 and/or May 1. Those changes came from Murphy's Executive Orders 216 and 203, issued Jan. 25 and Nov. 25 - and pending pre-March 1 State Legislature votes.

The Vote-By-Mail Ballot you will receive in the mail, for example, will be the only mailing you get from Essex County Board of Elections Superintendent Patricia Spagno (D-West Orange) and County Clerk Christopher Durkin (D-Roseland). Your accustomed Spring 2021 sample ballots will not be mailed but most likely found on essexclerk.com

Eliminating hardcopy sample ballots was issued in Murphy's Executive Order 216 Jan. 25.

"I want the election information process to be more efficient," said Murphy (D-Rumson) Jan. 25, "for election officials and workers who send out paper ballots."

This change was among Murphy's orders to consolidate Jan. 26 fire district and any scheduled Feb. 16 special school board elections into April 20. These said elections are usually found among Central and Southern New Jersey locales.

Your VBM Ballot may include two pending in-person polling station locations and ear-

ly voting hours.

You may get two locations to personally vote at: The Essex County Hall of Records and a designated municipal voting station.

State Senate Bill S3203, sponsored by Sen. Nia Gill (D-Montclair) will have county election boards designate at least one in-person polling station per municipality. The towns' polling booths would supplement ones set up for countywide registered voters last year.

Essex County Clerk Christopher Durkin and then-Board of Elections Superintendent Linda Von Nessi had added countywide in-person polling stations at Newark's Prudential Center and West Orange's Codey Arena for the Nov. 3 General Election.

Gill's legislation spells out where those municipal stations will not be located: "school buildings and buildings used as schools. The language would exclude for example, the Newark Public Schools Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.-turned-NorthStar Fairmount Heights Elementary School in Newark for April 20.

S2303, furthermore, does not rule out the use of houses of worship for polling stations. The proposed legislation appears to not require polling locations to meet the federal Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.

Your next VBM/sample ballot, pending S2303's passage, may also have your county and municipal polling stations' opening hours in advance of April 20 and May 11.

The bill would allow in-person voting for 10 a.m.-8 p.m. Mondays-Saturdays and 10 a.m.

(Continued on page 10)

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WORLD NEWS FLASH

(Continued from page 4)

"We agreed that in view of the law, and in particular the provision that establishes limitations, we have reached a temporary bilateral technical understanding whereby the agency is going to continue its necessary verification and monitoring activities for a period of up to three months," Mr. Grossi told journalists.

The arrangement means IAEA inspectors will have less access than under the 2015 deal on Iran's nuclear program, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. The number of inspectors will not change.

"We agreed that we are going to keep this understanding we reached under review constantly so if...we want to suspend it or extend it, this can be done," said Mr. Grossi. "The hope of the IAEA has been to be able to stabilize a situation which was very unstable."

CARIBBEAN

An Unstable Haiti

The UN human rights office (OHCHR) is "very concerned" over recent attacks against judicial independence in Haiti, as the country is gripped by political and institutional instability, a

spokesperson said on Feb. 19.

According to spokesperson Liz Throssell, a judge of the Haitian Cour de Cassation (Supreme Court), was arrested on Feb. 7, in circumstances that may amount to unlawful or arbitrary arrest and detention. Twenty-two other individuals were also arrested, 17 of whom still remain in pre-trial detention.

While the judge was subsequently released, the person along with two others were "forced to retire and later replaced, apparently through an irregular procedure."

"These developments cause concerns about judicial independence and have further eroded the separation of powers in Haiti," Ms. Throssell said at a regular media briefing at the UN Office at Geneva (UNOG).

Ms. Throssell stressed that respecting the rule of law and the system of checks and balances at all times is paramount.

"It is even more crucial now given the growing political tensions and the increasing expression of dissent in demonstrations," she said.

OHCHR called on the Haitian authorities to ensure respect for the established legal and institutional framework, and to comply with their obligations under the country's Constitution and international human rights treaties, she added.

TOWN WATCH

DISCLAIMER: The following items are primarily drawn from first responders. Responders' accounts may not be their full activity range. Grand juries hand down indictments when evidence presented them warrant a trial. Named suspects/defendants are innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

NEWARK - The 2013 bus rider versus NJTransit negligence damages case had reached its final stop before the State Supreme Court in Trenton Feb. 17, where it upheld a lower court jury's awarding of \$1.8 million in damages.

The state's highest judges, in a 4-3 split ruling that Wednesday, upheld last July's State Appellate Court ruling and earlier State Superior Court-Newark jury's finding. All three judicial levels found that NJTransit had "the same heightened duty of care as a private carrier." (NJTransit is a public carrier.)

The case began when the rider/plaintiff Anasia Mason boarded a bus at Broad and Market streets 1:14 a.m. July 22, 2013 and was soon harassed by a group of riding youths. Their insults and pelting Mason with objects seemed to have stopped when she switched seats; she moved after one of the youths displayed a knife in a threatening manner.

One of the males, however, threw a liquor bottle at Mason while disembarking at the Hayes Circle stop, leaving the victim with a 22-stitch cut on her forehead. The driver then stopped the bus and called NJTransit's control center who, in turn, called police and EMS from Newark Beth Israel for service.

The plaintiff maintained that bus driver Kelvin Coats had not stopped the bus, nor confronted the youths, ordered their ejection or called police. Coats had testified that his priority was to get his passengers "from Point A to Point B safely" but "it's not my job to get involved."

NJTransit had appealed on

two counts, the first that it, as a public carrier, should not be held to the higher private standard. Its attorneys further asserted that damages under the Tort Claims Act should not be entirely drawn from one party but shared with the bottle-thrower. (That suspect remains at large.)

The state's highest court has returned "Mason v. NJTransit and Coats" back to a lower court jury to determine the responsibility split between the state's largest public carrier and the bottle-thrower. The case was argued before the state justices Sept. 29.

IRVINGTON - ECPO Homicide and Major Crimes Task Force detectives have been investigating the circumstances of a three-year-old boy's fatal condition since his being found in a South Ward apartment here Feb. 18.

Responding Irvington police officers and local EMS technicians told county detectives that they were answering "reports of an injured child" at 395 Union Ave. 3:30 p.m. that Thursday.

They found the child in an apartment with an adult male inside. Witnesses said the medics were performing CPR on the boy while dashing off to a local hospital.

Irvington called ECPO when the boy had died later that afternoon. County detectives, assisted by IPD, collected items from the apartment and brought the male in the apartment into Newark for questioning that Thursday night.

The child's death, as of press time, has not been labeled as suspicious. There have been no arrests or charges made.

EAST ORANGE - The city's planning board approved its latest development in the "Lower Main Street Arts District" Feb. 3 - but one can still get takeout orders from the Soul Food Factory in the interim.

What the East Orange Planning Board approved Feb. 3 was to replace Soul Food Factory at 431 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd and two adjacent parking lots with the five-story, mixed-use "Hue Soul Apartments" building.

"Hue Soul," as presented by Novus Landmark East Orange Urban Renewal LLC, of Jersey City, since April 2020, features 113 residential units above a

3,562-square foot street level retail or restaurant space. Its amenities include a one-parking-space-per-unit" garage, bicycle racks, outdoor seating, an "exterior amenity deck" at its center and an "interior amenity" area.

Novus picked 429-33 MLK Blvd. in part because it is half-way between NJTransit's Morris & Essex Line Brick Church and East Orange stations. The location allows Hue Soul to take advantage of the state's Transit Village Zone and East Orange's Lower Main Street Arts District amenities.

Novus has also received from the city a 22-year Payment-in-Lieu-of-Taxes plan.

Hue Soul, as drawn by Kitchen & Associates, of Camden, will replace the brick-and-mortar diner restaurant that has been there since at least the 1960s. The former Main Street Diner was recently home to Metro City Diner, Ma Cuisine Cafe and - from Newark's 683 Springfield Ave.- Soul Food Factory. It is not known whether SFF will get first dibs on the new restaurant space.

Hue Soul will take up 433 MLK Boulevard which, until recently, was East Orange Auto Sales. It used to be Maxon Pontiac's used car lot until the dealership moved to Union's Rt 22 West in 1970 and became Maxon Hyundai-Buick. The new building will take up 429 MLK Boulevard, where a Gulf Oil filling station and a Blue Coal hopper chute used to front South Burnett Street into the late 1960s.

ORANGE - The corner of Oakwood Avenue and Clay Street was busier than on a usual Saturday here Feb. 20 while people filed into and out of St. Matthew AME Church for four hours to pay respects to the late Councilwoman Vivian M. Gaunt.

Gaunt, 83, who was a three-term At-Large Councilwoman 1996-2008, died Feb. 10.

Born Carol Robateau June 15, 1937, Gaunt eventually came to Orange's South Ward to teach and raise April Gaunt-Butler and Laurence Gaunt. Gaunt-Butler followed in her mother's footsteps as a teacher (in Irvington Public Schools Early Childhood department) and as an at-large

councilwoman (and Orange Council President 2015-16).

Gaunt was employed by the Archdiocese of Newark as a grade school teacher. Mayor Dwayne D. Warren, in his Feb. 15 open tribute letter, recalled first meeting Ms. Gaunt while she was Newark's Blessed Sacrament Fifth Grade teacher in 1976 - and he was a student.

Gaunt started her eponymous African Heritage Scholarship Foundation, for the education services field in 1988. She was the foundation's president at the time of her death.

Sister Carol Robateau and grandson Christopher Roy are also among Gaunt's survivors. Her 9 a.m. Feb. 20 visitation at St. Matthew was followed by an invitation only funeral there at Noon and burial at Montclair's Rosedale Cemetery. Arrangements were made by Woody "Home for Services."

WEST ORANGE - The West Orange Public Schools community and Toms River, 68 miles apart, are linked in mourning this week for Robert Kuczarski, Jr.

Kuczarski, 50, a lifelong Toms Riverite whose entire professional career was with WOPS, lost his two year battle against Stage IV colon cancer Feb. 21.

"Bob," or "Mr. K," was last assigned as the Gregory Elementary School's physical education teacher. He was first hired as a West Orange High School health and physical education teacher and, later on, as an assistant athletic director.

"WOPS lost an esteemed colleague and terrific person in Bob Kuczarski," said Schools Superintendent Dr. Scott Cascone Feb. 22. "As a school community we mourn this loss together but may be comforted by the many memories and countless young lives which he touched in his time as a professional West Orange educator."

Kuczarski, who was born in Toms River April 4, 1970, came here by way of Montclair State University. The Toms River HS-East Class of 1988 graduate earned his bachelor's and master's degrees at MSU.

Wife Vanessa and daughter Marley Rose are among Kuczarski's survivors. Respective visitation and funeral services

(Continued on page 15)

SHELTER (Continued from page 1)

reported that a stabbing at 224 Sussex Avenue was under investigation. According to the article, one person was taken into custody and charged with assault after a stabbing incident, which occurred at 12:25 a.m. that day. The article goes on to say that “EMS treated the victim while police took the suspects into custody at that location. According to preliminary reports, a firearm was recovered on the second floor of the shelter, but no other victims were injured in the incident.”

According to a February 14, 2021 post on yelp.com by a user only known as Labradorite L, “There is something about Mary... and her twin sister on the 5th floor, they have all the perks! The best food, blankets, pajamas, shoes, socks, slippers, coats, and clothing. Nice room with separate bathroom.”

“Is Mary stealing donations? Is Mary a homeless shelter resident or a paid staff that just happens to live there? How does Mary have access to the other residents’ confidential files and medical history? Is Mary gossiping about other residents? Something is very fishy and unlawful about these 2 fat old hags. Besides that, the shelter is horrific in every way. May the curses of Allah fall upon this corrupt establishment and everyone who works there.”

Many other residents have also spoken out against the facility, but all of the claims could not be substantiated as of press time.

Location of shelter, Ownership and operation

Located at 224 Sussex Avenue in Newark, the shelter called H.E.L.P Center, is operated by Urban Renewal. The headquarters of Urban Renewal Corporation is located at Kearny, New Jersey. Their website, urbanrenewal.org, has not had updated news since December 2015.

According to the website, Urban Renewal has 600 beds in 6 housing facilities for emergency housing.

According to urbanrenew-

al.org, “URC is a community-based non-profit organization that has provided a variety of services to vulnerable populations in New Jersey for over two decades. ... Our goal is to help people move from homelessness, substance abuse, dependency and public assistance into permanent employment and stable housing. We serve approximately 2,000 economically disadvantaged individuals/families per year and have provided comprehensive services to over 100,000 individuals since we were founded in 1994. URC continues to serve a diverse adult population ranging in ages 18-80.”

In 2018, TapInto.net reported that at least 336 people used the shelter between December 2017 - July 2018. In July 2018, at least 238 people used the shelter at least once a month, TapInto.net reported.

The shelter opened in December 2017. United Airlines, PSEG, Prudential/NJ Devils, RWJBarnabas Health and University Hospital donated money to keep the shelter open. The money was donated directly to Newark Community Economic Development Center or another entity that paid the shelter’s cost. As per the law NEDC, a non-profit organization, is not affiliated with the city of Newark.

Services offered

According to intherooms.com, Urban Renewal Corp. Sussex House offers substance abuse treatment services; partial hospitalization/day treatment; helps persons with HIV/AIDS and persons with co-occurring mental and substance disorders; pregnant/postpartum women; women; DUI/DWI offenders; assistance for hearing impaired; seniors/older adults; and assistance to recovery voucher.

According to clustrmaps.com, 224 Sussex Avenue is divided into separate units where residents live. A sampling showed 15 people ranging in age between 31 to 83. Of these, only two were in their 30s; the rest were in their 50s, 60s and 80s. Almost every tenant had a phone

BANKRUPTCY

CHAPTER 7 BANKRUPTCY

CHAPTER 13 BANKRUPTCY

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number. Rent for a unit is \$1430 per month. This is less than \$1643 a month for two bedrooms in Essex County, according to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Information about the building and the shelter, 1940 - present

Information found about the building raises more questions than answers. Apparently, the previous owners tried to sell 224 Sussex Avenue. According to loopnet.com, the building was built in 1940. The building has +/- 61,680 square feet. There are five floors. The first floor has +/- 14,064 square feet, second through fifth floors have +/- 11,904 square feet. Land assessment in 2017 was \$362,000; improvements assessment, \$1,388,900. Total amounted to \$1,751,000. Taxes in 2017 were \$60,234.40. NOI was \$540,200. In 2020, according to njparcels.com, taxes were \$65,855.11.

There are 50 parking spaces by 224 Sussex Avenue. The

building has an R-6 zoning as a multifamily unit. IN 2017, the building was fully leased to GEO Group and T-Mobile (tower). The current owners are Sussex Avenue Urban Renewal Corp. based at 555 Passaic Avenue, West Caldwell, New Jersey.

How are the current owners paying for the upkeep and other necessities? If the building is a shelter, how do the tenants pay the \$1430 monthly rent?

According to a July 28, 2018 nj.com article, updated Jan. 30, 2019, at least 25 residents had jobs in construction after passing a drug test. The salary of \$22 per hour would qualify these individuals for Section 8 housing.

Munirah El Bomani, a community activist, told “Local Talk” that previously tenants had jobs. “Not sure about now. I know a few that have jobs,” El Bomani said via text message.

Former employee speaks out, alleges fraud and theft by management

(Continued on page 14)



African American Heritage Parade Organization Committee Appeals to Community to Get Educated on COVID-19 & FDA Approved Vaccines. So you can make a better vaccination decision for yourself.

Who should be vaccinated?

Everyone over the age of 16 should be vaccinated, unless they have a history of serious allergic reactions to the flu vaccines or if your healthcare provider has advised against it. Currently vaccines will not be given to children under the age of 16 because the clinical trials conducted to date have focused on adults. At this time the Moderna vaccine will not be given to anyone under 18.

How do vaccines work?

The purpose of a vaccine is to introduce elements of a virus to trigger our bodies to produce proteins which build antibodies which fight the virus if we are exposed to it. The vaccine contains no live virus.

How will the vaccine be given?

Both vaccines require two doses of the same vaccine. The time between the two doses varies somewhat, three weeks for the Pfizer vaccine and four weeks for the Moderna.

Are the vaccines safe?

The results so far are extremely good. Tens of thousands of people were vaccinated and followed as part of the clinical trials and there have not been any serious incidents.

What are the side effects of the vaccine?

Some people will experience symptoms like soreness at the injection site, aches, or slight fever. If you have experienced more severe reactions from previous vaccinations, you should consult with a health care provider before getting the COVID vaccine. It is also recommended that before getting vaccinated you tell the vaccination provider if you have a fever or a bleeding disorder, are on a blood thinner, are immunocompromised, or take medicine that affects your immune system.

Reporting problems or bad reactions after getting a COVID-19 vaccine. If you experience serious reactions contact a health provider as soon as possible. A national system has been established to collect data on all adverse reactions

(Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System: VAERS).

Is the vaccine safe for women who are pregnant or breast feeding?

The College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and other health organizations recommend that pregnant women get vaccinated. The fact that the vaccines do not contain live virus makes them safer than other vaccines.

Can I still get COVID-19 after I am vaccinated?

Both COVID-19 vaccines have been shown to be successful in reducing the risk of COVID disease. The vaccines are still being studied to determine, how effective they are in preventing infection and shedding of the virus. People can test positive for the COVID virus shortly after the vaccine because it takes our bodies a couple of weeks to build immunity. The vaccines can be effective in preventing serious illness and therefore save lives.

How long is the vaccine effective?

We do not know that at this time, as this is a totally new virus which we didn't know anything about until early 2020. Viruses usually mutate (change their structure and behavior) and new variations or strains can develop. A new strain of the COVID-19 virus has appeared in England, and now in several states. We don't know how different this strain is and whether it will compro-



Camille Yelverton was vaccinated along with other workers. "I got my vaccine to protect myself, my family, and residents here at the facility. It's important to get the shot!" she said.

mise the effectiveness of the vaccine if it becomes widespread in the United States.

Can we stop wearing face coverings once we have been vaccinated?

No. Stopping the pandemic requires using all the tools available. Vaccines work with your immune system so that your body is better able to fight the virus if you are exposed. Face coverings help reduce the chance of being exposed to the virus and spreading it to others.

Is getting the COVID-19 vaccine mandatory?

No, no governmental agency is making vaccination mandatory. The federal Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC) has stated that employers may require their employees get vaccinated in order to maintain employment. If you are faced with this issue, contact your union representative for assistance.

How do I get access to the vaccine?

Each state is setting up their own vaccine programs and guidelines. Vaccinations are likely to be available at medical centers, health clinics, drug stores and some workplaces. You may want to contact your union rep for more information to learn when you are eligible for vaccination.

What is the priority order for availability to get vaccinated?

Each state will be establishing a priority system for vaccinating residents but most are following the recommendations of the CDC. The CDC recommends the following phase-in order for determining who should be vaccinated first. They are: (1a) healthcare workers and long-term care facility residents; (1b) frontline essential workers and people aged 75 and older; (1c) people aged 65-74, people aged 16-64 with underlying medical conditions, and other essential workers such as food service, housing, public safety, and high-risk factor seniors. The availability of vaccines will be dependent on when and how many vaccines the states receive. All vaccines will be free.

As doses of the COVID-19 vaccine begin to make their way around the country, many people are excited to have this first step in managing the spread of coronavirus.

Unfortunately, there has been a lot of misinformation surrounding the vaccine and its development. When deciding whether to get the vaccine, it's important to separate myths from facts.

Myth: The COVID-19 vaccine is unsafe because it was developed so quickly.

Fact: The vaccine is proven safe and effective.

Although it was developed in record time, it has gone through the same rigorous Food and Drug Administration process as every other vaccine, meeting all safety standards. No steps were skipped. Instead, we can thank the unprecedented worldwide collaboration and investment for the shorter timeframe on the development of the vaccine itself. The clinical trials and safety reviews actually

took about the same amount of time as other vaccines.

Myth: The COVID-19 vaccine will alter my DNA.

Fact: The first vaccines granted emergency use authorization contain messenger

(Continued on page 9)

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GET EDUCATED

(Continued from page 8)

RNA (mRNA), which instructs cells to make the “spike protein” found on the new coronavirus. When the immune system recognizes this protein, it builds an immune response by creating antibodies - teaching the body how to protect against future infection. The mRNA never enters the nucleus of the cell, which is where our DNA (genetic material) is kept. The body gets rid of the mRNA soon after it’s finished using the instructions.

Myth: The COVID-19 vaccine includes a tracking device.

Fact: A video shared thousands of times on Facebook makes false claims about the products of syringe maker Apiject Systems of America, which has a contract with the government to provide medical-grade injection devices for vaccines. The company has an optional version of its product that contains a microchip within the syringe label that helps providers confirm a vaccine dose’s origin. The chip itself is not injected into the person getting the vaccine.

Myth: The COVID-19 vaccine has severe side effects such as allergic reactions.

Fact: Some participants in the vaccine clinical trials did report side effects similar to those experienced with other vaccines, including muscle pain, chills and headache. And although extremely rare, people can have severe allergic reactions to ingredients used in a vaccine. That’s why experts recommend people with a history of severe allergic reactions - such as anaphylaxis - to the ingredients of the vaccine should not get the vaccination.

Myth: The COVID-19 vaccine causes infertility in women.

Fact: Misinformation on social media suggests the vaccine trains the body to attack syncytin-1, a protein in the placenta, which could lead to infertility in women. The truth is, there’s an amino acid sequence shared between the spike protein and a placental protein;

Status of COVID-19 Vaccines within WHO EUL/PQ evaluation process

Manufacturer	Name of Vaccine	Regulatory Authority	Platform	ECI accepted	Pre-submission meeting held	Dossier accepted for review*	Status of assessment**	Anticipated decision date***
1. Pfizer	BNT162b2/COMIRNATY Tozinameran (mRNA)	EMA	Nucleoside modified mRNA	✓	✓	✓	Finalized	31/12/20
2. AstraZeneca	AZD1222Z	EMA, MHRA, NMPA	Recombinant ChAdOx1 adenoviral vector encoding the Spike protein antigen of the SARS-CoV-2.	✓	✓	Accepted core data of AZ - non-Covax Data for Covax expected in March 2021.	Non-Covax Core data Awaited	NA March - April 2021
3. SK BIO	AZD1222Z	NFDS KOREA	Recombinant ChAdOx1 adenoviral vector encoding the Spike protein antigen of the SARS-CoV-2.	✓	✓	✓	Finalized	15 Feb 2021
4. Serum Institute of India	Covishield (ChAdOx1_nCoV-19)	DCGI	Recombinant ChAdOx1 adenoviral vector encoding the Spike protein antigen of the SARS-CoV-2.	✓	✓	✓	Finalized	15 Feb 2021
5. Sinovac / BIBP	SARS-CoV-2 Vaccine (Vero Cell), Inactivated (InCoV)	NMPA	Inactivated, produced in Vero cells	✓	✓	✓	In progress	Earliest March
6. Sinovac	SARS-CoV-2 Vaccine (Vero Cell), Inactivated	NMPA	Inactivated, produced in Vero cells	✓	✓	Additional expected end of Feb 2021		Earliest March
7. Moderna	mRNA-1273	EMA	mRNA-based vaccine encapsulated in lipid nanoparticle (LNP)	✓	✓	Additional data expected week starting 15 Feb 2021		Estimated end of Feb 2021
8. Janssen	Ad26.COV2.S	EMA	Recombinant, replication-incompetent adenovirus type 26 (Ad26) vectored vaccine encoding the (SARS-CoV-2) Spike (S) protein	✓	✓	Rolling data to EMA - Dec, 20 Jan and 15 Feb 2021 To submit for EUL on 19 Feb 2021	Not yet started Lite abridged procedure relying on EMA	March - April 2021
9. The Gamaleya Institute	Sputnik V	Russian NRA	Human Adenovirus Vector-based Covid-19 vaccine	Additional information submitted	Several meetings held	Rolling data started 06 and additional data expected week starting 15 Feb 2021		
10. CanSinoBio	Ad5-nCoV	NMPA	Recombinant Novel Coronavirus Vaccine (Adenovirus Type 5 Vector)	✓	✓	Rolling data starting April 2021		
11. Vector State Research Centre of Virology and Biotechnology	EpiVacCorona	Russian NRA	Peptide antigen	Letter received not ECI. Reply sent on 15/01/2021				
12. Zhifeng Longcom, China	Recombinant Novel Coronavirus Vaccine (CHO Cell)	NMPA	Recombinant protein subunit	Response to Second ECI sent 29 Jan 2021. Additional information requested.				
13. IMBGMS, China	SARS-CoV-2 Vaccine, Inactivated (Vero Cell)	NMPA	Inactivated	Not accepted, still under initial development				
14. Sinopharm / WIBP	Inactivated SARS-CoV-2 Vaccine (Vero Cell)	NMPA	No pre-submission meeting yet					
15. Hovion/AAK		EMA	No pre-submission meeting yet	Awaiting decision on submission				

1. Serum Institute of Biological Products, India
2. Yuhua Institute of Biological Products Co Ltd

* Dossier Submission date; more than one date is possible because of the rolling submission. Dossier is accepted for submission after screening of received submission

** Status of assessment: 1. Under screening; 2. Under assessment; 3. Waiting responses from the applicant; 4. Risk-benefit decision; 5. Final decision made

*** Anticipated decision date; this is only an estimate because it depends on when all the data is submitted under rolling submission and when all the responses to the assessors' questions are submitted.

however, experts say it’s too short to trigger an immune response and therefore doesn’t affect fertility.

Myth: I’ve already been diagnosed with COVID-19, so I don’t need to receive the vaccine.

Fact: If you have already had COVID-19, there’s evidence that you can still benefit from the vaccine. At this time, experts don’t know how long someone is protected from getting sick again after recovering from COVID-19. The immunity someone gains from having an infection, called natural immunity, varies from person to person. Some early evidence suggests natural immunity may not last very long.

Myth: Once I receive the COVID-19 vaccine, I no longer need to wear a mask.

Fact: Masking, handwashing and physical distancing remain neces-

sary until a sufficient number of people are immune. The best protection we can offer each other right now is to continue to follow current guidelines. As more people are vaccinated and experts have a better idea of how long natural and vaccine immunity last, public health experts will update their guidance as necessary.

Myth: You can get COVID-19 from the vaccine.

Fact: You cannot get COVID-19 from the vaccine because it doesn’t contain the live virus.

Myth: Once I receive the vaccine, I will test positive for COVID-19.

Fact: Viral tests used to diagnose COVID-19 check samples from the respiratory system for the presence of the virus that causes COVID-19. Since there is no live virus in the vaccines, the vaccines will not affect your test result. It is possible to

get infected with the virus before the vaccine has had time to fully protect your body.

Myth: I’m not at risk for severe complications of COVID-19 so I don’t need the vaccine.

Fact: Regardless of your risk, you can still contract the infection and spread it to others, so it’s important you get vaccinated. Once the vaccine is widely available, it’s recommended that as many eligible adults as possible get the vaccine. It’s not only to protect you but your family and community as well.

Myth: If I receive the COVID-19 vaccine, I am at a greater risk to become sick from another illness.

Fact: The vaccine is made up of mRNA, which boosts your immunity to the coronavirus. It does not heighten your risk to become sick from another infection such as the flu.

NASA LANDS GROUNDBREAKING PERSEVERANCE ROVER ON MARS

NASA - The largest, most advanced rover NASA has sent to another world touched down on Mars Feb. 18, after a 203-day journey traversing 293 million miles (472 million kilometers). Confirmation of the successful touchdown was announced in mission control at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Southern California at 3:55 p.m. EST (12:55 p.m. PST).

Packed with groundbreaking technology, the Mars 2020 mission launched July 30, 2020, from Cape Canaveral Space Force Station in Florida. The Perseverance rover mission marks an ambitious first step in the effort to collect Mars samples and return them to Earth.

"This landing is one of those pivotal moments for NASA, the United States, and space exploration globally - when we know we are on the cusp of discovery and sharpening our pencils, so to speak, to rewrite the textbooks," said acting NASA Administrator Steve Jurczyk. "The Mars 2020 Perseverance mission embodies our nation's spirit of persevering even in the most challenging of situations, inspiring, and advancing science and exploration. The mission itself personifies the human ideal of persevering toward the future and will help us prepare for human exploration of the Red Planet."

About the size of a car, the 2,263-pound (1,026-kilogram) robotic geologist and astrobiologist will undergo several weeks of testing before it begins its two-year science investigation of Mars' Jezero Crater. While the rover will investigate the rock and sediment of Jezero's ancient lakebed and river delta to characterize the region's geology and past climate, a fundamental part of its mission is astrobiology, including the search for signs of ancient microbial life.

To that end, the Mars Sample Return campaign, being planned by NASA and ESA (European Space Agency), will allow scientists on Earth to study samples collected by Perseverance to search for definitive signs of past life using instruments too large and complex to send to the Red Planet.

"Because of today's exciting events, the first pristine samples from carefully documented locations on another planet are another step closer to being returned to Earth," said Thomas Zurbuchen, associate administrator for science at NASA. "Perseverance is the first step in bringing back rock and regolith from Mars. We don't know what these pristine samples from Mars will tell us. But what they could tell us is monumental - including that life might have once existed

beyond Earth."

Some 28 miles (45 kilometers) wide, Jezero Crater sits on the western edge of Isidis Planitia, a giant impact basin just north of the Martian equator. Scientists have determined that 3.5 billion years ago the crater had its own river delta and was filled with water.

The power system that provides electricity and heat for Perseverance through its exploration of Jezero Crater is a Multi-Mission Radioisotope Thermoelectric Generator, or MMRTG. The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) provided it to NASA through an ongoing partnership to develop power systems for civil space applications.

Equipped with seven primary science instruments, the most cameras ever sent to Mars, and its exquisitely complex sample caching system - the first of its kind sent into space - Perseverance will scour the Jezero region for fossilized remains of ancient microscopic Martian life, taking samples along the way.

"Perseverance is the most sophisticated robotic geologist ever made, but verifying that microscopic life once existed carries an enormous burden of proof," said Lori Glaze, director of NASA's Planetary Science Division. "While we'll learn a lot with the great instruments we

have aboard the rover, it may very well require the far more capable laboratories and instruments back here on Earth to tell us whether our samples carry evidence that Mars once harbored life."

"Landing on Mars is always an incredibly difficult task and we are proud to continue building on our past success," said JPL Director Michael Watkins. "But, while Perseverance advances that success, this rover is also blazing its own path and daring new challenges in the surface mission. We built the rover not just to land but to find and collect the best scientific samples for return to Earth, and its incredibly complex sampling system and autonomy not only enable that mission, they set the stage for future robotic and crewed missions."

The Mars Entry, Descent, and Landing Instrumentation 2 (MEDLI2) sensor suite collected data about Mars' atmosphere during entry, and the Terrain-Relative Navigation system autonomously guided the spacecraft during final descent. The data from both are expected to help future human missions land on other worlds more safely and with larger payloads.

On the surface of Mars, Perseverance's science instruments

(Continued on page 12)

CHANGES SET FOR

UPCOMING SPRING VOTE

(Continued from page 5)

-6 p.m. Sundays for 15 days ahead of "Election Day." Those polling stations will not be open, however, on the day before Election Day.

"Local Talk" has calculated the prospective periods to be April 5-18 for the April 20 school board and April 25-May 9 nonpartisan municipal elections.

S2303 has cleared the State Senate Appropriations Committee Feb. 22 but, as of press time,

is waiting to see how its Assembly version clears its committee.

A4830, sponsored by Assemblyman Andrew Zwicker (D-So. Brunswick), appropriates \$2 million to the counties to pay for the extra polling booth hours.

Zwicker's bill, however, trims early in-person voting to 10 days before a Presidential General Election, five days before Presidential primaries - and three days for "non-Presidential primaries."

A4830 has Assembly Members Ralph Caputo (D-Belleville) Mila Jasey (D-South Orange) and Cleopatra Tucker (D-

Newark) among its co-sponsors.

State Senate and General Assembly members, who will reconcile both bills' differences in a post-vote committee, are running out of time to have it take effect for April 20 and May 11.

Prospective school board and nonpartisan municipal candidates, by another Murphy executive order, are meanwhile allowed to get physical and electronic signatures for their election petitions.

Those petitions still have to be filed to or in school board secretary and municipal clerk offices on or before 4 p.m., of

the 60th day before an election.

"Local Talk" translates that 60-calendar-days' filing period for the May 11 elections going out to March 12. April 20's school board deadline, Feb. 19, has passed.

Irvington and Newark voters are to decide on at least three public school board candidates each April 20 and South Orange three village trustee candidates May 11 - giving voters in the other nine "Local Talk" towns a "spring training" opportunity to check with Essex County on their registration accuracy.

LOCAL WEEKLY NEWSPAPER



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*From
The
Pastor's
Heart*

OP-ED BY DR. ROBERT KENNEDY

The Right To Rebel

After listening to Congregational Committees hearings on what went wrong on the day of the insurrection at the United States Capitol building on January 6, 2021, and also watching a news flash on a representative who participated in a zoom Congressional committee hearing, using guns as the backdrop, I began to think about the right of rebellion that is built into the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

I began to feel that the right to rebel has become the right of destruction. I am not singular in my thoughts because Albert Camus, one of the most profoundly influential thinkers of the last century, reflected on rebellion in the French Constitution that led to the revolution. And he said that the urge to revolt is one of the "essential dimensions" of human nature, manifested in man's timeless Promethean struggle against the conditions of his existence, as well as the popular uprisings against established orders throughout history. But then he shows how inevitably the course of revolution leads to tyranny.

In my brief reflection, I am saying that the First and Second Amendments of the American Constitution that offer the rights to free speech and the right to bear arms are seeded with destruction. I do not know that I can tell all that the writers of the Constitution had in mind when

they wrote the First and Second Amendments - the rights to free speech and the right to bear arms. I am sure that they did not intend for these rights to be abused as they are being abused today. But here is where we are - living out the abuse of the freedoms.

Let me frame what I am arguing by asking the following questions:

- Are there limits to our freedom of speech and freedom to carry arms?
- Do people have the right to say anything that comes to their minds?
- Do they have the right to spew anger, hatred and bitterness that will lead to violence?
- Do they have the right to speak any dirt that comes to their mouths?
- Do they have the liberty to use the language of ridicule and bullying that destroy others?
- Is this the kind of right of speech that the Constitution is seeking to give?
- Should people have free reign to purchase all the (kinds of) guns that they are purchasing?
- Do they have the right to brandish their guns in the public square, as many are?
- Do they have the right to attack the Capitol or any other building or people with their guns?
- Do people have the right to use their guns to intimidate others, as they are doing?

I am not trying to give direct answers to the questions above but let me turn to the Bible, a book in which I have a better understanding than the Constitution. Let me remind you, dear reader, that we can abuse free-

dom. Freedom without limits is a farce.

If at all, you know and accept the history of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden in the Genesis story, you will agree that something went wrong when they misunderstood and abused their freedom(s). Something went wrong when they listened to the serpent instead of listening to God. Something went awry when they rebelled against God. Something went amiss when they ate the fruit from the tree God had told them not to eat. Read the story in Genesis 3, and you cannot miss the struggle with identity, the fear, the pain, the alienation, the conflict, the blaming, the shaming, the suspicion, the despair, the destruction and death that came as a consequence of the abuse of the freedom.

Let me even invite you to read Genesis 4 to see the brokenness in family relationships and Cain's resentment that led to the murder of his brother Abel. Read on further in Genesis and see how Lamech, one of Cain's great-great-great-grandson, followed Cain's disobedience and murderous ways by killing a person he felt had insulted him.

Then look at the boast of his sin to his two wives and his rejoicing about suffering no consequences: "If Cain is avenged seven times, then Lamech seventy-seven times." I do not need to trace the rebellion story any further, except to state that God had to wipe out the earliest generations of humanity with a flood, then start human history again through Noah (Read Genesis 6-9).

Why do I seek to connect the freedom in the American Constitution with the freedom in the Genesis story? It is to state that freedom is portentous of good and evil and that when we refuse

to respect the limits of freedom, we are bound to self-destruct. If we have no limits on how we speak and carry guns, we can be sure that soon and very soon, we will reap the ultimate results of our misappropriated freedoms. I remind us of two things with a critical biblical perspective.

1. Our freedom of speech

Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. (James 3:5-8 NIV)

2. Our freedom to bear arms

Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword." (Matthew 26:52 ESV)

Do you get the message? Although we have our rights and freedoms, we need to watch our rebellious tongues because they can cause real trouble. We need to think clearly about the weaponry we think we need for protection because it can lead to destruction.

I pause here and will speak more of the right of rebellion in a future reflection. However, whatever think of the right to participate in rebellious speech or defense, you must carefully examine your actions and motives.

NASA LANDS PERSEVERANCE ROVER ON MARS

(Continued from page 10)

will have an opportunity to scientifically shine. Mastcam-Z is a pair of zoomable science cameras on Perseverance's remote sensing mast, or head, that creates high-resolution, color 3D panoramas of the Martian land-

scape. Also located on the mast, the SuperCam uses a pulsed laser to study the chemistry of rocks and sediment and has its own microphone to help scientists better understand the property of the rocks, including their hardness.

Located on a turret at the end of the rover's robotic arm, the Planetary Instrument for X-ray Lithochemistry (PIXL) and the

Scanning Habitable Environments with Raman & Luminescence for Organics & Chemicals (SHERLOC) instruments will work together to collect data on Mars' geology close-up. PIXL will use an X-ray beam and suite of sensors to delve into a rock's elemental chemistry.

"Perseverance is more than a rover, and more than this amazing collection of men and wom-

en that built it and got us here," said John McNamee, project manager of the Mars 2020 Perseverance rover mission at JPL. "It is even more than the 10.9 million people who signed up to be part of our mission. This mission is about what humans can achieve when they persevere. We made it this far. Now, watch us go."

MARIJUANA LEGISLATION

FINALLY PASSED

(Continued from page 1)

tionately people of color, to be arrested in New Jersey each year for low-level drug offenses is unjust and indefensible,” said Governor Murphy. “This November, New Jerseyans voted overwhelmingly in support of creating a well-regulated adult-use cannabis market. Although this process has taken longer than anticipated, I believe it is ending in the right place and will ultimately serve as a national model.

“This legislation will establish an industry that brings equity and economic opportunity to our communities, while establishing minimum standards for safe products and allowing law enforcement to focus their resources on real public safety matters,” continued Governor Murphy. “Today, we’re taking a monumental step forward to reduce racial disparities in our criminal justice system, while building a promising new industry and standing on the right side of history. I’d like to thank the Legislature, advocates, faith leaders, and community leaders for their dedicated work and partnership on this critical issue.”

Under A21, the Cannabis Regulatory Commission (CRC) will promulgate regulations to govern the medical and adult-use industries and oversee the applications for licensing of cannabis businesses. The legislation further provides for the Legislature to reinvest cannabis revenues in designated “impact zones”; directs the CRC to promote diversity and inclusion in business ownership; and contains critical employment protections for people who engage in lawful behavior with respect to cannabis.

A1897 reforms criminal and civil penalties for marijuana and hashish offenses, as well as provides remedies for people currently facing certain marijuana charges. The bill prevents unlawful low-level distribution and possession offenses from being used in pretrial release, probation, and parole decisions and

provides certain protections against discrimination in employment, housing, and places of public accommodation. The bill also creates a pathway to vacate active sentences for certain offenses committed before enactment of the enabling legislation.

The Governor also signed S3454 into law, clarifying penalties for marijuana and cannabis possession and consumption for individuals younger than 21 years old. The legislation corrects inconsistencies in A21 and A1897 concerning marijuana and cannabis penalties for those under age.

“I have been working on decriminalizing adult-use marijuana for well over three years now, and I am happy to finally see it become a reality,” said Senator Ronald Rice. “This is a common-sense and just law that gives an equal playing field for folks in communities of color. Many have argued that legalizing adult-use marijuana has been for social, economic and criminal justice, however, decriminalization for me, is equally as important. I will continue to watch closely and fight to ensure communities of color are treated equally.”

“The failed War on Drugs has systematically targeted people of color and the poor, disproportionately impacting Black and Brown communities and hurting families in New Jersey and across our nation,” said U.S Senator Cory Booker. “Today is a historic day, and I applaud Governor Murphy, the legislature, and the many advocates for racial and social justice whose leadership is ensuring that New Jersey is at the forefront of equitable marijuana legalization policy. I will continue to work with my colleagues in the Senate to end the federal marijuana prohibition so we can finally begin healing the wounds of decades of injustice.”

“I am proud to have been a driving force behind the most progressive decriminalization law in the country and I am grateful to finally see it enacted,” said Senator Teresa Ruiz. “Every day roughly 100 people in New Jersey are arrested for marijuana possession, this law is a move that offers individuals a second

ESSEX COUNTY COVID-19 CASE TALLY

Weekly Statistics from February 17 - February 24, 2021

Municipality	2-17-2021	Deaths	2-24-2021	Deaths
Belleville	4179	96	4317	97
Bloomfield	3994	97	4082	100
Caldwell	432	14	442	15
Cedar Grove	1207	119	1224	119
East Orange	5161	266	5255	271
Essex Fells	142	2	148	2
Fairfield	640	27	656	29
Glen Ridge	261	11	281	11
Irvington	3358	202	3434	204
Livingston	1397	81	1441	81
Maplewood	900	33	928	33
Millburn	646	8	660	8
Montclair	1626	64	1659	65
Newark	29573	853	30262	869
North Caldwell	336	6	349	6
Nutley	2174	51	2237	54
Orange	2618	118	2686	120
Roseland	382	15	387	15
South Orange	573	11	605	12
Verona	709	16	746	16
West Caldwell	805	51	826	51
West Orange	3549	215	3621	216
Total	64662	2356	66246	2394

OTHER COVID-19 TALLIES (As of Feb. 24, 2021)

NJ: 687,386 cases / 20,689 deaths (Plus 2,289 probable)

United States (approx.): 28.3 Million / 503,500 deaths

Worldwide (approx.): 112.32 Million / 2.5 Million deaths

NJ Gov. Murphy has announced that fans will now be allowed to attend entertainment and sporting events, with COVID-19 rules in effect (masks, social distancing, capacity limits, etc.)

Also, houses of worship can open up to 50% capacity, with the aforementioned COVID-19 rules in effect.

chance and ensures they do not become entangled in the criminal justice system. This is yet another step towards bringing justice and equity to our communities. Going forward, we must continue to look for creative solutions to reverse the generational impact the War on Drugs has had.”

“This new law includes real, enterprising opportunities for New Jersey communities that have been disproportionately impacted by cannabis prohibition, along with more defined employment opportunities and a commission that requires diversity,” said Assemblywoman Britnee Timberlake. “This will be a clear revenue generator for the State, and the social justice and diversity portion in the legislation remains imperative.”

“Decriminalization and expungement for those who have been disproportionately incarcerated for marijuana offenses is well overdue in New Jersey and many other states throughout this nation. A criminal marijuana charge has a detrimental effect on an individual’s opportunity to access higher education, obtain gainful employment, receive housing support, and address child custody issues. Not all communities are impacted equally by marijuana enforcement, measures to reduce the collateral consequences of criminal records are ones of racial, social, and economic justice. This is about social justice for a people who have endured the inequities in the law for generations.”

Legally Speaking



Cassandra Savoy, Esq.
OP/ED

Bankruptcy Might be the Answer

A friend who worked in midtown for a major Fortune 500 firm told me that his firm had given up three of the five floors they leased. Employees are working remotely, and the expectation is that most people will not return to the site, but will continue to work remotely and for those who need to come in to

the office, they will share space with others and only have to come in a couple of days per week.

So, I began to wonder...what happens to the cleaning staff? What happens to the pool secretaries? Another friend was an executive chef in a major restaurant. They had a huge lunch business. That restaurant has closed its doors forever. What will happen when the pandemic is finally over and those who have been unemployed - through no fault of their own I might add - for more than a year are left scrambling for the few available jobs.

I suspect that many people who have survived with unemployment, and due to the courtesies of creditors will find themselves at the end of their rope and for many, the only available "out" may be the bankruptcy court. The goal of bankruptcy is to discharge the debtor's debts and give him a fresh start.

For most people, the process begins by filing a Chapter 7 or

Chapter 13 bankruptcy petition. The goal of a Chapter 7 petition is to allow the debtor to liquidate and clear away many types of unsecured debts like credit card debt. If you're far behind on your bills and don't have the means to make monthly payments and living expenses, this may be the way to go.

On the other hand, if you own a house and have other assets, a Chapter 13 may be better option. In a Chapter 13, your total amount of your debts may be reduced, and you will have a payment plan to repay your creditors. In every bankruptcy case, a trustee is appointed.

While the overarching role of the trustee is to collect and liquidate the petitioner's property (called "estate") and to distribute the proceeds to creditors. Many people are unaware of just how powerful the trustee is. The trustee collects and reduces to money the property of the bankruptcy petitioner and close the estate as quickly as possible. The trustee ensures that the debtor

either keeps or surrenders property that secures consumer debt; the debtor makes all payments to the trustee who, in turn, pays the creditors. The trustee can terminate the Chapter 13 if you fail to keep your part of the bargain.

The Chapter 13 process can go over several years depending on the income of the debtor and size of the debt.

- Debts that you left off your bankruptcy petition,
- Many types of taxes;
- Child support
- Alimony;
- Fines or penalties owed to government agencies;
- Student loans; and,
- Personal injury debts arising out of a drunk driving accident

Bankruptcy is complicated. You will likely need an attorney who regularly works in the bankruptcy court to help you. This is not the time to go it alone. You could end up in a worse position that when you started!

SHELTER (Continued from page 7)

According to an anonymous former employee whose post on indeed.com is dated January 2, 2019, working at Urban Renewal Homeless shelter at 224 Sussex Avenue was challenging. Using the nickname "Non-Applicable," the former employee gave the following description.

"I begin work at 7:00 a.m. I met with the adolescent to review their progress with obtaining their GED. I met with clients that were positive for HIV. I set up doctor appointments, assist [ed] with obtaining medication, submitted Ryan White reports each month. I learned how to meet the needs for a client that had a chronic illness. I completed intake with new clients. I facilitated Health, education, Risk, Reduction Groups (HERR). The hardest part of the job was dealing with the manager who was (accused of) stealing money from the clients.

The most enjoyable part of the job was helping the client get their needs met with medical,

medication, housing and education."

According to the former employee, he "enjoyed working with adolescents and chronic illness clients."

There were several earlier reviews dated 2013-2016. Two were four stars, one five stars, and the last one, one star. It went downhill once management changed in 2017.

The shelter closed in September 2018 but reopened after private donors donated funds to keep it open. At that point, the shelter had 194 residents.

Community Activists speak out

In her email, Munirah El Bomani, a community activist, wrote in part, "in Newark, all shelters are full capacity except the horrible one at 224 Sussex Avenue where the homeless don't want to go because they are treated worse than animals."

Sources have told "Local Talk" that bad food is an issue that needs to be addressed by the federal health departments.

In a text message interview, Munirah El Bomani said that H.E.L.P Center / Urban Renewal at 224 Sussex Avenue had major problems. "Staff unprofessional. Food horrible. Freezing cold. Drug haven. Crime being swept under the rug, worse than the Lincoln Motel," El Bomani wrote.

No Comparison to Lincoln Motel

Before its demolition in October 2007, there existed a shelter called Lincoln Motel. It was located opposite Newark Broad Street train station. According to an October 8, 2007 New York Times article, the motel was owned by Miles Berger, a Jewish businessman who purchased it in 1976. Previously, an abandoned Holiday Inn hotel, the building was renamed in honor of President Lincoln who stopped in Newark in 1861 on his way to the inauguration. According to the article, in the 1980s, Mr. Berger turned the motel's 200 rooms into a haven for welfare recipients. Berger

received about \$1000 a month per person.

Crime, drugs and prostitution were rife at the Lincoln Motel, states the 2007 New York Times article. Police arrests "were so common that a motel floor plan graced the well of the public defender's office to assist lawyers juggling cases." With all of its problems, the old Lincoln Motel could not be compared to the infamous H.E.L.P. shelter at 224 Sussex Avenue.

At the Lincoln Motel, residents slept in regular beds, not mattresses. Rooms were warm. Police was a phone call away, there being a police presence at nearby Broad Street train station. No one tried to evict tenants without due process, defraud them, or serve bad and spoiled food.

Debra Salters, another community activist, told "Local Talk" via telephone, "I met people who slept in a park rather than be at that shelter."

TOWN WATCH

(Continued from page 6)

were respectively held 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Feb. 24 at the Silverton Memorial Funeral Home. Entombment followed at the Ocean County Memorial Park, Toms River.

SOUTH ORANGE / MAPLEWOOD - Village President Sheena Collum said that she, Maplewood Mayor Frank McGehee and their respective elders are talking with both sides of the SOMSD-SOMEA impasse Feb. 22 - about two hours after 100 parents rallied in front of the Maplewood Municipal Building to push for fully reopened schools.

Collum, during the village Board of Trustees meeting, said that she and McGehee have been talking with South Orange-Maplewood School District Board of Education members and have been looking on how to get COVID tests and vaccinations to South Orange-Maplewood Education Association members sooner. The Village President stressed that she and Mayor McGehee are working within institutional limits.

"We obviously have a consolidated district and the way it works is that we're a separate entity," said Collum. "We're a separate taxing authority. We're great partners in that we always welcome the opportunity to work with our schools."

100 members of SOMA for Safe Return to School held a 5 p.m. rally at Maplewood's town hall, calling for a return to full-time, in-classroom instruction for all elementary and special education students. This was held on the 100th day of the 2020-21 school year - and the 345th day since SOMSD closed the physical schools to help curb the global COVID pandemic.

Respective SOMSD and SOMEA leaders have been talking with a mediator to try to get their Jan. 27 school reopening plan revived. Disagreements over classroom readiness had closed a limited reopening Feb. 15 and kicked out its next step to either March 15 or April 19. Teacher continue to remotely instruct from their own homes.

The SOMSD school board has filed suit in State Superior Court-Newark Feb. 23 to end SOMEA's "illegal job action" and bring teachers back to the classrooms "immediately."

A new group - the SOMA Community Alliance for Education - announced their existence at Monday night's SOMSD BOE meeting. SOMA CAE posed a 10 point plan to comprehensively bring about safe school reopenings.

BLOOMFIELD - To say that two-term Councilman Gary Iacobacci, 64, who died Feb. 16, had his heart in Bloomfield may

be an understatement.

While some may look at Iacobacci's two terms on the Township Council 1990-96 as his career highpoint, the adopted son had been involved in Bloomfield's political and civic activities for the last five decades.

Iacobacci had helped campaign for several other council members. The one-time Bloomfield Little League coach was also a member of the Municipal Youth Guidance Council, Bloomfield-Newark Elks, Bloomfield UNICO, Bloomfield Friends of the Library and a Brookdale Park walking group.

Iacobacci, who was born in Newark Aug. 17, 1956, came here by way of Belleville. His family moved from Stephen Crane Village and Gary the Abington Avenue School to Belleville in 1966 and settled in Bloomfield.

The Bloomfield High School Class of 1974 graduate, except for his schooling at Nutley's RETS Institute and his medical equipment technician field calls, pretty much stayed here.

Son Gary, Jr., daughters Marie Iacobacci and Kristina Reese, brother Frank, sisters Mary Ann Mignone and grandsons Giovanni Iacobacci and Donovan Reese are among his survivors. Visitation was held Feb. 21 and funeral Feb. 22 at Nutley's S.W. Brown and Son Funeral Home. Burial was followed at Glendale Cemetery.

MONTCLAIR - The township government is now working on a 20-day clock, set by a State Superior Court judge Feb. 22, to decide on a landlords group's "cured" rent control referendum petition.

Judge Jeffrey B. Beacham is asking Montclair's township clerk to either certify the Montclair Property Owners Association's petition and schedule a special election or repeal its April 27-approved rent control law - on or before March 15.

Beacham's Monday ruling reverses his Jan. 15 ruling that upheld Township Clerk Angelese Bermudez Nieves rejection of MPOA's "cured" petition. The judge took up the landlord group's appeal to stay his Jan. 15 decision and re-evaluate.

MPOA had twice brought their "cured" petitions, with the corrections to match corrections in registered voters' signatures and addresses. Nieves' rejection, however, left the petition 27 signatures short of Montclair's 1,530 minimum to have the referendum question considered for ballot placement.

Beacham allowed MPOA to conduct their signature drive electronically due to the global COVID pandemic. The judge ordered the township to turn over resident's email addresses from a reverse-911 list - which Montclair elders felt was an invasion of privacy.

BELLEVILLE / NUTLEY - The dispute

between particular protesters, including a Belleville man, and individual Nutley police officers during the June 26 demonstrations at Nutley's Columbus monument has resurfaced in U.S. Federal Court-Newark Feb. 17.

Attorneys for Kevin Alfano, 21, of Belleville, and Georgana Sziszak, 20, Queens, N.Y., have filed a First Amendment suit against NPD Det. Michael Rempusheski.

Attorney Robert Friedman, of New York said that Det. Rempusheski's July 1 issuing a summons for cyberstalking and filing the said criminal complaint with ECPO was meant to stifle Alfano's freedom of speech.


Rempusheski had filed his suit against Alfano, Sziszak, one other Nutley man and two Belleville women because Alfano had posted a photo of another NPD detective between the demonstrators, asking for his identity.

Rempusheski said that his colleague, identified as Det. P.J. Sandomenico, told him that he was fearing harm to him and his family by Alfano's posting. The ECO dismissed Rempusheski's complaint by July 15 for "insufficient evidence."

Alfano, said Friedman, has since suffered from anxiety and sleeplessness, had stopped attending protests and made his online accounts private.

Alfano had posted Sandomenico's photo because he had hid his name on his badge June 26 and appeared to have befriended the counter-protestors. NPD officers stood between those by the statute, who erroneously thought the Nutley for Black Lives protestors were arriving to topple the Christopher Columbus marker.

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