YOU ARE PERSONALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR BECOMING MORE ETHICAL THAN THE SOCIETY YOU GREW UP IN. DO THE WORK.

ANTI-RACISM REQUIRES THE ROOTING-OUT OF RACISM FROM OUR WORDS, BEHAVIORS, GOVERNMENT POWER SYSTEMS AND COMMUNITIES.

POWER TO THE PEOPLE

WILL YOU CHOOSE REVOLUTION OR SILENCE?

REVOLUTION

SAY THEIR NAMES

IF YOU ARE NEUTRAL SITUATIONS OF INJUSTICE, YOU HAVE CHOSE THE SIDE OF THE OPPRESSOR.

BLACk LIVeS MATTER

SILENce IS VIOLeNce

TOGETHER WE RISE AGAINST INJUSTICE

JUSTICE FOR ERIC garner

JUSTICE FOR TAMIR RICE

JUSTICE FOR GEORGE FLOYD

JUSTICE FOR BREEONNA TAYLOR

REVOLUCIÓN

réVolution

革命

We will continue to fight until the end.
Dearest readers,

This is the section that my predecessors have carved out to write something profound about Klipsun’s theme and the stories you will find within. Yet, as I write this, I realize there isn’t anything inherently profound to say about pride.

Pride is something most people understand from a young age. Life is filled with proud moments. Pride in education and sports, pride in family and pets, even pride in our ability to meet milestones like talking and walking.

As I list all these moments, I wonder why it was so hard for me to feel pride growing up. I was only 13 when I realized that for many queer people, pride is a hard-fought battle. Sadly, most of us are never given the tools to fight it.

Being forced in the closet by societal norms and fear of retribution caused us to hide any outward notions of our pride and sulk in the shame of something that was unchangeable.

When other layers of identity are added onto this, that battle for pride becomes even tougher.

I learned to fight my battle, and now here I am writing this letter in my own magazine edition, themed after the very thing that has taken me so long to obtain.

Here is the mandatory call to action: take a second to set this down and think about what you are proud of. (I’ll give you extra space to think about it, too.)

Do you have it? Now think of what it took for you to get there. Imagine what life would be like if it brought you shame instead.

As you finish this letter you will move on to our magazine and discover the stories of pride found within our communities. Our writers have worked hard to tell these stories and I hope they bring you even the slightest amount of joy.

Once you finish this magazine—you are gonna finish it, right?? —I recommend you go out and do things with as much pride as you possibly can. Or else, what’s the fucking point?

With Pride,

Colton Rasanen
Editor-in-Chief
CONFLICT BEGETS REVOLUTION, and historically, movements require digression. Fifty-one years ago police raided the Stonewall Inn, a New York City gay bar in the Greenwich Village neighborhood.

The Stonewall uprising ignited in the early morning of June 28, 1969. The LGBTQ+ community had grown sour over the narrative society had given them. Time and time again they dealt with police raids and were routinely subjected to harassment and persecution. When confrontations with police became violent, the individuals from the LGBTQ+ community put up their fists and began the fight for liberation.

Steven Sawyer, one of the co-founders of Pacific Northwest Black Pride, emphasized the connection between the past violence against LGBTQ+ people experienced to the current Black Lives Matter movement. “Stonewall was about standing up against police brutality and that is what we are returning to,” Sawyer said.

While Stonewall didn’t necessarily start or end the LGBTQ+ civil rights movement, it was the stimulant for sustained political activism. Alike to the current Black Lives Matter movement, the news of this uprising had spread like wildfire around the world after George Floyd was murdered by Minneapolis police officer, Derek Chauvin. People were inspired and wanted a part in this fight for liberation.

Think about how Pride started,” Sawyer said. “A lot of people give credit to Marsha P. Johnson for throwing the first brick of rebellion.”

Marsha P. Johnson, a New York drag queen, was widely known as the poster child of the Stonewall riot. Marshall’s legacy is not only monumental because she pushed the envelope within the LGBTQ+ community, she also became a beacon of light for transgender people. Marsha also engraved the importance of inclusivity within the LGBTQ+ community, especially Black LGBTQ+ community.

Chris Vargas, executive director of the Museum of Transgender History & Art and speaker at Western’s “50 Years After Stonewall,” has laid groundwork for the recognition of LGBTQ+ people of color such as Sylvia Rivera, Marsha P. Johnson, Miss Major and many others who were great leaders of LGBTQ+ people of color such as Sylvia Rivera, Marsha P. Johnson, Miss Major and many others who were great leaders from the Stonewall riots. The Black Lives Matter movement has put a greater spotlight not only on these leaders but also a connection between racial and LGBTQ+ justice.

“I think queer liberation, since its inception, has been intersectional and intrinsically linked to racial justice,” Vargas said. “I see these two linked in the recognition that Black trans people are especially vulnerable to physical and systemic violence and discrimination and deserving of our care and support, and that Black Trans Lives Matter.”

Stonewall produced several crucial organizations that propelled the Gay Liberation Movement forward, including the Gay Liberation Front. This Front was the first and one of the most radical organizations that was a product of the riots. This organization formed a newspaper called Coming Out! which covered topics that educated people not only about gay and lesbian culture but also feminism and race. They also made an alliance with the Black Panthers, whose principles and practices were of Black socialism, nationalism and armed self-defense of Black citizens to patrol police officers’ behavior. This organization had groups in many major cities. This partnership was the first time that an openly gay organization had collaborated with another oppressed group.

“We now understand that Black Lives Matter. The truth was the Gay Liberation Front understood this in 1970,” Perry Brass concluded in his article about being apart of the Gay Liberation Front.

Pride has taken a step back this year due to the pandemic, but it’s allowed Black Lives Matter to take a step forward, and this may be the best thing that has happened to Pride in years. Sawyer emphasized what has happened to Pride is that it has become commercialized in a lot of ways, but during this movement it’s allowed people to reflect and do things differently.

Commercialization doesn’t only pivot the meaning of Pride into a box that multimillion-dollar businesses want the public to see. It also produces a deeper set of problems of how people of color in the LGBTQ+ community are often forgotten in this celebration of an all-inclusive fight for equality. Inclusivity has been ingrained in Pride’s history; the leaders that built the stepping stones to Pride were racially diverse. “When narratives of our history – for example Stonewall, the AIDS crisis, resistance to erasure of public sex cultures or advocacy for trans-inclusive health care – erase queer and trans people of color, those narratives are historically inaccurate and perpetuate dangerous dynamics of white dominance,” said L.K. Langley, Western’s LGBTQ+ Director.

Terminology within the LGBTQ+ community has also been wiped of diversity. A Longoria, a member who spoke at Western’s “50 Years Since Stonewall” event, said, “When we say, ‘queer,’ sometimes it’s automatically assumed to be signaling white queer, in a way we actually have racism within our own community.”

Pacific Northwest Black Pride saw the lack of inclusivity in Pride and wanted to reintroduce a space where Black, brown and other people of color in the LGBTQ+ community could be represented.

“We really did want to create this space where people can come and be unapologetically queer, unapologetically Black and positively trans,” Sawyer beamed.
From Sawyer’s own experiences he learned that a place was needed where people from diverse backgrounds could be represented. Sawyer grew up in the Deep South with deep connotations to the community, he recalls, “As I kind of came into my own sexuality, I started realizing that there were not a lot of places where Black and brown folk could come together and really feel a part of the [LGBTQ+] community.”

When Sawyer moved to Seattle he started to look for this community. Taking over where the last Black Pride organization ended, Sawyer and Anty Bell created Pacific Northwest Black Pride. The two co-founders looked to team up with other organizations in Seattle that also covered issues of racial equity within the LGBTQ+ community.

To Pacific Northwest Black Pride, providing resources and knowledge about issues that circulate within and outside of the LGBTQ+ community is just as, or even more, important than the celebration of Pride. “There is a schedule of classes where we talk about everything from HIV to Black trans issues,” Bell added.

Sawyer smirked, “But we do the turn-up as well.”

The Black Lives Matter movement and Pride are enhancing both fights by bringing back history such as the Stonewall riots. This history is important to give incentive for the queer liberation and modern LGBTQ+ civil rights movement to help embrace the connection between the importance of representing LGBTQ+ people of color.

“It was an uprising in response to police violence and harassment of the most vulnerable within our community, namely queer people, low-income, houseless and queer people of color,” Vargas said.

The interruption from COVID-19 has forced Pride events to turn to a virtual platform, but this opens an opportunity for diverse voices to be elevated and push Pride back to recognizing marginalized groups within the LGBTQ+ community. Bell quietly piped in over Sawyer’s shoulder, “It really does give us people of color educators so students can look at a leader who’s open and accepting of themselves, which then normalizes students to do the same. These virtual Prides do just that.”

The Black Lives Matter movement has pushed Pride to return to its roots this year. Both movements have elevated each other and nudged people and businesses to reflect on the building blocks that got both movements to where they are to-day.

“It’s not just a moment, but it’s a movement. A lot of people are saying that, but that is the reality,” Sawyer said. “I think as us LGBTQ folks, we can’t let this time pass without connecting to that movement. Right? It’s a continuation.”

Just the same, the Black Lives Matter movement isn’t a new concept, especially for Black individuals who experience racism every day. Langley said, “In recent months, many more people have paid attention to Black-led advocacy against police violence and structural anti-Black racism. More importantly, Black people, including Black LGBTQ+ people, have long been engaged in this advocacy.”

I DRAW PRIDE from within myself. To me, it doesn’t require money, external approval, conformity or people-pleas-ing. It’s something that radiates from the inside out; difficult to articulate, but felt with great certainty.

“Pride isn’t always flashy. It’s not always glamorous. It doesn’t always come naturally.

Sometimes it’s hard-fought, slowly-built, and takes time to flourish into something outwardly beautiful. That’s my experience, anyway. For me, pride means years of, “doing the work,” to be more at ease with myself and my body.

Growing up, I was far removed from any authentic feeling of pride. Sexuality aside, inhabiting my body wasn’t pleasant. I didn’t know what to make of me; my eyes, my face, my torso, my body. And bless you, mom, for this nose. I've had to go back and make reparations with my inner child for the effect this discontentment had on my well-being.

Anyway, my relationship with myself was not warm and fuzzy. And, as exceedingly obvious as it was to literally all my peers, I didn’t know I was gay until 7th or 8th grade. Apparently my voice and mannerisms (see: limp wrists) were a clear indicator of homosexuality. My time in the closet didn’t start until after I was relentlessly asked, “Are you gay?”

This question was always accompanied by chilling fear. That fear was not without merit. People were seeing something in me that I hadn’t even identified myself, and that something put me at risk of further bullying, discrimination and physical harm. I’ve personally experienced harassment for being, “gay,” for being chatty and for shrieking when I got excited.

By the time I’d made it through high school, I came out, and gone to college. I had no relationship experience, zero sexual encounters and next to zero experience being romantically intimate with another human. I had catching-up to do.

Enter: anxiety and depression. I’d dealt with anxiety before, but spending nine months at a school in Oregon was unlike anything I’d ever been through. I constantly experienced distress and alienation from hook-up culture. I thought I could never participate in the way I saw other people doing. I thought I was just too anxious and uncomfortable. When you’re working on being comfortable with yourself, apps that demand split-second decisions on people’s attractiveness are decidedly unhelpful.*

*When you’re working on being comfortable with yourself, apps that demand split-second decisions on people’s attractiveness are decidedly unhelpful.*

My favorite meditation teacher, Sarah Blondin, calls this the “un mediated self,” meaning the version of you that is burdened with the heavy weight of identities and responsibilities.

I’m determined to live via this self as often as I can, because that’s where I feel the most pride.
Cerna started to enjoy her culture through attending parties like quinceañeras, a coming-of-age celebration for a 15th birthday, where she would dance and enjoy time with her friends who shared her background. For Cerna, going was a way to show her pride for her Chicana culture because it was a way to truly connect with the culture.

This wasn’t always the case, not just for Cerna, but for the entire Chicana community. Historical their has been discrimination against Mexican and Mexican-American within society.

Cerna, a second-year Western Washington University student, was in middle school when she found pride for her Chicana culture.

Speaking Spanish caused embarrassment for Cerna when she was a child. She thought to herself, “Yeah, never doing that again.” Cerna went to a predominantly white school where most of her friends didn’t look like her.

Some of Cerna’s friends would occasionally make fun of her or look at her funny for speaking Spanish.

After that, Cerna “just tried to act white.” She would do so by dressing the way they did and eating the food they did. She stopped speaking Spanish.

Middle school allowed Cerna the freedom to stop trying to act white. It brought together many different people from different elementary schools. For Cerna, this brought more people that were Mexican-American like her. Having friends who grew up with the same background added fuel to a faint, yet burning, fire.

“I’m lucky to even be Chicana,” Cerna said. “We are a big community of people and I feel like you have this different connection with other people like that … I’m Mexican and I love it.”

Meeting people who come from the same background as Cerna brings a sense of community. “I feel like I know them, I feel like I’m not alone.” Cerna said.

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Dear Diary: My Adventure in Geocaching

An interurban treasure hunt brings outdoor entertainment amid pandemic

BY MALLORY BIGGAR

While regular summertime activities are limited, it’s the perfect time to pick up a new hobby. Geocaching is an outdoor activity and perfectly equipped for social distancing.

DAY 1

Friday, July 3: The temperature outside is still not breaking the mid-60s, and a little bit of wind makes anything more than a sprinkle unbearable. Or at least more uncomfortable than the mist any average Washingtonian is used to. I’m freezing and generally do not deal well with mild discomfort. But if I’m waiting for the rain to stop, it may be a while.

Today, I’m going Geocaching.

Geocaching is a real-world scavenger hunt on a global scale, as my friend Alex, who first introduced me to Geocaching put it. About a year ago when he was visiting Bellingham, he took me on my first hunt, and I’ve been itching to go out ever since.

What started in 2000 as one person posting coordinates to a large black bucket filled with prizes to be found has developed into a worldwide phenomenon with only one request to the finders: “take some stuff, leave some stuff.” From what I gathered, the names of those who came before us have been lost to water damage. For geocachers, this is part of the prize.

Although Geocaching technically started in Portland, the Geocaching headquarters are less than 90 miles away in Seattle, which as a Pacific Northwest native I think is pretty cool. This is definitely something I’ll have to check out post-pandemic. The idea is that if I have the coordinates, I’ll find the prize. Or in this case, many prizes; Bellingham has dozens of caches hidden all over the city.

How to play: To make things easier, I downloaded the official Geocaching app. The app automatically links your location and shows which caches are closest to you, caches around town as well as premium caches which require a subscription. The app automatically links your location and shows which caches are closest to you, caches around town as well as premium caches which require a subscription. The navigation system, I know we’re in the right area, but the problem is that it’s right in the middle of an apartment complex parking lot. I figure since it’s closing in on 11 p.m. that no one would be around, but of course, there are cars coming in and out and a couple of guys hanging out outside of their apartment, looking right at us. Jonathan and I have resigned ourselves to looking like creeps, so we turn our flashlight down as low as they’ll go and get to searching.

Based on the navigation system, I know we’re in the right area, but we still can’t seem to find it. I open the app and check the description.

“This is a micro cache (key magnet box) and holds a logbook and pencil.”

That wasn’t helpful, so I gave up and looked at the hint.

“Bzzzzzzz.”

And then it clicks. It’s obviously somewhere close to the electrical box. It was easy enough to find the small key box, but to my disappointment, someone had put a piece of gum in with the logbook, but that wasn’t all that was in the box. Someone out there had left a plastic yellow jumping frog, a purple hair tie and a sticker that read “My Lucky Four Leaf Clover.”

Over my two days of Geocaching, I not only had an excuse to get out of the house, but I enjoyed myself in a way that I haven’t since the pandemic started. The more I look back I realize that these caches were right in front of me the entire time, and the more I think about it, I realize that this is a metaphor for Geocaching. Adventure is right in front of me, just waiting to be found.
The Betty Pages were born. Originally, the publication served the same purpose as Rumors’ poster-covered walls, except you didn’t need to sneak in the back door to read it.

The first two editions of The Betty Pages were printed on standard letter paper at Office Depot. Betty printed 300 copies of those first issues, and thought that she would end up keeping most herself. Betty never imagined she would distribute them all.

Clearly she underestimated Bellingham’s appetite.

Every reader that finds help within the pages motivates her to help more. LGBTQ+ organizations are spotlighted in the bar of each issue. A suicide hotline is listed, free meals and food banks are advertised. COVID-19 health and safety guidelines are the most recent additions to the Betty Pages.

“We try to have articles that might be able to be helpful to the reader. You know, something that might say, ‘Oh, that might work in my life,’” she said.

Every edition is prefaced with Betty’s Corner, penned by Miss Betty Desire herself. Whatever is on her mind is what informs the page. In May 2013, Betty talked about discrimination in businesses and Ski to Sea. In January 2016, she discussed marriage equality and the birth of her granddaughter.

“Not only a magic formula – besides a healthy dose of THC – for producing each issue, Betty says it usually just falls into place.

“I sit down in front of the computer and write what comes to me. And most of the time it’s okay!” she said.

The Betty Pages are not only there for the community, but the community is there for them. Betty delivered all the copies each month herself. She would linger and chat at each stop. Through her web of connections, The Betty Pages was first printed by the Bellingham Herald (not counting the initial Office Depot copies) until the Herald outsourced their printing in 2018.

Now, she has a network of support. She has enlisted a few kind volunteers to help with distribution. She has writers based all over the world, from India to Sweden. Naomi Steele, graphic designer for The Betty Pages, is one of Betty’s many loyalists.

Each month, Naomi crafts the newest edition of The Betty Pages. Rainbows and marijuana leaves are favorite decorative details, and occasionally the positive messages like “Stop Hate” and “We’re all screwed 2016!” adorn the cover.

Naomi and Betty are the last line of defense for errors or typos, but if something slips through the cracks, “I want to say that over the last few years we have gotten a bit more political but we haven’t lost the entertainment and informational aspect completely,” Naomi said.

“We both just feel like it’s really important to make sure people are informed and aware, especially nowadays."

The very purpose of the Betty Desire persona is to start conversation and inspire empathy. In the days when the bar downtown of Rumors was the main entrance, the stage, she would stop at bars to have a drink and a chat with other bar-goers, and let everyone get to know Betty.

The cocktails and conversation weren’t only for fun. Betty had a mission, and a theory.

“ ‘My theory was that exposure to gay people and drag queens is like a vaccine to bigotry,’ Betty said.

For over 25 years, Betty has been injecting the Bellingham community with her vaccine, and according to her, people are responding well to the medication. She has found that most bars in Bellingham understand what comes with being gay, and she really believes that Betty’s work is to take care of everyone,” Rian Greer, owner of Rumors said.

“Through the articles and the advertisements [in The Betty Pages] she’s able to provide those resources, not just to people she knows, but to anyone who’s able to pick up The Betty Pages,” Rian said.

Rian started working at Rumors as a bartender in 2003. He’s gotten to know Betty and her pages well over the years, as Rumors grew alongside it.

Looking back on the one year anniversary of The Betty Pages, Rian remembers stumbling back into Rumors one afternoon after an all night shift with his fellow bartenders, followed by some sunrise drinks, and coming across Betty.

She was compiling the anniversary issue, and decided to feature the stripping young bartenders who fell right into her lap.

The photo that ran? Six stark naked people posing in front of the bar, with liquor bottles tastefully arranged in front of their “unprintables”, as Rian put it.

The image still hangs above the bar at Rumors, 16 years later.

Now, as the owner of the bar, Rian admits it’s a little embarrassing when customers recognize him in the photo. But it’s not going anywhere.

“ ‘Betty’s poured a lot of heart and soul into it,” Rian said of The Betty Pages. “I’m really proud of her for keeping it up this long.”

As she’s gotten older, The Betty Pages has remained a constant outlet for Betty to speak her mind and have her voice heard. Make no mistake - Betty doesn’t let her age stop her from getting involved.

Whether it’s performing at retirement homes, fulfilling her role as “cookie lady” at free meal events, or participating in protests, Betty always spreads positivity and fun. But, The Betty Pages project gives her the opportunity to continue her work at home.

Organizing content, coordinating advertisers, writing a column, distributing the publication...it’s a lot of work. But for Betty, it’s worth it.

“It’s an absolute labor of love. I don’t regret one second of it. I really don’t,” Betty said. “I’ve had people come up to me and say something like, ‘If you need something to eat, she wants to take care of everyone,’ Rian Greer, owner of Rumors said.

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The image still hangs above the bar at Rumors, 16 years later.

Now, as the owner of the bar, Rian admits it’s a little embarrassing when customers recognize him in the photo. But it’s not going anywhere.

“ ‘Betty’s poured a lot of heart and soul into it,” Rian said of The Betty Pages. “I’m really proud of her for keeping it up this long.”

As she’s gotten older, The Betty Pages has remained a constant outlet for Betty to speak her mind and have her voice heard. Make no mistake - Betty doesn’t let her age stop her from getting involved.

Whether it’s performing at retirement homes, fulfilling her role as “cookie lady” at free meal events, or participating in protests, Betty always spreads positivity and fun. But, The Betty Pages project gives her the opportunity to continue her work at home.

Organizing content, coordinating advertisers, writing a column, distributing the publication...it’s a lot of work. But for Betty, it’s worth it.

“It’s an absolute labor of love. I don’t regret one second of it. I really don’t,” Betty said. “I’ve had people come up to me and say something like, ‘If you need something to eat, she wants to take care of everyone,’ Rian Greer, owner of Rumors said.

“Through the articles and the advertisements [in The Betty Pages] she’s able to provide those resources, not just to people she knows, but to anyone who’s able to pick up The Betty Pages,” Rian said.

Rian started working at Rumors as a bartender in 2003. He’s gotten to know Betty and her pages well over the years, as Rumors grew alongside it.

Looking back on the one year anniversary of The Betty Pages, Rian remembers stumbling back into Rumors one afternoon after an all night shift with his fellow bartenders, followed by some sunrise drinks, and coming across Betty.

She was compiling the anniversary issue, and decided to feature the stripping young bartenders who fell right into her lap.

The photo that ran? Six stark naked people posing in front of the bar, with liquor bottles tastefully arranged in front of their “unprintables”, as Rian put it.
The damaging stigmas and prejudices around the LGBTQ+ community bleed into violent hate crimes and unjust legal defenses.

BY CAMERON SIRES

STIGMAS SURROUNDING THE LGBTQ+ community are taught by the things we see and hear from those around us. Media also plays a significant role in disseminating and amplifying messages that are derogatory and prejudiced. For example, in entertainment, gay males are often shown only as flamboyant and lesbians as masculine. Transgender people tend to be shown in an exaggerated joking manner or as a victim in crime shows. People within and outside of the LGBTQ+ community have squashed the legitimacy of bisexuality, denying or questioning if it's even a real thing. Media follows this notion with a lack of representation, if once in a blue moon they are included, they aren't identified as a bisexual.

90% of Americans said they personally know someone in their life who is lesbian, gay or bisexual. The Human Rights Campaign says four in ten Americans personally know someone who is transgender. However, these statistics don't indicate if these people who personally know an LGBTQ+ person is accepting of them or if they're actively educating themselves on LGBTQ+ issues.

If you are basing the entire LGBTQ+ community off of one person, how is that any better than what you see in entertainment?

These stereotypes lay a foundation for straight or cisgender people who are unfamiliar with LGBTQ+ individuals to justify their hateful actions and biased thoughts against people in the LGBTQ+ community, but it doesn't end at being derogatory. These rooted stigmas can lead to much more violent outcomes, such as murder.

We cannot just look at the individuals who are perpetuating violence towards the LGBTQ+ community. We must look at the aftermath of an attack to understand why anyone thought they needed to commit violent actions against LGBTQ+ people and how that thought process is treated during trial.

Some state laws allow tactics such as the LGBTQ+ "panic" defense which puts the community in greater danger and gives loopholes for homophobic and transphobic people to achieve lesser sentences for murdering LGBTQ+ people.

The LGBTQ+ "panic" defense is a legal strategy that asks a jury to find that a victim's sexual orientation or gender identity is to blame for the defendant's violent reaction.

This defense is now banned in the state of Washington, effective June 6, 2020. Nine other states have also banned this tactic, leaving 40 more states with legal precedent to enact this defense.

While this strategy is not a get-out-of-jail-free card for the attacker, it can work in their favor even when the case is cut and dried. Yet somehow, a person's sexual orientation or gender identity becomes a way to pin the murder on the victim, even when there is no evidence the victim tried to make provocative advances on the defendant.

The LGBT Bar provides a timeline that explains some cases that used this strategy. In 1995, Scott Amedure had been a guest on "The Jenny Jones show". The talk show host was trying to get juicy details of guests’ secret admirers. Amedure shared he had a crush on his friend Jonathan Schmitz, who was invited to come to the show. Three days later Schmitz showed up and killed Amedure.

At trial, Schmitz used the LGBTQ+ "panic" defense in favor of his actions saying he suffered from "gay panic disorder" when he became aware of Amedure’s crush on him. The jury reduced Schmitz charges from premeditated, a murder that is planned before it was committed, to second-degree murder, which requires intention of murder but lacking premeditation.

This is far from the only case. A recent and well-known case in 2015 involved two men in Austin, Texas. Daniel Spencer and James Miller were neighbors and both musicians. Spencer invited Miller over to play music and drink together. That night Miller claimed Spencer tried to kiss him. Instead of a civil conversation about what happened, Miller stabbed Spencer multiple times in the back, in Spencer’s own home.

According to the National LGBT Bar Association, the LGBTQ+ "panic" defense is a legal strategy that asks a jury to find that a victim's sexual orientation or gender identity is to blame for the defendant's violent reaction, including murder.

State prohibits LGBTQ+ panic defenses
State does not prohibit LGBTQ+ panic defenses
Miller cleaned up Spencer’s apartment, went home and changed his clothes, then called the police to report he had killed Spencer. In the 2018 trial the defense attorney argued that Miller had never been in trouble with the police, and because of that loose argument, the only thing that made sense is Spencer had tried to sexually assault Miller. I say this is a loose argument because a clean record does not indicate innocence. I also say loosely because there was no physical evidence to suggest an attempted assault. In this case, the LGBTQ+ “panic” defense was successful. The jury convicted Miller of the lowest grade of felony murder in Texas, criminally negligent homicide.

The final verdict? Miller got away with six months in jail and a 10-year probation.

In 1998, Matthew Shepard in Laramie, Wyo., was murdered. The defendants tried to use the LGBTQ+ “panic” defense to warrant the torture and murder of Shepard because of a provocative proposition he made. This gave the defendants an “irresistible impulse” to murder. However, the American Bar Association said, “in the state of Wyoming, irresistible impulse is not a defense allowed under the statutory insanity defense construct. The LGBTQ+ panic defense was inadmissible, not due to the illegitimacy of it, but instead due to Wyoming’s statutory insanity defense construct.”

This defense strategy can’t stand alone in court as the defendants only rebuttal to why they attacked an individual, they must also support three theories. The defendant first has to argue that the knowledge of the victim’s sexual orientation or gender identity was a sufficiently provocative act that drove them to kill. Second, the defendant has to have a solid argument that their discovery or potential disclosure of a victim’s sexual orientation or gender identity caused them to go into a temporary mental breakdown, driving them to kill. Third, the defendant has to support a theory of self-defense, where they feel they were in immediate danger or serious bodily harm based on the disclosure of victims’ sexual orientation or gender identity. I can’t help but let out an obnoxious sigh at these fragile arguments. They stem from those same stigmas and prejudices that I talked about earlier. If people feel serious bodily harm, temporary mental breakdowns and murder because they are scared of someone’s sexual orientation or gender identity, what does that say about the narrative America has formed around the LGBTQ+ community? As a society, we’ve seen time and time again that we choose ignorance over educating ourselves. Not just when it comes to LGBTQ+ violence and hardship, but when it comes to violence against different races, ethnicities and religions. FBI data that was last recorded in 2018 shows that 4,047 hate crimes occurred because of someone’s race or ethnicity, 1,419 because of someone’s religious belief, 1,196 because of someone’s sexual orientation, and 168 because of someone’s gender identity.

According to the Human Rights Campaign the FBI data showed an increase by almost 6% in hate crimes against LGBTQ+ individuals since 2017. There was also a 42% increase in crimes directed against transgender and gender non-conforming individuals.

But take that data with a grain of salt. According to the Human Rights Campaign and NBC News, reporting hate crimes to the FBI is not mandatory. The number of law enforcement agencies reporting hate crime data decreased by 110 from 2017 to 2018. These statistics surely only show a fraction of such violence. The consequences LGBTQ+ individuals have to deal with when opening up about violence is also a big factor in why hate crimes go unreported. The Human Rights Campaign says the fear of discrimination, retaliation, harassment, or being outed to friends and family can be a reason for hate crimes not being reported.

I always hear we have come so far, and I agree we have, but we are also far from reaching the goal. The fight for LGBTQ+ equality is far from over when we live in a country where states give a lesser sentence to murderers because of how the victim expresses themselves or who they choose to love.

I always hear we have come so far, and I agree we have, but we are also far from reaching the goal. The fight for LGBTQ+ equality is far from over when we live in a country where states give a lesser sentence to murderers because of how the victim expresses themselves or who they choose to love.

Steps are being made to prohibit the LGBTQ+ “panic” defense at the federal level. On June 5, 2019 the “Gay and Trans Panic Defense Prohibition Act of 2019” bill was introduced to the Senate. The sponsor of this bill, Senator Edward J. Markey, said, “this bill generally prohibits a federal criminal defendant from asserting, as a defense, that the nonviolent sexual advance of an individual or a perception or belief of the gender, gender identity or expression, or sexual orientation of an individual excuses or justifies conduct or mitigates the severity of an offense.”

The last actions have been that the Senate has read the bill twice and referred to the Judiciary Committee, but has yet to pass the introductory stage.

The LGBTQ+ “panic” defense law is a prime example of the issues that fly under the radar when the LGBTQ+ community is not represented or forgotten. We need to bring attention to why these kinds of strategies are created and more importantly why they are still allowed to be used. Bring the issues into conversations with your family and friends, spread awareness on social media, contact legislators or governors that are trying to ban the gay/trans defense, and research where you can support organizations that support the LGBTQ+ community. This issue might seem bigger than you, but if everyone thinks this nothing will change.

Female gamers of color share their experiences in an industry dominated by white males charged with sexist and racist slurs

BY MALIA CANTIMBUH

AFTER A LONG and difficult day at preschool, I remember sitting in my dad’s lap as he bolted away and shot flesh-eating, reawakened corpses. His hands were noisy as he smashed his thumbs into the buttons and sticks of the controller. He jolted his entire body, including my tiny self, in reaction to a loud noise or unexpected attack. At the time, I didn’t know what the hell was happening or what zombies were, but I did know that the whole experience was exhilarating.

My dad was playing “Resident Evil 2.” As I started to learn and understand more of what zombies were and the objective of the game, I became increasingly interested - and borderline obsessed - with the grey plastic box that my dad called a PlayStation.

My dad’s best friend, who I referred to as my uncle Khoi,
I can understand how Neytiri feels. Over the years, I’ve realized how growing up in this community has affected the way I look at myself. I was quiet because anytime I spoke or made the slightest audible expression, I was told to shut up. Now I am not only silent and upset, but I was frustrated. This frustration developed into a rage. This pent-up anger affected my mood, my gameplay and how I interacted with people online and in person.

It is easy to be discouraged in the gaming community as a woman of color or that shouldn’t stop anyone from participating or giving in to the toxicity of trash-talking.

“People are looking to connect and people of color feel comfortable seeing people who look like them in the media,” Neytiri said. “While the internet and gaming culture may work to put down women and minorities, there will be plenty of allies who meet you along the way that makes it that much easier to push through!”

Looks up to Mae, someone I grew up watching, and Neytiri, someone who is my age, has helped me fully accept who I am. This acceptance has not only given me hope for the future of gaming but has also reminded me to never underestimate myself. Gaming has given me complete confidence and willingness to go after the things that people tell me are impossible. Even if we only play as buff white male protagonists in video games, it doesn’t mean women or people of color can’t ever envision themselves as a hero in their own story.
The Far-Right of the Upper Left

Whatcom County's violent white supremacist past and present, and the prospect of deradicalization

BY RILEY CURRIE

White supremacy has a long history in the Pacific Northwest, from the European incursions of the 1700s to modern far-right flyers and presence at protests. As the Black Lives Matter movement gains momentum in Whatcom County, hate groups are becoming more prominent, but so is the idea of deradicalizing their members.

LOCAL COMMUNITY ACTIVIST Stacy Bloch always refers to his cousin, who is alive and well in another part of the state, in the past tense.

"Growing up, I thought he was one of the coolest guys in the world," Bloch said. "He was one of the fan cousins, he was always fun to hang out with." His cousin's family was religious, but never extremely so. In the 70s, Bloch said, he was a hippie. Eventually, he joined the military and became a paratrooper.

Years later, when Bloch became friends with his cousin on Facebook, there was a disconnect. His cousin started questioning some of Bloch's posts about activism and human rights causes.

"I started seeing these, 'the liberals are coming for you,' or, 'get them before they get you,' posts from him," Bloch said. "One post was about clearing the brush around your house so you have better sight lines, so you can shoot people approaching your house."

Eventually the jokes crossed a line.

Bloch's interactions with his cousin stopped being friendly political banter and started to become upsetting.

"I started teasing him," Bloch said. "But it stopped being funny. I'm thinking, 'hang on, you want to shoot me?'"

Bloch believes that his cousin didn't get his far-right belief system from his family. His other cousins have expressed that they "don't know what happened" to cause this shift in his cousin's thinking.

"It's really disappointing," Bloch added. "Here's one of the coolest people in the world, and then all of a sudden they turn out to be pretty extreme and pretty darn ugly in the way that they think. He and his cousin are not on speaking terms.

Bloch's interest in activism was piqued in his early teens, during the protests against the Vietnam War. He became even more involved in activist causes in the 1980s, when he protested the Central American wars and advocated for the antimovement.

He's currently a well-known cannabis and human rights activist in Bellingham.

Bloch is the first generation of his family since they emigrated from Germany in the 1880s to not grow up on a farm in North Dakota. His father, a World War II veteran, was born in the United States to German immigrants. His father's role in the war and hatred of the Nazi party fascinated Bloch, and he has always been interested in "fringe-y" hate groups.

"Oregon and Washington in particular have really heavy racist histories," Bloch said. "Hate group activity in the Pacific Northwest is nothing new. In 2009, 30 hate groups were tracked in Washington state, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center. The Ku Klux Klan, one of the United States' most infamous white nationalist groups, made its first appearance in Bellingham in the 1920s."

"When you think about the Klan, you think the Deep South," Bloch said. "You don't think Bellingham, Railroad and Holly."

Whatcom County is 86.2% white, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2019 estimate. That's almost 10% more white than the United States. (Bellingham falls squarely in the middle, at 82.5% white.) Bellingham also has a long history as a hotspot for white supremacy.

“White supremacy is really built into the fabric of our country,” said Miri Cypers, regional director of the Anti-Defamation League's Pacific Northwest Office. “There’s certainly this white nationalist ideology that envisions especially the Pacific Northwest as a bastion for whiteness.”

Many of the same elements that appealed to white settlers in the 18th and 19th centuries appeal to white supremacist and white separatist groups today.

"[White supremacist groups] just don’t see a place for people of color, Jews, immigrants and other marginalized groups as even being a part of this country or society," Cypers said.

1855
White Euro-American settlers forced the Lummi and other tribes onto reservations.

1880s
Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families and cultures and sent to residential schools.

1906
A controversy erupted when State Normal School (now Western Washington University) admitted its first Black student, Alma Clark.

1942
Japanese-American residents of Bellingham and cities across the West Coast were sent to internment camps.

1995
Two Western students of color were attacked by neo-Nazi skinheads.

2017
Multiple Islamophobic materials were found on campus.

The Washington Territory recognized the Dred Scott v. Sandford decision and denied citizenship to Black individuals. The Territory also supported the rights of slave owners who arrived with slaves.

1858

1882

1920s

1960s-70s

The Chinese Exclusion Act was put in place. It denied Chinese individuals entry to the United States, and wasn’t repealed until 1943.

The Ku Klux Klan established a strong presence in Bellingham, and in 1926 a KKK parade drew over 700 participants. In 1929, the mayor of Bellingham presented a key to the city to the KKK Grand Dragon.

Students of color protested Western Washington University’s “inadequate” response to racism. Federal courts affirmed native fishing rights despite tension and violence against members of the Lummi tribe.

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Anti-Semitism on Western Washington University's campus resulted in the creation of a Task Force for Preventing and Responding to Antisemitism.

An influential member of Atomwaffen, a white supremacist terrorist organization active in Bellingham, was found in Blaine, Washington, and charged with violating the gun ban.

She notes that the Anti-Defamation League has seen a surge in reports of hate groups present at protests of all kinds since 2016. Whatcom County is no exception.

In early June, several concerned residents filed reports of individuals armed with AR-15 assault rifles at peaceful protests in downtown Bellingham. Stephan Hadeen, who self-identified as one of the armed individuals, went live on the air for an interview with Joe Teweh with KGMI NewsTalk 790 on June 5. Hadeen is a member of the Washington Three Percent.

The Three Percent define themselves as “a national organization made up of patriotic citizens who love their country, their freedoms, and their liberty.” The Anti-Defamation League defines the Three Percent as a “wing of the militia movement that arose as part of a resurgence of the militia movement in 2009.”

When asked why guns were present at the protest, Hadeen said they “didn’t need a reason.”

Ben Scholtz, owner of Mallard Ice Cream, posted on Facebook on June 7, adding his voice in opposition to the presence of firearms downtown Bellingham.

Scholtz went on to say he believes in the Second Amendment and understands that Washington is an open-carry state, but he hasn’t seen a single instance that would have been improved by a private citizen having a firearm in Bellingham. On the contrary, the open-carry of firearms (especially semi-automatic rifles) adds a significant concern for the people who live, work, and shop here, Scholtz continued.

On July 6, the Young Activists of Whatcom County organized a march for Black Lives in Lynden, Washington. The Lynden Freedom group was also in attendance, with trucks, American flags and guns in tow. Police stood between the protesters and Lynden Freedom group at several points along the march.

“When those who brought out assault weapons in front of children peacefully protesting should be ashamed,” said Whatcom County Councilmember Rud Browne. “Simply ashamed.”

Browne, originally from Australia, has lived in Whatcom County for 25 years and is a U.S. citizen.

“When I walk around, if I keep my mouth shut, most people don’t know I’m an immigrant,” he said. Browne retains a strong Australian accent. While, as a white man, he doesn’t have any lived experience being discriminated against on the basis of his race, he does have experience being discriminated against for his immigrant status. He’s often told to “go back to where he came from.”

Like most white people, Browne says, he knows he sees only a small percentage of the discrimination that occurs in his neighborhood or county. His focus now is on awareness.

“The center of the population has become more aware,” he said. “But the extreme end of the population has also become more emboldened.”

Stacy Bloch has seen the same trend.

“What’s bubbling to the surface right now is driven by fear and hate,” Bloch said. “They’re afraid of losing what they’ve grown up with or what they’ve been accustomed to.”

Those involved in far-right or white supremacist groups are primarily afraid of losing their privilege, Bloch added. He described a banner he saw with the phrase “equal rights for indigenous whites” emblazoned on it.

Historically ignorant and cruel sentiments like that one have been circulating in Whatcom County for decades, but there’s been an uptick in recent years. In 2019, the hate group Patriot Front plastered Ferndale and the border of the Lummi nation with flyers that read, “not stolen, conquered.”

Bloch believes the current presidential administration has given space for many of these fringe hate groups to express themselves more publicly. President Trump infamously said of the deadly protests in Charlottesville, Virginia in August of 2017 that there were “very fine people, on both sides.”

Bloch believes things will get worse before they get better. He worries about the possibility of “some sort of spasm of violence on the way out” on behalf of some of these hate groups.

Bloch is excited, however, about the future and direction of the Black Lives Matter movement in Whatcom County.

“Many times, you think you’re going to get really close to seeing some real social justice and equality, you end up being disappointed,” Bloch said. “But this may be the first time in all my decades of being involved in something, fighting for some form of justice, this movement may be it.”

Many also argue for a deradicalization approach. Life After Hate is a nonprofit devoted to helping individuals exit the violent far-right. Founded in 2011, the nonprofit conducts a wide variety of education, intervention, academic research, and outreach.

“This is the most important thing to remember is that hateful ideology is not a prerequisite for joining a hate group,” said Dimitrios Kalantzis, director of communications at Life After Hate. According to Kalantzis, many people are sucked into extremism when a basic human need for connection is hijacked.

“Trauma, shame, and identity issues are common themes,” Kalantzis added. “People use violent far-right extremism to make sense of their place in the world.” Those feeling isolated may lean into conspiracy theories and violent stances on immigration.

When it comes to helping someone leave the violent far-right, Kalantzis said that, as dissatisfying an answer as it may be, the most important thing is to exercise patience, and to remind that person that they are loved and welcome.

Many people who come to Life After Hate have already decided that they want to change, so the nonprofit focuses on giving them a positive community and support. According to Kalantzis, individuals are more likely to leave a hate group if they feel they have a community that is waiting for them.

“Radicalization isn’t linear,” Kalantzis said. “So neither is de-radicalization. It’s often a lifelong process.”

Kalantzis also emphasized the importance of raising awareness, not only of hate groups, but of institutional forms of white supremacy. There’s a tendency to associate hate groups with rural, isolated areas.

“To call hate groups a naturally occurring phenomenon in certain geographical regions is to absolve the rest of the country from a racism that millions of people are living in and facing every day,” Kalantzis said. “Every day, we make decisions that are rooted in white supremacy. If we don’t ask ourselves, ‘what decisions am I making that are informed by white supremacy,’ aren’t we complicit?”

Stacy Bloch has been following these issues closely for years, and continues to confront them regularly in his own community. He knows that as a white activist in Bellingham, it’s easier for him to speak out than it is for many others. For Bloch, deradicalization and rehabilitation are excellent ideas, but hard to envision clearly.

“A lot of these people have a lot of hate inside them,” Bloch said. “I don’t know if all of them can change. But if you can show them that the things they’re afraid of aren’t going to happen, then maybe they can change ... good grief, we can only hope.”
“PHEW. WOW. EVERYONE, this thing is hard to write.”

On May 23, 2020, venue owner and bartender Erin Gill poured herself a few drinks and sat down to write the 361-word Facebook post that would announce the closure of The Firefly Lounge. The choice to close was already made, but Gill knew sharing it with the public would be hard. She wrote a long stream of consciousness letter in a Google Doc, slept on it, and waited to hit “send” until around 8 p.m. the next day.

Gill opened The Firefly in April 2018, after taking over Firefly in April of the same year. She joked that the last thing The Firefly has been able to do for its community was “crashing halt in March. We optimistically closed our doors in March, but now, facing an uncertain future … the time has come to close our doors for good,” the Facebook post continued. Gill was especially touched by one person’s comment he said he’d been coming to the venue for years and had never been able to get a table. “With this comment I really started to realize it could easily be almost a year, the numbers just didn’t add up.”

The Firefly, which mainly hosted open mics and burlesque shows, was a place for new and established artists, touring acts and tending artists, touring acts and tight-knit community events. In the same week, the Firefly might have hosted a bluegrass jamboree. The restrictions in place meant the venue could not go out of business if the shutdown lasts six months or longer without federal relief.

Between the loss of a beloved space and the reality of some venues never coming back, it’s understandable that things may be different when we reopen. It’s understood that things may be very different when that reopening happens, but for now, all there is to do is wait. “I see artists creating their usefulness to keep working on their music, and find new ways to make a few dollars while weathering this shitstorm,” Gill said.

As shutdowns crawled into August, that assumption quickly withered. Artists and booking agents stopped confirming dates industry-wide, according to Jewell. This uncertainty comes as a disappointment to concertgoers and as an existential threat to venue owners, employees and artists. Without art, uplifting artists won’t be possible. “This is a pivotal moment,” Bonaci added.

When discussing re-opening and who is given a platform, it’s important to acknowledge the role independent venues play in the industry. Without an arts community, uplifting artists aren’t able to perform. “There is a real threat to the cycle of the music scene has not been the same. We optimisticilly closed our doors in March, but now, facing an uncertain future … the time has come to close our doors for good,” the Facebook post continued. Gill, who had attended a show or performed at The Firefly, that first line is an understatement. Gill opened The Firefly in April 2018, after taking over the space previously known as the Green Frog in January of the same year.

In two short years, The Firefly established itself as a central venue in Bellingham. The venue hosted performances almost every night, Monday through Saturday, featuring everything from live music, comedy and open mics to burlesque and drag shows. Sundays were reserved for private parties, tending artists or just a day off.

The decision boiled down to the sheer uncertainty of anything,” Gill said. “We could have weathered a closure of a few months, but when we all sat down and realized it could easily be almost a year, the numbers just didn’t add up.”

Estimates are scattered, but most musicians and venue owners agree that concerts won’t be fully possible until 2021 or 2022. “I don’t think concerts are coming back until spring of next year,” said local musician and booking intern James Bonaci. “Until there’s a vaccine, it’s not safe.” Bonaci hopes that the time away from performing will provide space for long overdue conversations about representation and accountability in Bellingham’s music community.

“I hope a lot of people can reflect on what it means to meaningfully support the people who have provided space for them in the first place,” Bonaci said.

When concerns around COVID-19 began to spread in March, venues were some of the first public spaces to shut their doors. The National Independent Venue Association (NIVA) reports that 90% of independent venues will go out of business if the shutdown lasts six months or longer without federal relief.

Government assistance programs have been established for the arts as well, Bonaci said. “The government has been wonderful in moving quickly to provide this support. The only thing I would say is that the process is so long and complicated that it seems like there’s a significant amount of perpetually qualified people who are eligible to receive support.”

But with musicians unable to perform, venues facing long-term closures and college plans uncertain, he worries the regular turnover of Bellingham’s music scene might stall. That worry is felt across the entire local music community. “I don’t think concerts are coming back until spring of next year,” said local musician and booking intern James Bonaci. “Until there’s a vaccine, it’s not safe.”

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It’s extremely difficult to survive as a musician without being paid to perform in established venues. It’s even more difficult to uplift previously unheard voices in music without established venues providing that space.

“Musicians don’t make money recording music,” said Craig Jewell, one of the founding members of Madrid, the Wild Buffalo House of Music. “They actually lose money.”

The advent of livestreaming has been great for audiences, but it’s not sustainable. Without venues and a live platform, musicians just can’t stay financially afloat. WANMA was created by a group of independent music venues, local artist organizations, and other music stakeholders in response to the industry-wide economic crisis brought on by COVID-19. The association’s main aim is to provide relief for the Washington music industry.

Jewell is completely focused on keeping live music alive. “For every one dollar spent on a ticket, $12 is spent in the local economy,” Jewell said. “The cultural and economic impact of music venues is so vast.”

Reopening won’t be as simple for concert venues as it is for restaurants and bars. Most tours have been postponed indefinitely, or rescheduled as far out as 2022. The Wild Buffalo has been closed completely since March. It’s absolutely impossible to predict,” Jewell said of the timeline for re-opening. “There was this assumption that it would be two months.”

But as shutdowns crawled into August, that assumption quickly withered. Artists and booking agents stopped confirming dates industry-wide, according to Jewell. This uncertainty comes as a disappointment to concertgoers and as an existential threat to venue owners, employees and artists.

Concertgoers, artists and venue owners are all holding out hope, however. It’s understood that things may be very different when that reopening happens, but for now, all there is to do is wait. “I see artists creating their usefulness to keep working on their music, and find new ways to make a few dollars while weathering this shitstorm,” Gill said. “I see musicians coming to one that’s still making art and will be ready to light up stages again when they can re-open. Mostly, I see a community that will con-stantly adapt and make it itself heard, and one that will come out strong when this is all said and done.”

Live music isn’t dead — it’s only sleeping.
Zora’s Salon is proud to serve customers with all kinds of hair

BY ROB STANLEY

WILLIAM ZAYAS PREPARES his hair with a rinse, shampoo, deep condition and gel application, before knocking on the door of Sloane, his 14-year-old neighbor who has a knack for braids.

Back home, he adds an olive oil spray and lays his hair down with a durag. After a brief wait, Zayas pulls off the durag to reveal a slick set of braids, followed by the sounds of his own laugh and a loud “ooo!”.

About two weeks later, he unravels his braids. Another shampoo and deep condition brings Zayas’ hair back to a springy, defined look.

Zayas produces head-bobbing house music under the moniker “Trillivm,” and on his way back from a panel on decolonizing the anthropology department at Western, decided on naming his 2019 album “Decolonizing House Music.”

“My first actual job was a barber,” Zayas said on a Zoom call. Now 27, he has been cutting his own hair since he was 12. He began cutting his friends hair when he was in high school, and had some of the same customers for seven years. “When I had people to cut, it was like therapy. We’d sit there and just talk it up.”

Frida Emalange, owner of Zora’s Styling Salon and Spa, shares a similar sentiment. “Doing hair is not about having a salon, it’s about the people,” said Emalange. “I know how important it is for kids to feel confident. For kids to grow and be confident, they need to feel good about their hair.”

Emalange has family in Bellingham, and on a trip to visit them from her home country, Cameroon, she noticed an absence of salons that could style Black hair textures. She saw the need and jumped at the opportunity to bring her culture to Bellingham.

Emalange opened up Zora’s in 2001. The salon, named for Emalange’s daughter, prides itself on serving customers of all hair types. Zora’s stylists cut, color, braid, dreadlock and cornrow.

In March, Washington governor Jay Inslee signed into law House Bill 2062, an amendmentment to the Washington Law Against Discrimination that extends the term “race” to be inclusive of “traits historically associated or perceived to be associated with race, including, but not limited to, hair texture and protective hair styles.”

“Clients have come to trust me, I couldn’t go forward knowing I could cause long-term side effects,” said Emalange.

To many people, Zayas included, hair is a big part of who they are. Being able to express yourself with something you grew out of your own body is a unique source of pride.
Huddled in the back of her kennel, LuLu, with her sleek, black coat and a white chest, cowered when first approached by Valerie Reyes. Reyes, who had just begun volunteering for the Whatcom Humane Society (WHS), decided to give the dog some space, knowing LuLu was probably involved in negative situations with humans before. From a distance, Reyes introduced herself to LuLu, offered some treats and left her alone.

When Reyes returned on another day, she introduced herself again. Surprisingly, LuLu came to the front of the kennel and accepted the treats Reyes had slid under her door. LuLu was shy and hesitant, and stayed in the shelter longer than most. But, Reyes began interacting with Lulu regularly, when she could. With every visit, Reyes watched as LuLu gained confidence and trust, until she was eventually adopted.

WHS hosts the annual Dog Days of Summer, where they implore families to bring their dogs for treats, socialization and games. Reyes was just leaving after volunteering at this event when a dog caught her off-guard and jumped on her. To her surprise, it was LuLu with her adoptive family saying hello to her old friend.

“The best experiences are [knowing] that they are adopted and loved and in their own homes now, with their adopted families,” Reyes explained.

As a kid, Reyes lived in a home without animals. Reyes developed a fear of dogs when one of her friends - who is also involved with animal rescue - was hit trying to corral a lost dog.

“(My husband) grew up with animals; so, he introduced me to having a dog in our home and, when we adopted our dog together, that’s what really got me started with wanting to be more involved with the shelter,” Reyes said.

Accepting all animals, WHS commits to being an open-admission animal shelter, regardless of age, breed or condition. With three facilities: domestic, farm and wildlife, WHS staff and volunteers care for an average of 4,500 animals a year.

Kelsey Forbes has worked in all three facilities and began volunteering in 2016 with the Wildlife Rehabilitation Center. After being hired in the domestic animal facility in 2019, Forbes started volunteering in the farm facility on her days off.

“Animals have always been a huge passion and I had two days off a week and I didn’t know what to do with myself,” Forbes explained. “So, I just figured I might as well put a couple hours to the farm facility.”

After recently moving to Bellingham, Forbes found a limping, three-legged deer and immediately searched online for somewhere that could help. She soon found a number and dialed. After speaking with a representative from the Wildlife Rehabilitation Center at WHS, Forbes signed up as a volunteer and never left.

Telling the stories of those working with the animals at the Whatcom Humane Society, this article explores the volunteer and staff experiences and recollections explaining why they do what they do.
“You get an opossum; its mother was hit by a car. They’re mar- supials, so the babies are in the pouch,” Forbes described. “Being able to rescue the joey from the pouch, bringing them into care, and helping them grow up to be able to live and survive in the wild again; it feels awesome.”

In the farm facility, horses take longer to adopt out than other animals. Since they are so expensive, require special care and need lots of land, it takes a specific person to adopt a horse.

“One of our resident horses had been there for over two years, and one had been there for over three, and they finally found homes,” Forbes said, beginning to tear up. “The people who were adopting had horses who lost their best friend, probably naturally, and horses do better, usually, with another horse, and they looked at our facility and matched them up and it was really awesome.

At WHS, working with fearful animals, similar to LuLu, is not uncommon.

“You’re on their time. You can’t just force them. You can’t reason with them. It’s not like talking to a fearful human being and trying to get them to understand you. They don’t speak the language,” Forbes expressed. “So, I’ve learned to be a lot more patient and tolerant and learn the different kinds of techniques to diffuse certain situations and that actually crossed over with how I work with people too."

As a WHS education and outreach coordinator, Forbes seeks to educate students of all ages, from preschoolers to Western Washington University students.

“This little girl had caught me when I was at the supermarket, she recognized me,” Forbes recalled. “That’s the animal lady!” the little girl exclaimed. “This is where I want to be in life,” Forbes remembered thinking. “I love being the animal lady.”

Established in 1902, WHS is the oldest non-profit animal welfare organization in Whatcom County.

Susan Martucci, one of the newer volunteers to WHS, previously fostered animals for the Seattle Humane Society. Martucci and her daughter, a veterinarian, made the collective decision to become a certified foster family. They fostered everything from bunnies and chinchillas to dogs and puppies.

Martucci started as a dog TLC (tender love and care) where she would walk and play with the dogs at WHS. However, she soon began training in consoling adoptions.

“It’s really a more intimate setting, where the family would love for this pet to work out, but now they’ve only seen it, behind the cage. So, we get to do some introductions and kind of talk them through what we know about the animal,” Martucci explained. “It’s a lot of talking people through things they might not have thought about — making sure the animal is a good fit.”

Every year since 2010, WHS has averaged approximately 4,823 animals coming into the shelter and about 2,966 animals going out. Of the domestic animals being taken in every year since 2010, an average of approximately 1,649 were cats and about 1,351 were dogs. Although there are many other types of animals taken in by WHS, according to the WHS Intake by Species chart, cats and dogs are consistently the most common, with the majority of them being strays.

Most of the animals at WHS are just waiting for the perfect family to come along and take them to their forever home, just like LuLu.

WE NEED TO EDUCATE and open our eyes to the glaring issues facing the trans community. I just want to start off by saying that even though I always listen to trans voices and try to educate myself on the issues, I cannot even pretend to say that I understand the pain and oppression that is felt by trans people. I do, however, want to share my insight on the problematic stereotypes that movies and television have ingrained in our society about trans people.

We must push for more and better representation, but we also cannot stop there: we must stand up for trans people and continue to fight for equal treatment in our laws and in our society.

What really opened my eyes to the issues of representation for trans people is Netflix’s “Disclosure,” a documentary on transgender representation in film and television. “Disclosure” gives a thorough examination of Hollywood and the problematic depictions of gender in film through the voice of leading trans thinkers and creatives.

As a cisgender man, I didn’t grow up thinking about the problematic stereotypes in the entertainment industry. I realized later in my life that a lot of the movies and television shows that I grew up on had so many troublesome “jokes” and portrayals, especially towards the transgender community. Unfortunately, it was hard to escape these shows and movies that made fun of trans people, as they were pretty much everywhere.

In the much-loved show “Friends,” Kathleen Turner played the role of Chandler’s biological mom. The silver was a transgender woman. The character’s gender identity is never fully discussed, she constantly gets misgendered and ends up being a walking punchline.

The joke that is constantly repeated in shows and movies is about a man dressing in women’s clothing. This kind of trope exists to make fun of transgender women and should make you cringe anytime you see a show, new or old, use this as a “joke.”

As cis people, we constantly see our heroes on screen represent what we like. For trans people, most of the representation they get to see of themselves are problematic stereotypes. For example, when the transgender character always gets killed off either because of a transphobic crime or dying from the media they are using for their gender confirmation.

I watched “Disclosure” as a way to further educate myself on many of our society’s glaring issues, which seems to be just about every aspect of our world. I was deeply saddened to see how surprised I was that there were so many occurrences of adult portrayals and mistreatment of transgender actors and trans life altogether.

The documentary, and Nikki Reitz’s study of the representation of trans women in film and television, show that the storyline for a lot of trans characters is that coming out as trans affects and burdens the cis people around them. Like making it seem like the sheer existence of transgender people is too much for cис people to bear, which is devastating because it can be difficult to accept their own identity when they see the reflections of themselves being treated badly in the shows and movies they grow up watching.

84% of Americans say they do not personally know someone who is transgender or don’t know that they do, which means the only way most cis people learn about trans people is through images shown in the media. This is scary because the media and entertainment industry has so much power to be able to show marginalized groups in a bad light and shape the narrative for the majority of the country.

If there was more representation of trans people and trans culture in shows and movies, it would make these awful representations less damaging. The GLAAD Annual Report shows that of the 329 regular and recurring LGBTQ+ characters on screen in the 2017-2018 television season, only 17 were transgender.

Laverne Cox, a transgender actress, played a lead role in a CBS legal drama “Doubt” which was shockingly canceled after only two episodes due to bad ratings and critics saying the show “deserved a better cast.”

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“I wonder if people who watch and love these shows,” Cox said during the documentary. “I wonder if they will reach out to trans people in need and work to defeat policies that discriminate against us, policies that dehumanize us. Because until that happens, all that energy from the silver screen won’t be enough to bet- ter the lives of trans people off the screen.”

You should feel heartbro- ken after watching this docu- mentary for supporting these problematic shows in the past and ignoring the problems that the trans community faces.

The best thing that we as cis people can do with this feeling is to use it to educate others around us.

With so many problematic systems and people getting brought to light recently, I’ve always tried to think twice about the places I spend my money or support; this is no excep- tion. I won’t stop my education of trans life with just one docu- mentary, and neither should you.

As cis people, we should all listen and uplift trans voice- es and appreciate trans art and community. We need to join in supporting and pro- moting more representation of trans people and culture, but we also must stand up for trans people by stopping the spread of hateful language and jokes.

It all starts with education and listening, and us cis people need to do a lot more of that. We shouldn’t stop educating ourselves after watching just one documentary. To contin-ue to be an ally to trans people, check out GLAAD’s tips.
A brief reflection on being a girl

BY ELLA BANKEN

GETTING PICKED LAST for capture-the-flag among my 11 male cousins every time.

Not being allowed to help clean the gutters.

Being teased for drinking a “ladies’ beer”.

Receiving the recommendation to do “girl push-ups” during P.E. fitness testing in middle school.

The little comments and actions stack up over the years.

Two years ago I moved into my first home. It was definitely a “college house.” After years of rowdy tenants, it had seen better days. We covered the most gruesome wall splatters with posters and suffocated the vague cat smell with fruit-scented candles. Occasionally the dryer would catch on fire or the kitchen sink would overflow with wastewater, but we made it work, and we kept re-signing the lease.

The front of the house was almost completely obstructed by a wildly out of control laurel bush. Based on the Christmas lights that the shrub had grown around, it hadn’t been pruned - or touched at all - in years. The base of the beast was littered with broken glass and cigarette butts.

The comment stung for multiple reasons. First, I knew that my roommate and I were perfectley capable of calculating the amount of dirt that we needed to purchase. We had both triumphed over algebra, defeated geometry and conquered calculus. We knew what we were doing and we didn’t need accommodation.

But the comment also stung, because it was a woman who said it to us. When I think about the women in my life, I am amazed at their strength and resiliency. I know that they can do anything they put their minds to, and they don’t need to modify their actions to be successful.

Looking back on that moment, I wish I had said something. It’s the sort of situation that you scheme up comebacks for while you’re in the shower, you know? Instead of ignoring the comment, I could have said, “you mean regular math?” or any other variation of “hey, girls can do math too.” Instead, we laughed uncomfortably, and left without buying the dirt.

“As a young reporter in one of my first jobs, I was frustrated that hometown friends (fortunately, not my parents) weren’t interested in hearing about my work, just about my love life and likelihood of marriage soon. I got a button that said, “Unhooked and Happy.” The publisher of the community paper saw it on my purse and laughed and said, “It should say “Unhooked and pregnant! That would be funny!” No one said anything, including me, but it still rankles me decades later.”

—Peggy Watt

“I was in my early 30s and was overseeing sales and marketing of six hotels as Regional Group Sales and Marketing Director. I was in a discussion with the general manager of one of the hotels that was not doing well about all the changes and policies that he will need to do to improve sales for the hotel. This GM chose to say “When I was running hotels, you were still in diapers.” He proceeded to spread a nasty rumor that I got my position by sleeping with my bosses! When I found out about it, I was very upset and told my bosses about it - all men. They all thought it was very amusing and laughed about it. Mind you, they were great bosses who were very respectful of me. Although this happened 20 years ago, I still felt that my sacrifices and hard work to prove my capabilities were erased by rumors and innuendo. (I don’t think it would happen to a man if he was in my position. This happened in Malaysia, so I think it’s an issue for women internationally and still happening now.”

—Angela Seow-Scott Yuan Huay

“I used to work at a hardware store. There have been so many times where a customer (most of the time an older white man) would come in and either completely ignore any advice I gave. He would ask to speak with one of my male coworkers, who would repeat the same thing I told them, making me feel worthless at times. We would also have a few men that would come into the store and make inappropriate comments a lot and it got to the point with one guy where if I was working and he came in, I would hide in our break room until they left because they made me so uncomfortable. One man in particular would make inappropriate comments to me in front of his young daughter, too, which broke my heart. When I became a manager there as well, some of my older, male coworkers wouldn’t listen to me when I would try to do my job and assign tasks to them or would try to tell me how to do the job I had been doing for much longer than them.”

—Sara Bourgeau

“There are a lot of little things, but the main thing I can think of happened a couple years ago. It was when Christine Blasey Ford came out against Brett Kavanaugh, and it’s all people were talking about. Some people close to me made jokes about it and dismissed her testimony. I’ve been in a situation that is kind of gray in terms of whether it was sexual assault or not, and it made me feel like if I spoke up about what happened to me, they wouldn’t listen. It made me feel like, because I am a woman, my voice doesn’t matter. I began to realize that because I’m a woman, my voice is more easily brushed off by a lot of people. This has had a huge impact on me when I started at Western a few months later, because I was going into journalism, a profession that requires me using my voice to bring important issues to light.”

—Izzy
BY COOPER CAMPBELL

AIDS activist Tim Costello opens up in this podcast about the similarities and differences he sees in the public and institutional responses to the AIDS crisis and COVID-19.

Comparing Crises: Remembering the AIDS Epidemic Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic

BY CLAUDIA COOPER

Medical and future medical workers talk about how they hold pride for their career in a fearful time.

What the Doctor Ordered

BY CLAUDIA COOPER

Clinical Training Clinic, Western Washington University Psychology Department
360-650-3184

Lake Whatcom Residential and Treatment Center
360-676-6000

Mental Health Central Access Line
1-888-693-7200

National Alliance on Mental Illness of Whatcom County
360-671-4950

National Hopeline Network Suicide Prevention
1-800-SUICIDE (784-2433) or 1-800-442-HOPE (4673)

Project for Assistance in the Transition from Homelessness
360-540-5288

Relationship Resources
360-393-9063

Sea Mar Community Health Center-Bellingham
360-671-3225

Washington Health and Human Services Referral 211

VOA Crisis Response Services for Whatcom County
1-800-584-3578

Bellingham Fire Department
360-778-8400

Adult Protective Services
1-977-734-6277

24 Hour Missing Persons Information
1-800-543-5678

Washington Health and Human Services Referral 211

Behavioral Health Access Program, Whatcom Alliance for Health Advancement
360-788-6594

Behavioral Health Inpatient Center at St. Joseph Hospital
360-734-5400

Compass Health mental health and psychiatric outpatient services
360-676-2220

Counseling Training Clinic, Western Washington University Psychology Department
360-650-3184

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Photo by Olga Kononenko on Unsplash
GEORGE FLOYD’S LAST WORDS

IT’S MY FACE MAN I DIDN’T DO ANYTHING SERIOUS
MAN PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE I CAN’T BREATHE
PLEASE MAN PLEASE SOMEBODY PLEASE MAN CAN’T
BREATHE I CAN’T BREATHE PLEASE MAN CAN’T
BREATHE, MY FACE JUST GET UP I CAN’T BREATHE
PLEASE I CAN’T BREATHE SHIT I WILL I CAN’T MOVE
MAMA MAMA MAMA
I CAN’T MY KNEE MY NUTS IM THROUGH IM THROUGH
IM CLAUSTROPHOBIC MY STOMACH HURTS MY NECK
HURTS EVERYTHING JESSICA DOTKWHITTAKER
HURTS SOME WATER OR SOMETHING PLEASE PLEASE I CAN’T
BREATHE OFFICE DONT KILL ME THEY GO KILL ME MAN
COME ON MAN I CANNOT BREATHE I CANNOT BREATHE
THEY GON KILL ME THEY GON KILL ME I CAN’T
BREATHE I CANT BREATHE PLEASE SIR PLEASE
PLEASE I CAN’T

FLOYD’S EYES CLOSE. FLOYD IS NON-RESPONSIVE.

2 MIN 43 SECONDS WITH OFFICERS KNEE STILL ON HIS NECK.
NOW TELL ME WHY FIGHTING FOR RACIAL JUSTICE IS STILL A CRIME? TIME FOR A NEW WORLD IS NOW.