



**City in transition**  
Northern Station Captain Joe Engler moves on. p. 6  
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Are people really fleeing San Francisco? p. 11



**More online**  
NEW! Expanded Reynolds Rap! The Coastal Commuter gets sporty, and more.  
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Elle Fanning plays Empress Catherine and Nicholas Hoult plays Emperor Peter III in *The Great*, now available for streaming on Hulu. PHOTOS: OLLIE UPTON/HULU

## The empress and the stranger

BY MICHAEL SNYDER

DESPITE CURRENT PRODUCTION suspensions and slowdowns that have caused some of our go-to network and cable TV programs to shorten their seasons or postpone their upcoming returns, enough already finished shows were banked

earlier this year to allow for some seriously good viewing right now. The streaming services in particular have been a boon to anyone wishing to catch fresh high-quality programming or delve into the video archives for a classic or two. On the new and nifty side, we have a marvelous period satire and a tense modern-day mystery.

### 'THE GREAT'

Huzzah! *The Great* — set in the 18th-century Russian royal court of Emperor Peter III and Empress Catherine — is a delicious stew of skewed history, sly comedy, and character-driven drama. Stew? Make that tasty borscht. The fact that it

SNYDER, continued on 8

### REYNOLDS RAP :: Opinion

## Friends with community benefits

Is the SFPUC running a social impact program or a pay-to-play scheme?

BY SUSAN DYER REYNOLDS

OVER A YEAR AGO WHEN I BROKE THE STORY OF Department of Public Works boss Mohammed Nuru's shameless corruption, his romances with Mayor London Breed and Sandra Zuniga (recently charged by the FBI with laundering money for Nuru), and the way City Hall has ignored dirty politics for decades, I was also digging into the shadowy San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) Community Benefits Program. SFPUC General Manager Harlan Kelly Jr. and Assistant General Manager Juliet Ellis have run a pay-to-play scheme in plain sight for years, extracting money from contractors doing business with the SFPUC and funneling it to "nonprofits" associated with their friends.

They do this through multimillion-dollar agreements with joint venture boards — representatives from different contractors who team up on an SFPUC project. There are numerous joint venture boards, so for the purpose of this column, let's focus on one: AECOM-Parsons.

REYNOLDS RAP, continued on 4

### MOMSENSE :: Teaching kids

## Hopeful for change

How to have important discussions with children

BY LIZ FARRELL

WHO WOULD HAVE EVER THOUGHT THAT IN the middle of a major pandemic we could also be looking at the possibility of real change on an entirely different topic? Who would have ever thought that while sheltering in place and arguing over droplets and wearing masks there was a much larger movement coming?

This international movement was spurred by outrage over the horrible killing of George Floyd. A terrible act of violence by several Minneapolis police officers sparked protests, riots, and uncomfortable but long overdue and much-needed conversations around racial injustice and inequity in our country. These conversations are happening worldwide, in our communities, and around our dinner tables.

As parents, we were explaining the difference between protests and riots to our children, why we were under curfew for several days all while still trying to make sense of it ourselves. The protests have slowed, the curfew lifted, but for change to happen we can't stop listening, educating, and continuing to raise awareness of these issues. How do we do that for ourselves and our children in a way that makes a difference? There are no

MOMSENSE, continued on 10

### ART WORLD :: Museum leadership



Nickolas Muray's *Frida with Olmeca Figurine, Coyoacán, 1939*.  
IMAGE COURTESY THE DE YOUNG MUSEUM; © NICKOLAS MURAY PHOTO ARCHIVES; COURTESY THE FINE ARTS MUSEUMS OF SAN FRANCISCO

## Online education and BLM community support at the de Young Museum

BY SHARON ANDERSON

ALTHOUGH THE DE YOUNG museum remains closed, they continue to offer online art and articles to the general public through the Covid-19 shutdown.

Recently, the museum has taken a pledge to take action regarding the Black Lives Matter movement.

In the wake of the brutal killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, and countless other lives lost to police

brutality and racial injustice, the de Young is taking actionable steps to change patterns of racial intolerance.

### COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

What role should museums play in community leadership? Art does many things; among them it engages with the issues of the day and can provide a framework to process grief and discomfort that can lead to a greater understanding of the space we occupy in history. The de Young's strategic plan commits to employing more diverse staff, reassessing collecting priorities, and rethinking strategies of art as they relate to the discussion of the politics of heritage, and developing exhibitions that challenge the traditional canon and promote diverse voices.

Director and CEO Thomas P. Campbell writes, "I write in support of, and in solidarity with, those who are suffering, those who are living in fear, those who are exhausted, and those who are expressing their anger and frustration at this time. As I listen to the pain of those around me, and as I grapple with my own heartache, I know that we all must do our

ART WORLD, continued on 8









The mayor hopes to spur small business recovery with a new ballot measure.  
PHOTO: CHRISTOPHER MICHEL

# Back to the ballot

## Mayor Breed looks to voters for change

BY JOHN ZIPPERER

### BREED ANNOUNCES SEVERAL BALLOT MEASURES

Mayor London Breed announced in June several measures planned for the November ballot that would seek to address high-profile challenges in the city.

The Save Our Small Businesses measure seeks to help small businesses in the city by cutting bureaucracy and modernizing zoning for commercial corridors. “Many of our small businesses were already struggling before Covid-19, and now they are barely hanging on,” said Breed.

The ballot measure would require permit applications for purposes allowed by current zoning to be reviewed within 30 days, cutting months off the process. The measure would also expand the number of businesses eligible for streamlined zoning approvals, increase certain permissible uses within a building, and help nonprofit organizations find space in neighborhood commercial districts.

A second ballot measure, the Fair Wages for Educators Act, would provide \$50 million in funding for teachers in the San Francisco Unified School District. Breed and supporters of the measure say it addresses the legal limbo of the voter-approved Proposition 5, which passed with a simple majority in 2018 and is tied up in court.

Breed has also introduced the Business Tax Reform measure, which would free up about \$300 million in funds already paid by businesses for addressing homelessness and childcare. Here, too, litigation has prevented those funds from being spent. This measure would also repeal and replace the payroll tax with an increased gross receipt tax, providing some possible financial relief to small and struggling businesses.

### FIREWORKS CANCELED

The San Francisco fireworks on Pier 39 have been canceled this year, along with its concert. “Due to the City & County of San Francisco’s Health Order prohibiting large gatherings, the Fourth of July Fireworks show over the Bay (shot from a barge located off Pier 39) has been canceled,” according to Pier 39’s website. “Pier 39 has also canceled its band performance scheduled for the Fourth.” The organization did announce that the pier will be open for outdoor dining and shopping on the Fourth from 11 a.m.–6 p.m.

The cancellation shouldn’t surprise anyone; fireworks displays, parades, and concerts celebrating Independence Day have been canceled across the Bay Area. Some localities will be offering instead virtual, online fireworks. Fremont has replaced its annual parade with a “porch parade,” asking its residents to decorate their porches in red, white, and blue.

### SLOW STREETS COME TO PRESIDIO

The movement to remove vehicles from streets expanded to The Presidio in June, the latest development in an effort to give people safe places for exercise and other outdoor activities in this time of social distancing (News Briefs, June 2020, *Marina Times*). From June 8–30, various streets in the park were closed either partially or entirely to traffic.

Visit [presidio.gov/slow-streets](http://presidio.gov/slow-streets) for information on the program and to learn whether it will be extended.

### MUSEUMS FROM HOME

The second summer of the city’s “Museums for All” initiative has evolved to fit in with pandemic-era needs for social distancing and distance learning.

The program, which provides free or reduced admission to local museums and cultural institutions for city residents on public benefits, will now include a catalog of free online resources, including exhibits, activities, and interactive programs at more than a dozen museums and cultural institutions in San Francisco. Dubbed “San Francisco Museums from Home,” the new effort will take advantage of the online or digital programming created by the museums during shelter-in-place.

Last year, “Museums for All” attracted 25,000 participants. Visit [sfhsa.org/san-francisco-museums-all](http://sfhsa.org/san-francisco-museums-all) for details on the program.

### FACTS AND FIGURES

**8,000:** number of crab, shrimp, and black cod traps lost by 30 crabbers as a result of the May 23 fire at Pier 45 . . . **1,712:** number of Sheriffs and Police Department employees who have taken implicit bias training over the past five years. . . **\$1.65 million:** amount raised by the city’s “soda tax,” which will be used to provide emergency relief to people struggling to afford food during the Covid-19 shutdown . . . **300:** number of tents and homeless encampments in the Tenderloin that the city of San Francisco agreed to remove by July 20, as part of an agreement to settle a lawsuit over conditions in the neighborhood; the homeless affected will be relocated to hotel rooms, safe sleeping villages, or off-street sites such as parking lots . . . **18,000:** number of vehicles violating street-cleaning rules while the rules were not being enforced because of shelter-in-place . . . **55 years:** length of the friendship between *The Sound of Music* co-stars Julie Andrews and Christopher Plummer — but it didn’t start out that way; Plummer says that he initially found her to be insufferable and annoying.

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Reynolds Rap  
continued from cover

On Nov. 28, 2012, shortly after construction giants AECOM and Parsons created a joint venture that secured a \$150 million contract from the SFPUC on the \$7 billion Sewer System Improvement Project (SSIP), Ellis sent a memo for “Community Benefits Commitments” to the AECOM-Parsons Joint Venture Board with a minimum commitment of \$1.5 million. In the last decade, firms have provided more than \$5 million in financial contributions, but that good will is eclipsed by the SFPUC making it impossible for the public to see how the money is dispersed and spent.

So why is the SFPUC intent on keeping the inner workings to themselves? The answer could be straightforward (they realize requiring contractors to commit direct financial contributions is indeed pay to play), more complex (offering input as to where the money goes is likely illegal), downright sinister (kickbacks to SFPUC staff and allies), or somewhere in between (they’re spending an exorbitant amount meant for the community on “staff and expenditures” for their nonprofit partners).

**BENEFITING THE COMMUNITY AND THEIR FRIENDS**

The SFPUC says they “invite contractors to contribute” and have a hands-off approach, but in emails obtained by the *Marina Times* there is a clear relationship between the AECOM-Parsons Joint Venture Board and the SFPUC.

On Feb. 26, 2019, David Gray, acting director of community benefits (who says in his LinkedIn bio that he “administered \$17 million in community investments” during his six-month tenure), reaches out to Julie Labonte, SSIP program advisor for AECOM (and a former SFPUC employee). “Thank you for the opportunity to present to your [joint venture] board this morning . . . We appreciate the JV’s support and will touch base as we near the program launch date. Also, let me know if you’d like to chat about the disbursement plan for the remaining \$360,000 after the fiscal year.” Labonte responds: “Following your presentation [our JV board] unanimously voted to financially support the program starting with two \$50K contributions . . . the JV Board is also supportive of our current plan to invest a total of \$360K in the program. Finally, it was decided that all contributions will be made directly to the San Francisco Housing Development Corporation (as opposed to contributing through a fiscal agent such as the Southeast Consortium for Equitable Partnership).”

What is the Southeast Consortium for Equitable Partnership? One of several companies with Community Benefits ties run by longtime Ellis and Kelly pal Dwayne Jones.

**WHO IS DWAYNE JONES?**

Dwayne Jones is well known at City Hall. Former San Francisco supervisor Chris Daly once said, “If you are going to have an operation where you’re buying political support in the Southeast part of the town, Dwayne Jones is the guy.”

In 2004, then-mayor Gavin Newsom announced the Communities of Opportunity program, intended to help families living in San Francisco’s public housing projects. But after two years and nearly \$4 million, there was little to show for it. Management spent

\$570,882 on conferences; \$162,000 on a Comedy Shop performance with six comedians and the hip-hop group Def Jam; \$464,823 for consultants and public relations; \$399,000 on an office and staff; and \$1.6 million for “community-based organizations” — in other words, right into the pockets of the service providers. Newsom also ponied up \$370,000 in taxpayer money to cover the cost of a top mayoral deputy to oversee the program. His name? Dwayne Jones. Communities of Opportunity shuttered, and the families it was supposed to help were shuffled into already existing programs. It was one of Mayor Newsom’s biggest boondoggles, thanks to Dwayne Jones.

In 2013, an investigation into bid rigging at the San Francisco Housing Authority, involving then-executive director Henry Alvarez, focused on possible co-conspirators (including former mayor Willie Brown). Alvarez allegedly manipulated the competitive process to steer contracts to specific favored individuals. Dwayne Jones — who served as a Housing Authority commissioner under Alvarez — was one of them, lowering his original bid to get the job.

Despite all that, Jones is an SFPUC Community Benefits “fiscal agent” through the Consortium, a somewhat fuzzy nonprofit located at 1485 Bayshore Boulevard along with three others of Jones’s firms: Urban Equity Group, Urban Ed Academy, and RDJ Enterprises — which, in a blatant conflict of interest, subcontracts with the SFPUC and AECOM. Urban Ed Academy receives Community Benefits, and SFPUC contractors have written checks totaling more than \$600,000 to the Consortium, where the Board of Directors consists of Jones’s wife and his business partners. At one time Jones even had an office at SFPUC headquarters (where, by the way, the meetings discussed in those emails were held).

Maybe integrity doesn’t rank high on Ellis’s list because she’s had her own issues. In 2014, the San Francisco Ethics Commission called for Ellis to be fired after she admitted awarding a \$200,000 contract to a nonprofit where she served as a paid board member and additionally received \$2,000 per month as the organization’s acting executive director. But Kelly stood by her (perhaps because, as I wrote in my column last March, they were involved in a romantic relationship). Now, Kelly has her overseeing millions in Community Benefits. “She’s the most powerful official in San Francisco no one’s ever heard of,” said one former associate.

**HOW LOBBYISTS INFLUENCE JOINT VENTURE BOARDS**

According to sources inside the SFPUC (who asked not to be named for fear of retribution), Dwayne Jones is a top lobbyist for the Community Benefits Program, along with Chris Gruwell, another longtime ally of the Willie Brown machine. “When a contractor gets a big contract, they form a Joint Venture Board, then the SFPUC leadership tells them which nonprofits they want paid — sometimes directly, sometimes through trusted lobbyists like Jones and Gruwell,” one person with inside knowledge said. “Juliet has scorecards that she grades, then Jones or Gruwell or whoever goes back to the Joint Venture contact and shows them where they did well and where they could improve. That improvement might involve writing checks to a certain nonprofit.”

REYNOLDS RAP, continued on next page



In scorecards obtained by the *Marina Times*, Ellis grades multiple firms, including AECOM. The scorecards, sources say, are the conduit for where and how the Community Benefits dollars are spent.

Ali Altaha, whose company ARA Engineering Group did business with the city from 2002 until 2012, says if you're not an insider with ties to top brass and lobbyists, good luck. He blames "the corruption and pay-to-play mentality" at the SFPUC for driving his small firm out of town. "In San Francisco you only have one door — the Willie Brown door. If you get in that door, you're fine for life, but if you can't get in that door, you're screwed. I moved to L.A. because even though it's corrupt on a much larger scale, there are multiple doors you can try to get into."

SFPUC DENIES INFLUENCE

When I asked SFPUC Communications Director of External Affairs Tyler Gamble how the joint venture boards decide which nonprofits get funding, he said they did their own research: "Contractors gather information from a variety of sources including internet searches and SFPUC publications such as the Bayview Environmental Justice Analysis . . ."

But if the SFPUC steers them to their own publications, that's influence. For example, one of the nonprofits touted in the Bayview Environmental Justice Analysis is the Willie L. Brown Middle School (yes, named after that Willie Brown). In a series of checks obtained by the *Marina*



SFPUC General Manager Harlan Kelly Jr. and his deputy, Juliet Ellis, at a job site. PHOTO: LINKEDIN

*Times*, AECOM-Parsons paid \$30,000 to the San Francisco Unified School District, which Gamble confirmed went to the Willie L. Brown Middle School.

There is also a \$40,000 check to the Cal Maritime Academy in Vallejo. What does that have to do with San Francisco? According to sources, that was a favorite of Vallejo resident and SFPUC Assistant General Manager of Wastewater Tommy Moala. As it turns out, Moala also ran the Annual Fall Classic Golf Tournament fundraiser at Eagle Vines Golf Club in American Canyon, where contractors played to gain favor with the SFPUC. One city employee says Moala was overheard telling a contractor it would cost him "\$20,000 a hole."

Perhaps Moala was getting too brazen, because in 2017 the NorCal MLK

Classic golf tournament, sponsored by AECOM-Parsons, was canceled — but, sources say, "the contractors didn't get their checks back." Moala soon retired, and the tournaments ceased.

POWER AND POLITICS

If the joint venture boards are choosing their charities by doing random Internet searches, allies of Kelly and Ellis are super lucky. For example, in those canceled checks from AECOM/Parsons (totaling \$655,000, a drop in the bucket compared to the millions running through multiple joint venture boards), the most prolific beneficiary is Young Community Developers.

Not only was Dwayne Jones the executive director from 1998 to 2003, but Shamann Walton held the position from

2010 until he joined the Board of Supervisors in January, 2019. During Walton's tenure, AECOM-Parsons wrote \$169,500 worth of checks to Young Community Developers. Of course, Walton was endorsed by Harlan Kelly. (Surely it can't hurt to have a close friend in the District 10 supervisor's seat where most of those Community Benefit dollars are doled out.)

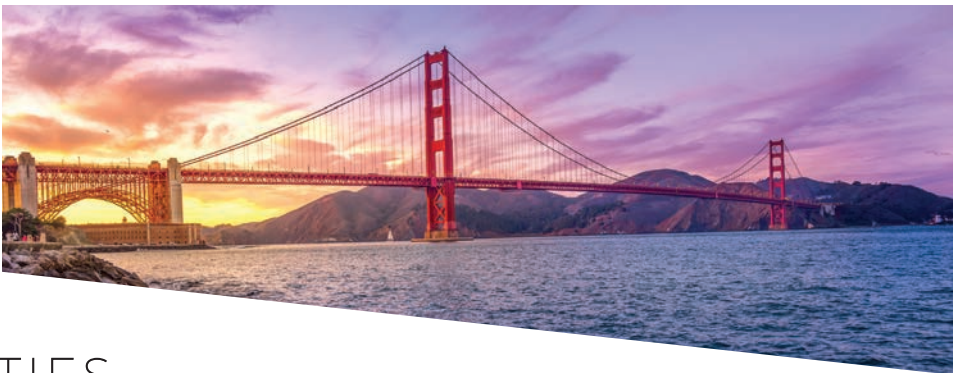
THE PROBLEM WITH WALTER WONG

I'm pretty sure at some point the FBI will knock on the doors of Harlan Kelly, Juliet Ellis, Dwayne Jones, Chris Gruwell, and others regarding the SFPUC Community Benefits Program, but Kelly and his wife, city administrator Naomi Kelly, may also be worried about Walter Wong, the longtime contractor and permit expeditor who recently agreed to plead guilty to federal conspiracy, and money-laundering charges.

Numerous workers inside the SFPUC told me not only did Wong do work for the power couple, but "Harlan bragged about it." According to the Department of Building Inspection, the Kellys pulled three permits on their home between 2011 and 2014. The authorized agents on each of those permits is Best Design Construction — a firm with ties to Wong.

As for the Community Benefits Program, a few things are crystal clear: There's no oversight, no voting, no public input, and no transparency. That's just plain wrong, and it shouldn't take the FBI to figure it out.

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# Moving on

## Change of captain at Northern Station

BY CAPTAIN JOE ENGLER

“Accept things as they are, not as you would have them be. When you do this, only then can you obtain the clarity necessary to do what needs to be done.”

—Coach Jim Sochor

**D**URING THESE UNCERTAIN TIMES, while facing public health Covid-19 dangers and daily acts of civil disobedience, I find solace in the words once used to explain to me how to best overcome adversity.

San Francisco police, since March 1, have been engaged in actively saving lives and supporting high-risk populations in danger of contracting the coronavirus. Low-income residents have received groceries, masks, and medical referrals to testing sites that have helped to suppress the spread of the virus. Also, the death of George Floyd during a police arrest in Minneapolis has resulted in daily Black Lives Matter-inspired protests since March 30 in our city. The public health crisis, when paired with the daily demands upon district police, has required officers to dig deep within themselves to deliver quality police services.

With this as my backdrop, I would like to thank all community members, including our local merchants, residents, and law enforcement officers for the support given during my past two-and-a-half years as the commanding officer of Northern Station.

I have thoroughly enjoyed the position, and it is with mixed emotions that I announce my retirement from the San Francisco Police Department after 28 years of service and my newly announced appointment to assistant sheriff within the San Francisco Sheriff's Office.

Captain Paul Yep, a veteran officer within the police department and former commanding officer of Richmond and Central Police Stations, took control of Northern Station on Saturday, May 29, 2020. Captain Yep brings with him an enthusiasm for the job and administrative, educational, and patrol knowledge that will help him to continue the work of Northern Station into the future.

Please attend our Northern Station monthly meetings when you can, read our SFPD postings on our department Twitter page, and subscribe to our weekly station newsletter for the most up-to-date events, crime statistics, and community outreach ([sanfranciscopolice.org/stations/northern-station](http://sanfranciscopolice.org/stations/northern-station)).

Thank you, citizens and merchants, for allowing me to be your captain. It has been an honor and a privilege that has brought me great joy over the past two-and-a-half years. Please welcome Captain Yep into our community and treat him well.

*Here are some recent Northside crimes, compiled by the Marina Times.*

**THE WORST PICKUP**  
May 25, 7:15 a.m.  
1485 Bush Street

A woman who was screaming for help from the bed of a pickup truck led to officers stopping the vehicle without incident.

After a brief conversation, the woman voluntarily got into the truck, and she and the driver then went to her residence, where they had sexual relations.

Two hours later, the victim requested the subject leave her apartment. He did, but later he returned and entered her residence without her permission, accusing her of stealing his property. She denied the allegations and began searching for the items, at which point the subject stole some of her property and fled.

The victim chased after the subject to try to get her property back. She jumped into the bed of his pickup truck. She saw him holding onto her property inside the cab of the vehicle. As the victim tried to take her property back from the subject, he began to drive the truck with her still in the exterior bed of the vehicle. The subject drove the vehicle erratically at a high rate of speed and began throwing the victim's property out of the window, damaging it.

The subject eventually stopped the vehicle; the victim jumped out of the bed to try to pull the last of her property out

of the vehicle. The subject then exited, put his arm around her neck to drop her to the ground, and then drove away again. The victim, however, was able to get back inside the bed of the vehicle. She

began screaming for help when officers approached the vehicle and conducted a felony stop. The subject was arrested without incident.

**ANYONE CAN PLAY GUITAR**  
May 31, 12:17 a.m.  
1645 Van Ness Avenue

Officers responding to reports of a burglary in progress observed the suspect holding a guitar in front of the building. They saw another suspect walking away from the burglarized Guitar Center and detained him. He was subsequently released due to no stolen property found on his person.

The suspect in front of the store had left the scene, and officers found two guitars placed inside a rolling garbage can, and a third guitar lying on the ground. They placed the stolen and recovered property back inside the store and closed the security gates.

Officers located the subject inside the store, and he was detained and placed under arrest for looting the business during a state of emergency.

Eight hours later, another incident occurred at the same location. Officers discovered that the glass doors had been smashed in and the security gate was pried open, causing permanent damage. They located one suspect and ordered him to stop causing damage. While officers were speaking to that suspect, another subject emerged carrying stolen and recovered guitars. That subject quickly walked away from the officers, who followed him on foot.

The subject eventually dropped the guitars and began to run. Other officers arrived on the scene and were able to stop the subject and detain him in handcuffs. Officers went back to the guitar center, with the stolen guitars in hand, and met with a responsible party who confirmed the guitars had been stolen from the store. The subject was booked in this case.





Chesa Boudin at the Women's March. PHOTO: STEVE RHODES

# D.A. Chesa Boudin on Twitter: Spinning or fabricating?

BY LOU BARBERINI

JACK DORSEY, THE CEO OF TWITTER, recently initiated fact checking in response to the incessant false public statements made by elected public officials on his social media platform. There seems to be a social media accuracy problem in San Francisco.

On March 26, 2020, District Attorney Chesa Boudin made a public statement on Twitter: "Like a majority of Americans I have an immediate family member in prison." If the average family size of four is divided into the U.S. population of 330 million, there are approximately 82 million American families. Per Boudin, half those families — 41 million — have relatives in prison, which goes against the actual U.S. incarceration census of 2.2 million. That means Boudin only exaggerated by 2,000 percent.

In May, San Francisco Public Defender Jacque Wilson became the third public employee, following Mayor London Breed and Boudin, to use his city employee position to campaign to have a relative released from prison. On May 20, 2020, Boudin forwarded Wilson's Twitter appeal and commented, "Marijuana should not equal incarceration. Especially not a 17-year-old case." Thus, Boudin furthered the myth that jails are full of nonviolent criminals who just committed petty drug crimes.

Actually, Wilson's brother Neko was arrested in Arizona for being in the business of "transporting marijuana." Instead of serious jail time, in 2006 Arizona freed Neko with a four-year probation period. While on probation, in July 2009, Neko helped plan a robbery of high-grade marijuana from a couple's home in Fresno. Though Neko didn't actually enter the house during the robbery, he didn't call in sick that night, nor did he try to talk his coconspirators out of the crime. Neko's teammates slashed the couple's throats and Neko received a jail sentence for his participation in the robbery and double homicide.

California released Neko in 2018. However, Arizona — feeling responsible for granting Neko the freedom of probation, only to have him participate in a robbery and homicides during that probation period — called Neko back to Arizona to complete his original sentence. I am not gloating over Neko's sentence. This is about Boudin forgetting to factor in the robbery and homicides to the "17-year old marijuana case."

## CONSPIRACY THEORIES

Section 182 of the California Penal Code is clear about conspiracy to crimes: If two people plan a crime together, they are equally culpable. Section 105 of the New York State Penal Code parallels California's

statutes. For instance, if a New York couple dropped off their infant with a babysitter before they participated in a planned \$1.6 million robbery, and some of the couple's teammates ended up murdering two police officers and a security guard, the couple can't claim, "We were just drivers."

And yet, on May 6, 2020, District Attorney Boudin, using his elected position as leverage to write an opinion piece for the *Los Angeles Times* stated, "My parents, both political activists, made the terrible decision to act as getaway drivers in a botched robbery meant to raise money for their cause. Though my mother and father were unarmed, other participants shot and killed two police officers and a security guard."

In his op-ed, Boudin deceived readers by ignoring the application of conspiracy statutes, minimizing his parents' role as just "unarmed getaway drivers," and justifying their actions because they were "political activists" raising money for "their cause."

On May 15, Boudin made a public statement on Twitter: "I am especially thinking of those who lost their lives in my parents' case." Classic Boudin public defender mode: spinning a cold-blooded triple murder into just a "case" where people "lost their lives." One "loses" keys or a wallet; a murderer doesn't misplace someone's life.

On June 5, Boudin stated on Twitter that "In less than 24-hours my office has received over 1,000 emails demanding that San Francisco defund the police department." Through a public records request, I learned that identical prescript emails were addressed to Mayor Breed with Boudin only receiving a copy as one of 17 "others." All of the orchestrated emails concluded by perpetuating the current San Francisco social experiment, "We can be a beacon for other cities to follow." So far on our new beacon DA's watch, homicides are up only 37 percent compared to last year.

## MISSED OPPORTUNITY

At times, we all are inspired by leaders who eloquently challenge our ingrained perspectives with aspirational visions. Meanwhile, Boudin consistently substitutes fictitious statistics and half-truths as replacements for sensible arguments. One gets the impression that he is intentionally employing public defender spin as an excuse not to prosecute arrests and to free prisoners as retaliation for the New York Penal Code denying him a normal childhood with his parents.

Either way, Twitter needs to fact-check Chesa Boudin's tweets to preserve the integrity of his position as San Francisco's chief law enforcement officer.

Lou Barberini is a CPA. Send feedback to [letters@marinatimes.com](mailto:letters@marinatimes.com)



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A photograph of a man wearing a grey t-shirt and a black baseball cap, sitting outdoors and writing in a notebook with a pen.

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Michael Snyder  
continued from cover

comes from the mind of Tony McNamara is no surprise, given that he was the Oscar-nominated co-screenwriter of *The Favourite*, a dark-hued historical dramedy set in a different royal court. Both projects bring wit and wisdom to an examination of palace intrigue and the manipulation of power from the perspective of women in close quarters with rulers of questionable skill and, in the case of *The Great*, dubious virtue.

True to its title, the 10-episode series concentrates on the struggles and rise of the plucky, brainy, rosy-cheeked beauty eventually known as Catherine the Great, played here with grace and wiles by Elle Fanning. The series begins as Catherine, a young, naïve Prussian aristocrat, arrives in Moscow for an arranged marriage to Peter III, the absolute monarch of Russia. Peter is depicted in *The Great* as an offhandedly cruel, callous, selfish, philandering, and less-than-competent despot beset with feelings of inadequacy in the shadow of his father, the late and purportedly beloved Peter the Great. Despite the detestable nature of his role, actor Nicholas Hoult is eminently watchable and perfectly perverse as the emperor.

Abused by Peter III and surrounded by decadent, self-serving members of his entourage who resent her, Catherine soon learns the survival skills she needs to navigate the treacherous social and political waters of the palace. And she finds a few kindred souls to join her in a plot to overthrow her arrogant, hedonistic heathen of a husband and build a nobler, more forward-thinking Russia. Foremost among Catherine's allies would be the learned, humane, but skittish aristocrat Count Orlo (Sacha Dhawan) and her handmaiden Marial (Phoebe Fox), a former lady of the court whose title was stripped away by the emperor.

While it addresses some accepted facts of Catherine's life, *The Great* happily takes

its share of wild leaps into profane, sexy, and clever conjecture amid luxuriously realized settings. Fun and frolic aside, it has plenty to say about class systems, economic disparity, the entanglement of church and state, the frenzy of nationalism, the horrors of war, and of course, women's rights. Fanning is front and center throughout the entire endeavor, and her regal demeanor is put to better use here as Catherine than as the dewy-eyed Princess Aurora in the hackneyed *Malificent* live-action movies from Disney. It's a tribute to the vibrant, thoughtful nature of *The Great* that the occasional anachronistic argot and attitudes and the use of contemporary rock songs over the end credits never feel jarring or inappropriate. The fizzy effervescence and modern point of view only underscore the daring difference between this and *Victoria* or *The Crown*, two highly decorated series that are also about empowered female leaders.

*The Great* is available for streaming on Hulu.

‘THE STRANGER’

If you're a fan of the adroit American writer Harlan Coben, you may have seen *Ne le dis à personne*, the gripping 2006 French movie adaptation of his novel *Tell No One*. Now, Coben's psychological thriller *The Stranger* — about the deadly consequences of life-altering secrets being revealed throughout a small community — has been turned into an addictive eight-part miniseries. Some elements of the source material have been changed, such as the locale moving from a suburban New Jersey town to one in England, but it's presumed that the alterations have been done with the author's approval because he is listed as a co-producer.

At the center of the story is lawyer Adam Price (Richard Armitage) who learns some upsetting information about his wife, Corinne (Dervla Kirwan), from a stranger (Hannah John-Kamen). Corinne disappears shortly thereafter. Over the course of Adam's search for Corinne and a concurrent police investigation into an



Adam Price (Richard Armitage) is approached by a mysterious woman (Hannah John-Kamen) in *The Stranger*. PHOTO: COURTESY OF NETFLIX

assault on a local teenager, the stranger spreads more discord in the area with the knowledge she has uncovered.

Disparate plot strands slowly come together and tighten on the various locals, including a police inspector (Siobhan Finneran) on the job, her best friend (comic actress Jennifer Saunders of the sitcom *Absolutely Fabulous* in a rare dramatic part), Adam's neighbors, his sons and their friends, and even his father (Anthony Head) whose ruthless business practices create more conflict. As in the best mysteries, the twists and turns keep coming until the final moments. There's little danger you'll be disappointed by *The Stranger*.

*The Stranger* is available for streaming on Netflix.

COMING ATTRACTIONS

Be on the alert for HBO's recently premiered reboot of the classic legal drama *Perry Mason*, reimagined in the hard-boiled milieu of 1930s Los Angeles with Matthew Rhys (winner of a best actor Emmy for *The Americans*) on the case as private-eye-turned-defense-lawyer Mason, plus co-stars Tatiana Maslany

(winner of a best actress Emmy for *Orphan Black*), and John Lithgow (multiple winner of best actor Emmys).

Netflix will soon present the third series of *Dark*, the mind-blowingly complex, era-spanning sci-fi series from Germany; the latest run of *Lucifer*, the droll, supernatural cop procedural featuring the most suave incarnation of the Devil ever — a club owner and moonlighting LAPD consultant embodied by the magnetic Tom Ellis; and for anyone who missed it on Pop TV, the final season of the completely delightful, reliably funny and occasionally touching sitcom *Schitt's Creek*, a showcase for the brilliant comedic talents of Eugene Levy and Catherine O'Hara as the father and mother in a wealthy, ostentatious family that's bankrupted and must relocate to a rural town where they try to get their lives back together.

Michael Snyder is a print and broadcast journalist who covers pop culture on Michael Snyder's Culture Blast, via GABnet.net, Roku, Spotify, and YouTube, and The Mark Thompson Show on KGO radio. You can follow Michael on Twitter: @cultureblaster.



Nickolas Muray's *Frida on Bench*. IMAGE COURTESY THE DE YOUNG MUSEUM; © NICKOLAS MURAY PHOTO ARCHIVES; COURTESY THE FINE ARTS MUSEUMS OF SAN FRANCISCO

Art World  
continued from cover

utmost to hold one another up and to do the hard work, as individuals and as a community that is required to effect substantive change.”

While many shelter-in-place requirements have kept public spaces like museums closed, the de Young website provides a list of articles that unpack and examine the circumstances surrounding the Black Lives Matter movement, the protests and continued calls for activism across the country. Their site contains lists of local and national organizations dedicated to justice and racial equality issues. The museum invites the public to join them in getting involved to create positive change.

UPCOMING EXHIBITION: FRIDA KAHLO

In step with keeping in touch with the community, online access to current exhibitions and the permanent collection remain available during the museum's temporary closure. “Frida Kahlo: Appearances Can Be Deceiving” was originally intended to open March 21, but will now open when the de Young can safely welcome gallery visitors.

Fifty years after Kahlo's death in 1954, a treasure trove of her personal items such as clothing, jewelry, and prosthetics were unsealed and will be featured in this exhibition. Through online photos we learn about how Kahlo's clothes framed her identity. The jewelry and wardrobe pieces are as colorful and eclectic as her paintings, including traditional Mexican pieces from Oaxaca, garments from Guatemala, China, and collections of European and American blouses, jewelry, accessories, and orthopedic devices.

While Kahlo styled herself in traditional dresses and long skirts, it was often to conceal

her disabilities. Her body was compromised by illness and a near-fatal accident at the age of 18. That pain informed her art and her dress.

She rebelled against the concept of an invalid as an object of pity by creating elaborate designs on her corsets and carefully adorning her shoes with bows and pieces of silk. A prosthetic leg with a red leather boot will be on display, decorated with a twisting, open-mouthed dragon on green embroidery. Functionality and self-expression worked together to create possibilities from limitations. These lively, intimate objects frame a new portrait of the bohemian originality that is Frida Kahlo. During a visit to San Francisco in 1930, children in the street would ask her, “Where is the circus?” and she would just smile graciously and continue walking.

ONLINE TOURS

The de Young's online tour of their permanent collections includes striking photos of their American, African and Oceanic art collections as well as costume and textile arts. As an active conversation about cultures, perspectives and time, the museum's own history is reflected in these acquisitions taking place through purchases and donations since their opening in 1895.

The de Young will share their plans to reopen in the coming weeks, but in the meantime, online tours, articles, and resources will furnish the inspiration and solace that art can provide.

Visit the online galleries of the de Young and Legion of Honor at [famsf.org](https://famsf.org).

Sharon Anderson is an artist and writer from Southern California. She can be reached at [mindtheimage.com](mailto:mindtheimage.com).



# SIGNS OF THE TIMES

CONTENT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY NAOMI ROSE



Boho is a popular outdoor dining option.



A woman window shops at Al's Attire on Grant Avenue in North Beach.



Boarded storefronts become message boards on Polk Street.



Parkgoers enjoy Washington Square Park on a sunny day.



Balboa Cafe has reopened for outdoor service.



Vuori on Union Street shares words of wisdom.



Original Joe's contributes to the revitalization of North Beach.



The outside seating at A16 is separated by partitions.



Cultivar's builds outdoor seating.



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The Dorian .....	3349 Fillmore St.
Glaze .....	2095 Chestnut St.
Izzy's Steaks & Chops .....	3345 Steiner St.
Walgreens .....	2141 Chestnut St.
Tri Counties Bank .....	3298 Pierce St.
Super Duper .....	3259 Pierce St.
Lucky Brand Jeans .....	3273 Scott St.
Walgreens .....	3201 Divisadero St.
Books Inc. (Inside) .....	2251 Chestnut St.
Marina Library (Inside) .....	1890 Chestnut St.

Cow Hollow

Bus Stop .....	2837 Laguna St.
Geo Gelati .....	1996 Union St.
See Eyewear .....	2100 Union St.
Michaelis Wine & Spirits .....	2198 Union St.
Coffee Roastery .....	2191 Union St.
Comerica Bank .....	2001 Union St.
Wells Fargo Bank .....	1901 Union St.
Octagon House .....	2643 Gough St.
Postal Chase (Inside) .....	3053 Fillmore St.
Golden Gate Valley Library (Inside) .....	1801 Green St.

Pacific Heights

Glaze .....	1946 Fillmore St.
Wells Fargo Bank .....	2100 Fillmore St.
Peets Coffee .....	2195 Fillmore St.
Pets Unlimited (Inside) .....	2343 Fillmore St.
Mayflower Market (Inside) .....	2498 Fillmore St.

Russian Hill/Nob Hill

Crepe House .....	1755 Polk St.
Corner at Polk .....	1600 Jackson St.
Peets Coffee .....	2139 Polk St.
Starbucks Coffee .....	1505 Vallejo St.
Beauty Supply .....	1409 Green St.
Corner at Polk .....	1485 Vallejo St.
1760 Restaurant .....	1687 Washington St.
Nob Hill Grocery (Inside) .....	1600 Hyde St.

North Beach/Embarcadero

Mama's Restaurant .....	604 Filbert St.
North Beach Pizza .....	501 Union St.
Family Hat Makers .....	1612 Stockton St.
Mario's .....	662 Union St.
The Board Room .....	693 Green St.
Cole Hardware .....	627 Vallejo St.
St. Francis Church .....	414 Columbus Ave.
Bank of America .....	1455 Stockton St.
Corner at Green .....	1511 Stockton St.
Fisherman's Wharf .....	292 Beach St.
PIER 35 .....	Pier 35
Park Opposite Ferry Plaza .....	1 Embarcadero
Ferry Building Plaza .....	Ferry Building Plaza
Alcatraz Landing .....	Pier 31

Other

City Hall .....	200 Van Ness Ave.
Buckhorn .....	609 Market St.
BART Entrance .....	201 Market St.
Bank of America .....	1291 - 9th Ave.
Books Inc. (Inside) .....	3515 California St.

\*Check individual business hours for inside locations.



It is important to have ongoing conversations with your children about complicated issues. PHOTO: JACKF/IISTOCKPHOTO.COM

MomSense continued from cover

easy answers; it is a complicated problem with a long history, but here are some simple ways we can start:

TALK TO YOUR CHILDREN

One of the most productive things to come out of the recent events is the importance of talking to our children about these issues. These are tough topics; they are complicated, and many parents out of fear of saying the wrong thing decide not to say anything at all. As a result, children draw their own conclusions, which are often flawed. Research shows it is never too early to start these conversations.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, babies' brains can notice race-based differences as early as six months. By the time they are in preschool they can internalize racial bias, and by age 12 many children become set in their beliefs. Thankfully there are more resources than ever for parents to help guide these conversations. Even *Sesame Street* is helping us talk to our kids about racial injustice.

Kids and teens need information tailored to their age and comprehension level. Parents don't always have to have the answer, but just like conversations about eating healthfully or puberty these should be ongoing conversations.

How we talk to our children is also changing. As I was growing up, I was taught to be colorblind when it came to skin color. That thinking has changed, and I have had to do a lot of reading to reteach myself how to talk to my children about this.

Today, we want them to see color and acknowledge the racial differences that exist. For young children, it is O.K. to point out differences in the people around them. For children in grade school, open conversations become more important, providing them with a safe space to ask questions about race and diversity. This is a good age to start to point out stereotypes in books and movies and to seek out media with diverse main characters who act as heroes.

LEAD BY EXAMPLE

We teach our children early about the "golden rule" — treat others how you want to be treated. This is an important start, but it can't stop there. We need to model for them what it means to treat people fairly and what to do if we think that is not happening. What we say and how we act in our everyday lives will say more to them than anything else. To do that honestly, however, requires parents

being able to identify and correct our own racially biased thoughts, feelings, and actions. This isn't easy, and through some raw and challenging conversations over the last few weeks I have come to realize that.

One of the ways we can do this is by exposure to a culturally diverse social network and by seeking out activities and experiences as a family. Travel is also a great way to expose your children to other communities and cultures to help them understand diversity in the world — everything from a different language to different food to different traditions or rituals.

DO SOMETHING

Part of leading by example is teaching our children that if they don't like what is happening to do something about it. Giving your children some ways to be part of the movement can make them feel hopeful.

Because the news is tough to watch, I put together my own newsreel of all the positive protests — pictures of thousands of people marching together calling for change. I wanted my kids to see powerful positive images of people that all look different all seeking the same

thing — justice and equality for all.

This sparked conversations about what we could do as a family to be part of the solution, like putting a sign in the window or posting something on social media. I also saw one neat idea of a chalk walk where kids could use chalk to make hearts of different colors with messages of hope. For older children, it could be writing letters to their elected representatives or getting involved with a local organization. In our family, we each chose a book on this topic or with a diverse main character as part of our summer reading.

It is easy to say, "I am not a racist" or "I am against racism" especially in San Francisco. These are widely accepted norms here, but if the last few weeks have taught us anything it is that our country, our city, and myself included still have a lot left to learn.

We need to listen more and we have only just begun to try to understand. We need to keep talking to our children and helping them understand even when we ourselves don't have all the answers.

*Liz Farrell is the mother of three young children and the founder of TechTalks, a consulting group to help schools and families have productive and healthful conversations around social media and technology. Email: liz@marinatimes.com*





Although home sales are down this year in San Francisco, prices have remained stable. PHOTO: GAREY DE MARTINI

# Are people really fleeing the city?

BY GAREY DE MARTINI

IS THE PANDEMIC THE LAST STRAW FOR San Francisco residents, fed up with the high cost of owning a home or paying rent in the city? For years, people have been threatening to leave, and there have been lots of stories suggesting that residents were fleeing the city for less expensive locales. But for everyone who left, others — often more affluent — would move in. The big exodus never really materialized.

However, things are now dramatically different. The pandemic has had a profound and unwelcome impact on life in the city.

“I am moving because most of the things I love about living in a city are closed indefinitely due to the pandemic — live music, art galleries, bars. Without these options, the pace of the city really changes,” said Natasha Vo in a recent SFGate.com interview. “I figured I might as well take this opportunity to live in a new place while saving money.”

## FIGHT OR FLIGHT?

For years young people had driven the back-to-the-city movement. They cherished San Francisco’s cool, sophisticated urban setting, its abundance of activities, and its walkability. Much of that allure has vanished for the moment, and may not return for some time.

Meanwhile, some leading tech companies are signaling a long-term acceptance of remote work, and this means there is now little need to live close to offices. This broadens the horizon for many.

“There have been several recent articles about wealthy buyers fleeing San Francisco for Marin and other Bay Area counties, and while I have seen some of that, I don’t see everyone bailing out of the city,” said Annie Williams, an accomplished San Francisco real estate agent with Sotheby’s International Realty.

She also notes that these things go in cycles, and once cultural venues, retail stores, and restaurants are fully reopened — and traffic into the city increases as more people return to their offices — San Francisco will probably once again look far more appealing than the suburbs.

## MARKET PERFORMANCE

The San Francisco Association of Realtors reported that there were 105 single family home sales in San Francisco in May, down 56.1 percent from the previous year. During the same period, there were 95 condo and loft sales, down 67.8 percent. In spite of these extremely low sales numbers, prices remained relatively stable. The median sales price for a single family home was \$1.63 million, down 3.3 percent from last May. While

the median sales price for a condo and loft was \$1.1 million, down 10.9 percent.

“Like the weather, San Francisco real estate has micro-climates,” explained Williams. “Single family homes under \$5m continue to fly off the shelf and fare well — especially those that are not in need of major renovations. Condos in downtown high-rise buildings requiring an elevator, and offering no outdoor space, are very slow.”

According to Bloomberg.com, suburban and rural areas around the Bay Area experienced the biggest rebound in real estate sales in May, while contracts in San Francisco were well below where they were in 2019. However, Williams points out that this may be largely due to the fact that the inventory of homes for sale in the city is simply way down, and much of what is available is located in the downtown area — new-construction condos that aren’t selling right now.

During the pandemic, home prices have remained remarkably stable because of this tight inventory of properties for sale. Yet most buyers expect that prices would have dropped over the past few months. Consequently, agents and sellers are changing how they price their listings.

It had been a common practice in recent years to price properties on the low side, and then count on multiple offers to carry it to a higher sales price. That is no longer the case. Today you are more likely to see what agents call “transparent pricing.” The list price is more in line with what the agent and seller believe will be its actual market price — its ultimate sales price.

How about rents in the city? According to SF.Curbed.com, referencing a Zumper report, one-bedroom rents in San Francisco fell 9.2 percent year-over-year in May, the largest drop ever in the history of the company’s monthly reports, and the lowest price point in more than three years. The average rent for a one-bedroom unit in San Francisco was \$3,360; compared to \$3,700 last year.

A report published by the *San Francisco Chronicle* said a new survey from the San Francisco Apartment Association found that 7.5 percent of renters have broken their leases over the last three months. Gen Z workers — those 18 to 25 years old — made up the biggest group of tenants breaking leases in San Francisco. If there is an exodus out of the city, it will likely be from among this group.

The pandemic will certainly reshape San Francisco in many perhaps unpredictable ways. Whether that’s good news or bad news, only time will tell. It will be fascinating to see what kind of city emerges when this is all over.

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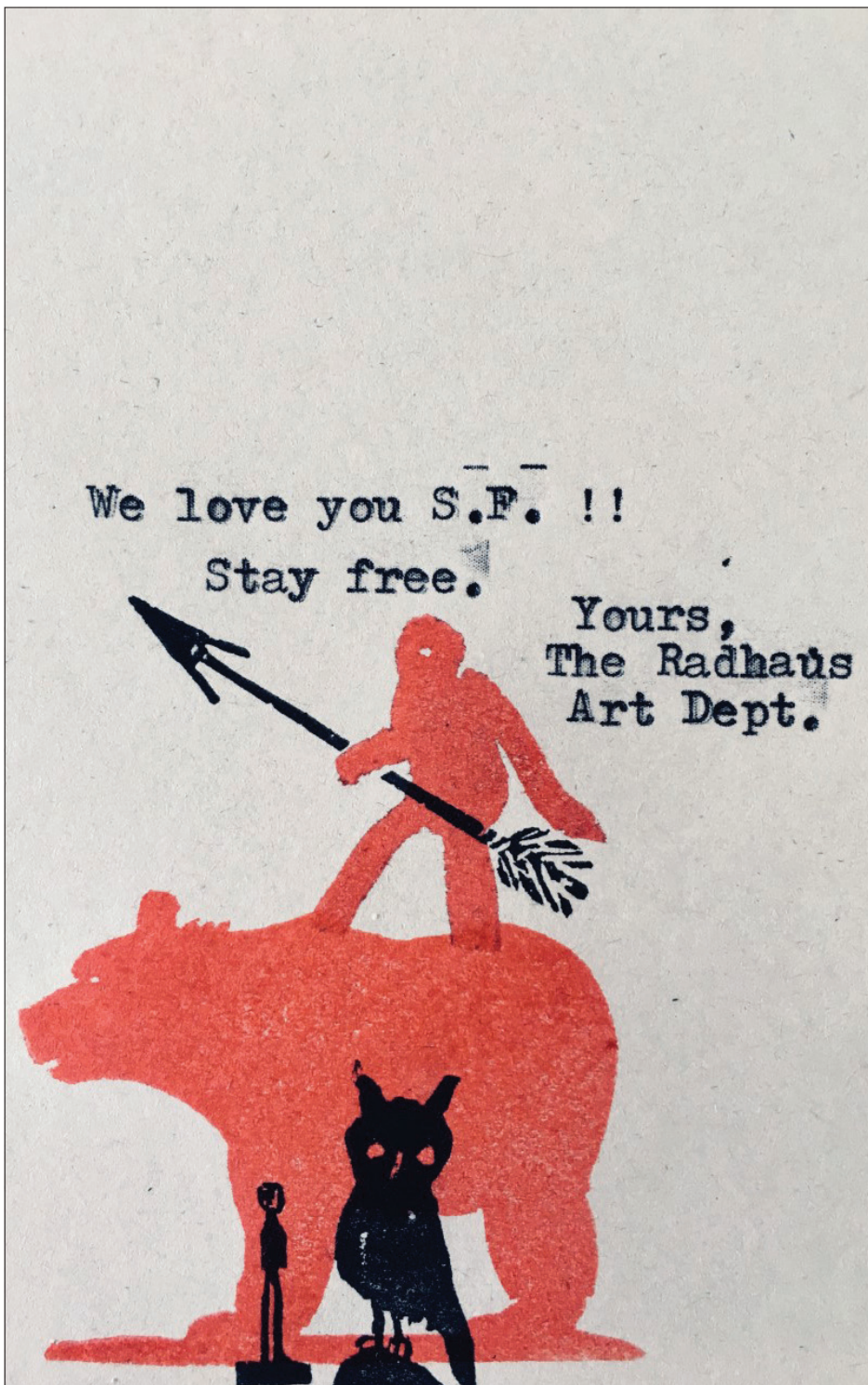
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