Little Amal Begins Her US Walk in Boston

By Harmony Witte

A 10-year-old Syrian girl stepped off a boat in Boston Harbor on September 7th—a beacon of hope encountering a new land. Her name is Amal, and she was without parents, a stranger in a strange place, displaced from her home and everything she knew. But Little Amal was not alone; observing closely, she was surrounded by a sea of people who came to greet the 12-foot-tall puppet along with her three puppeteers. Two of the puppeteers were operating her arms with a third person inside of her ribcage on stilts who was also operating her expressions and turning her head. People from across the region came to welcome Amal to Boston where she began her journey across the United States. This journey is a walk that will bring her message of hope to 35 cities, across 6,000 miles, over a period of 2 months, ending on the Mexican border in early November. At each stop, she will be welcomed by arts communities with art projects, songs, and dance.

Amal Walks Across America is produced by The Walk Productions in association with Handspring Puppet Company in partnership with the City of Boston. There were several events in the Boston area to celebrate Amal hosted by local arts organizations who, in a rare instance, came together for the occasion such as ArtsEmerson, the American Repertory Theater, Company One, the Institute of Contemporary Art, and Extinction Rebellion. Dayton Miles of American Repertory Theater said “Amal is going to leave us very soon, but we’re still going to be here in this network of trust. And these organizations having the opportunity to come together and the relationships that have been strengthened and built through this will still be here which means that we’re a more connected city, and a healthy city is one that’s in conversation with itself. I think her walk means being at Emerson, Chinatown is re-ally our closest neighbor. It was so exciting to learn that Chinatown is also the site of former Little Syria and the history of deep relationships and organizing and collaboration between Syrian and Chinese folks in some of the early organizing around gentrification and fighting against gentrification. And that moment is going to be highlighted in the walk. I can’t say enough how much we are so honored and grateful to be welcomed into Chinatown. And very much our intent is that this walk is our project—song and dance.

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Romee Pinoy of ArtsEmerson said, "Amal is going to leave us very soon, but we’re still going to be here in this network of trust. And these organizations having the opportunity to come together and the relationships that have been strengthened and built through this will still be here which means that we’re a more connected city, and a healthy city is one that’s in conversation with itself. I think her walk means being at Emerson, Chinatown is really our closest neighbor. It was so exciting to learn that Chinatown is also the site of former Little Syria and the history of deep relationships and organizing and collaboration between Syrian and Chinese folks in some of the early organizing around gentrification and fighting against gentrification. And that moment is going to be highlighted in the walk. I can’t say enough how much we are so honored and grateful to be welcomed into Chinatown. And very much our intent is that this walk is our project—song and dance.

Marrakesh-Safi Earthquake: Morocco and the World React

By Jeff Millman

A 6.9 magnitude earthquake hit Morocco’s Marrakesh-Safi region just after 11 PM on September 8, 2023. It is the largest earthquake recorded in Morocco in at least 120 years, and the deadliest in the country since the 1960 earthquake in Agadir. 2,901 people have died and well over 5,000 are injured as of this writing, but as searches continue these numbers are expected to rise. Rescue efforts are particularly difficult given that the areas most affected are rural and mountainous. The Red Cross has claimed that recovery may take years.

Sampan is published through the Asian American Civic Association. Many of our students, clients, and employees are from Morocco. We share in their pain, and we want to bring you reactions from Moroccan individuals, some of whom live in the States and some of whom are in Morocco. One of our sources, who grew up in Morocco and now lives in Massachusetts, gave us more information about what is happening on the ground in the affected regions.

“Some villages were completely wiped out, with over 90% of the population dead. The injured in certain villages are still waiting for rescue forces to arrive due to geographical challenges and blocked routes,” he tells us. “Moreover, the royal armed forces sent some important rescue forces to the mountains and helicopters to reach those isolated areas. Tents were deployed and a military field hospital was established near the affected areas to provide initial and urgent assistance to the injured.”

Morocco is using all of its resources to address this tragedy, and multiple other countries, including the US, India, and Algeria have pledged financial assistance and humanitarian support. Thus far, the Moroccan government INSIDE THIS ISSUE

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Marrakesh-Safi Earthquake: Morocco and the World React

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has only accepted aid from Qatar, Spain, the United Arab Emirates, and the United Kingdom, though this may soon change. As one of our sources tells us, within Morocco “people from the north to the south have shown again to the world how they come together in moments of need. Many influencers in social media launched donation campaigns to collect food, clothing, blankets, and other items to help their fellow citizens in the mountains. The amount of donations and generosity displayed during [the past few days] were astonishing, and left many speechless of how Moroccan people unite during difficult times.”

Rescue attempts are still going on. One of our Moroccan colleagues says, “the aftermath will be hard to assess right now, but the head of a parliament chamber announced earlier that it will take 5-6 years to rebuild those areas. 90% of the damage happened to villages in the mountains where it is very difficult to travel to by car...Unfortunately, this earthquake hit one of the most fragile areas of Morocco, where people were already struggling during tough, cold, and snowy winters, lack of water, and lack of agricultural fields.”

The Moroccan government has received some criticism for the perceived slowness of its reaction to the earthquake, and official requests for assistance were delayed. International coordination over the next few weeks will be crucial to rescue more people and begin to repair the damage to the areas hit by the earthquake, and while the Moroccan government has refused some aid (for example, from Algeria), many countries and international bodies, such as the European Union and United Nations, have pledged to help in whatever way the Moroccan government will accept. Residents of Morocco are also eager to assist in these efforts. One of our sources currently living in Morocco describes “hundreds of posts on social networks [showing] the movement of hundreds of trucks loaded with tons of aid from various cities and destinations to the Kingdom to the affected areas.”

She continues by reflecting on the feelings of unity across the country: “The sense of solidarity shown by Moroccans shows just how deeply rooted the various forms of solidarity are in Moroccan culture. What stands out in this vast campaign is the clarity and perceptible presence of the human motif, followed by spontaneity and immediacy.” This tragedy is terrible, but our fellow human beings do not wait to lend a hand. We will no doubt continue to see this solidarity over the next few weeks, and people living in the United States can help too. You can donate to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to support earthquake relief efforts here: https://donation.ifrc.org/?campaign=9-4e4ecd-8350-ec11-a2e7-080506010027
Asian Americans and Women More Vulnerable to Displacement by AI Technology

By Damica Feliciano

There’s also a significant gap between men and women impacted by AI exposure, according to the study. 21 percent of women are more likely to be exposed to AI in their jobs compared to 17 percent of men. Kochlar says it’s due to the differing tradesmen and women tend to work. “Women are much less likely to be employed in construction than men and are much more likely to be employed in healthcare or education compared with men,” he noted.

“So we see women have actually more exposure than men at the moment.” Although the study echoes common fears about job loss and replacement by AI technology, the study points out that the workers who are likely to see the most exposure to AI don’t feel their job is at risk. About one-third of U.S. workers in the most exposed industry, information and technology, said that AI will help them more than harm them personally. Only eleven percent say the opposite, according to the survey.

A study earlier this year by Goldman Sachs revealed how generative AI tools like Chat GPT could impact 300 million jobs worldwide, a disruption mainly seen in white-collar jobs. However, blue-collar jobs are also sitting in a unique predicament being affected by automation and AI.

Another study released in July showed how different labor markets in China are influenced by AI and automation. Their results showed that 54 percent of jobs in China would be substituted for AI and production and transport equipment workers are the most susceptible to being replaced.

Khiem VG, CEO and executive director of the Society of Asian Scientists and Engineers, expresses his uncertainty about AI exposure among Asian Americans, especially in low-income communities.

“It doesn’t surprise me that it’s going to impact Asians,” he told NBC News. “We’re just on the cusp of this revolution. This is the first wave to impact.”

Little Amal Begins Her US Walk in Boston

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Amal has already completed a 5,000-mile trek across Europe where she was celebrated internationally, with her journey first beginning in July 2021 in Gaziantep, Turkey with her and her team walking all the way to the United Kingdom.

Amal began her U.S. walk in Boston arriving via schooner where she was met with Wampaanag dancers and singers welcoming her to the land. Then she made her way from there to Dewey Square, then on to Chinatown. David Gendreder, Master Wampaanag Tribal Administrator said of Amal, “I think just being able to welcome another person from another sovereign nation and let them know that we're peaceful, that we're welcoming people, but that she was also respectful to come in and dance with us as well and showed that certain about what the future holds,” Rakesh Kochlar, Pew research researcher and author of the study told NBC News.

Kochlar’s disaggregated data of women present unique trends that could alter an industry’s work activities more than others. High-exposure professions like technical writing, tax preparation, and web development are in close proximity to AI-driven tasks, whereas low-exposure professions like child care, food and hospitality, and firefighters are distant from the presence of AI. “More educated workers who are engaged in jobs requiring more analytical and cognitive skills,” he said in an episode with “Rolli’s Experts Explain Everything” podcast. “They are more exposed to AI and these workers include Asian and white workers who are typically more likely to be college educated than Hispanic and Black workers.”

Asian Americans are also more likely than average to work in professional and technical occupations, leaving their Black, Latinx, and Pacific Islander counterparts to work in least exposed, physically demanding jobs by larger margins than Asian Americans.

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Events Calendar

- **Taiwan Nigh Market 2023**
  Saturday, Sep 16, 2023 - 9pm; Chinatown Gate, Hudson St and Beach St. There will be a variety of Taiwanese street food, Art crafts, Chinese folk dancing and live performances by Boston You & Me Music.

- **33rd Annual South Boston Street Fest**
  Saturday, Sep 16, 2023 - 11:00am-4:00pm; East Broadway between I and L Streets, East Broadway at L Street, South Boston, MA. This FREE event includes participation by nearly 100 South Boston businesses, non-profit organizations, and artists that will fill the festival site – along with 2 performance stages filled with live entertainment throughout the day.
  [https://www.southbostonstreetfest.com/](https://www.southbostonstreetfest.com/)

- **Fiesta Welcome- Fiesta En La Plaza**
  Saturday, September 16, 2023 - 10:00am-7pm; City Hall Plaza and Pavilion, 1 City Hall Square, Boston, MA 02103. Latinx Heritage Month celebration at City Hall Plaza and Pavilion! Join us for a four-weekend series of exciting events showcasing the rich culture and heritage of the Latino community.

- **Boston Women’s Market at Riverfest**
  Saturday, Sep 16th, 11am-4pm; Assembly Row, 355 Artisan Way, Somerville, MA 02145. Vendors will be popping up during Riverfest between Shake Shack and Cafe Nero in Assembly Row! Discover your new favorite small business as you enjoy the fleeting summer days by the river.
  [https://www.bostonwomensmarket.com/events-calendar/boston-market-at-riverfest-2023](https://www.bostonwomensmarket.com/events-calendar/boston-market-at-riverfest-2023)

- **BU Global Music Festival 2023**
  Saturday, Sep 16th, 1pm-10pm; BU Beach, 735 Commonwealth Ave, Boston, Massachusetts 02215. Enjoy extra-ordinary music, educational events, and a global bazaar – all free and open to the public of all ages with registration.

- **Sixth Annual Revere Beach Art Festival**
  Saturday, Sep 16, 11:00am-2:00pm; Revere Beach, Revere, MA 02151. The day will be filled with fun activities, artists selling their incredible pieces, live music, and a Live Art Competition.
  [https://www.reverebeachpartnership.com/events/art-festival/](https://www.reverebeachpartnership.com/events/art-festival/)

- **ACDC’s Autumn Moon Cultural Festival**
  Friday 9:22 5pm to 9pm; Tufts Community Commons, 186 Harrison Ave in Chinatown, Boston. Offering free multigenerational programming centered around the Chinese folklore of The Lady In The Moon. We will have crafts, storytelling, giveaways, moon cake tasting, screening of the animated film “Over The Moon” and food/drink.

- **Taiwan Film Festival of Boston 2023**
  Sep 23-24, AMC Boston Common 19, 175 Tremont Street Boston, MA 02111. The theme of this year is “Faces of Life.” The Fall Film Festival consists of two days of events, including six to eight feature-length film screenings, post-screening discussion forums, and the evening Gala Reception.
  [https://tinyurl.com/tffb2023](https://tinyurl.com/tffb2023)

- **Experience Chinatown 2023!**
  Mural: September 1 - October 14, 2023, Live Performances: September 30, 2023, Chinatown Park on The Greenway (near Chinatown Gate). Experience Chinatown is a part of Chinatown HOPE, an open space initiative led by a collective of 8 community organizations in Boston’s Chinatown, to advocate for new and improved open spaces, and promote community wellness.
  [https://www.pawartscenter.org/events/experiencechinatown2023](https://www.pawartscenter.org/events/experiencechinatown2023)

- **6th Annual Lesbians & Friends LGBTQ+ Dance**
  Saturday, September 16, 2023 at 4pm; East Broadway between I and 2, Boston, MA 02215. Enjoy the fleeting summer days by the river.
  [https://www.unionsquaremainstreets.com/events-calendar/boston-womens-market/](https://www.unionsquaremainstreets.com/events-calendar/boston-womens-market/)

### Affordable Housing Lottery

**One Eighty Fearing Street**

**180 Fearing Street, Amherst, MA**

One BR @ $1,165, One 2BR @ $1,375, One 3BR @ $1,650

Rents do not include the cost of electricity (which includes heat, hot water, and cooking). Water and sewer costs are included. There is complimentary parking on site.

**Application Deadlines:**
- Lottery: October 23, 2023 at 2:00 pm
- Application: October 23, 2023 at 2:00 pm

**Maximum Household Income Limits**
- 30% AMI: $25,620 (1 person) or $29,280 (2 persons)
- 50% AMI: $42,700 (1 person) or $48,800 (2 persons)

**Applications:**
- Go to [www.sebhousing.com](http://www.sebhousing.com) or call (617) 328-5166, TTY/TDD: Dial 711 or BSL/711
- Applications must be submitted by 4:00pm on the last day of the lottery.

**Public Info Session:**
- Go to zoom.com/join or call (646) 558-8656 and enter Meeting ID: 857 2736 5609, Passcode: 276410
- Go to zoom.com/join or call (646) 558-8656 and enter Meeting ID: 818 9317 7595, Passcode 088159

**Lottery:**
- Applications postmarked by the deadline must be received no later than 5 business days before this date.

**Come Join Our Team!**

If you’re passionate about serving the Asian immigrant community, come join our team. We offer great benefits for full-time and part-time positions. Scan the QR code for more info.

Contact: jobs@bcnc.net
Arbella is proud to support the

Asian American Civic Association

Arbella is committed to supporting charitable organizations that work so hard to positively impact the lives of those around them. We are proud to be local and to help our neighbors, individuals and families in our communities.
A shocking article published in August’s Environmental Science & Technology by the American Chemical Society showed that Asian Americans have disproportionately high exposure to polyfluoralkyl substances (PFAS). The primary author, Dr. Shelly Liu who is an associate professor at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, additionally noted that when compared to whites, Asian Americans had a median PFAS level that was 88% higher.

The lack of previous investigation on the matter is a result of exclusion of Asian Americans within public health studies. A 2021 study by Stephanie Yom and Dr. Mai-chou Lor titled “Advancing Health Disparities Research: The Need to Include Asian American Subgroup Populations” revealed that even when Asian Americans are included in public health studies, Asian Americans are commonly treated as a singular group, despite significant disparities that exist culturally and socioeconomically within the singular label “Asian American”. The paper notes that a potential cause of these omissions could be the “Model Minority Myth” or the idea that Asian Americans are not considered a disadvantaged group, leading to a lack of focused research groups focusing on Asian Americans as well as a false sense of homogeneity within Asian populations. In an effort to expand public health support for Asian American communities, President Obama signed Executive Order 13515 in 2009, which works primarily to promote equality for AAPI communities. Despite this order, there has been a lack of continued governmental action on the subject.

Additionally, studies have shown that PFAS exposure can negatively affect the immune system, resulting in reduced effectiveness of vaccines. As the potential health risks of high PFAS levels can be potentially life threatening, it is important to be aware of how people are typically exposed to PFAS. Exposure to PFAS occurs primarily through exposure to contaminated water and soil. Diets that contain high levels of fish also lead to a higher risk of PFAS exposure, as well as diets with high levels of packaged foods.

While the health impacts and routes of exposure to PFAS have been widely known within the scientific community for a significant period of time, the recent paper by Dr. Liu, titled “Toward Advancing Precision Environmental Health: Developing a Customized Exposure Burden Model for PFAS Mixtures to Enable Equitable Comparisons Across Population Subgroups, Using Mixture Item Response Theory”, was one of the first to shine a spotlight on particular risks associated with Asian Americans.

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It is clear, based on recent and previous studies that continued work needs to be done to protect the public from the risks of PFAS. On March 14, 2023, the Biden-Harris administration released a briefing on plans to protect communities from PFAS contamination. The plan includes a $9 billion investment in environmental testing, monitoring, and cleanup of contaminated areas. Additionally, the Biden-Harris administration announced $370 million of funding for FEMA’s Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program (AFG) to support cancer screenings, as exposure to PFAS in fire extinguishing materials have been shown to increase cancer risk. Despite this investment, the plan does not mention other at-risk communities. The plan will be directed towards, which is concerning as current research shows that specific demographic groups, such as Asian American communities, are at a significantly higher risk of incurring negative health repercussions as a result of PFAS pollution.

Additionally, Dr. Shelly Liu noted in a recent interview with NBC that the reasons for heightened PFAS levels in Asian American communities are currently largely unknown. Given the public health threat that PFAS levels have on the lives of Asian Americans, continued research is important so that Asian American communities can be informed about the risks associated with specific sources of exposure to make educated decisions and take proper protective precautions. Research involving Asian American communities must also refrain from treating Asian Americans as a homogeneous group and focus on risk factors based on ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds. In general, the outcomes of recent PFAS research has also made it clear that exclusion of minority groups, such as Asian Americans, from public health research is a continuous issue in today’s society, and future work needs to be done to ensure that no demographic is left behind.
State and Federal Aided Housing and Rental Assistance Waitlists Available!

The Gloucester Housing Authority's waitlists for state-aided housing, federal public housing and Section 8 are open! If you or your family are interested in learning more about housing and rental assistance, please visit our website: http://www.gahma.com or call our office at (978) 281-4770. Income limits do apply, you can find out more about those on our website: http://www.gahma.com/rents/Assistance.aspx. Applications for all programs are available on our website and at our office (259 Washington St, Gloucester, MA 01930). We can also send you an application.

Applications for state aided programs can be found at https://publichousingapplication.occ.state.ma.us

Affordable Housing Lottery
Helix
655 Washington St
Weymouth, MA

Four Studios at $1,962, Six 1 Bedrooms at $2,237

Rent is subject to change in future years. One free parking space is included.

Tours will be responsible for paying gas heat & hot water, electric cooking, electricity, heat, and sewer.

Helix is a brand-new rental development located in Weymouth. There will be a total of 160 rental units within the building, including 10 affordable apartments which will be leased to households with incomes at or below 60% of the area median income. Conveniently located off of Route 3, near shops and restaurants, the building features three stories and is serviced by an elevator.

Helix is not just a place to live—it's a lifestyle. The community is committed to providing elevated living you won't find anywhere else. Luxury is not just a word, but an experience. The apartments cater to the most discerning tastes, featuring the finest finishes, modern appliances, and cutting-edge technology. Community amenities are second to none. With street level commercial space and access to over 24,690 square feet of flexible amenity space, you won't want to leave. A state-of-the-art fitness center, firepits with grilling areas, a resort-style pool, and an indoor-outdoor lounge space provide the perfect setting for entertaining guests.

Minimum Household Income Limits:
$42,690 (1 person), $49,600 (2 people)

Public Info Session:
October 10, 2023 at 6:30pm via Zoom
Go to zoom.com/join or call (646) 558-8656 and enter Meeting ID: 857 2736 5609, Passcode: 276410 (approx. 3-4 weeks after start of marketing)
Application Deadline:
November 17, 2023 at 2pm
Completed Applications and Required Income Documentation must be delivered, or postmarked, by this date. Applications postmarked by the deadline must be received no later than 5 business days from the deadline. (approx. 60-65 days after start of marketing)

Lottery: November 30, 2023 at 6:30 pm via Zoom
Go to zoom.com/join or call (646) 558-8656 and enter Meeting ID: 857 2736 5609, Passcode: 276410 for approx. 9-14 days after application deadline

Attendance is not required at Info or Lottery sessions. To view the recorded sessions at a later date, please search for Helix on the SEB Housing, YouTube channel.

For Lottery Information and Applications, or reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities, go to www.яхов.com or call 1-877-752-0060 (heal), and have a passcode or postal mail SEB Housing, 257 Hillside Ave, Needham MA 02494. For TTY Services dial 711.

Free translation available. Traducción gratuita disponible. Tradução livre disponível.

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Commonwealth of Massachusetts

- Position: Registered Dietitian-Pan Time
  Salary range: $68,016.52 - $97,157.12 Yearly

- Position: Knowledge of community nutrition
  Medical terminology applicable to nutritional care

- Bachelor's degree in Nutrition preferred

  - Contact: William Herbert, william.herbort3@mass.gov, 617-348-8473
  - Contact: Registered Nurse I Full Time
  - Position: Salary range: $67,106.52 - $111,980.44 Yearly

- Knowledge of standard nursing policies

  - Maintains accurate records
  - read and comprehend the English language

- Contact: Diverse Officer / ADA Coordinator
  - Contact: Ferdouss Faruque (Ferdouss.Faruque@mass.gov)
  - Position: Social Worker I - Boston Region Full Time
  - Salary range: $57,885.88 - 79,062.10 Yearly

- Bachelor's degree

- Valid Licenses as a Licensed Social Work Associate

- Contact: ADA Coordinator: Robert Arna (Robert.D.Arne@mass.gov) - 857-274-8824

- JP Fuji Group WoC, Ink Block, Assembly, Kendall | Shabu Restaurant, Shabu Mein, B JP Fuji Group - WoC, Ink Block, Assembly, Kendall | Shabu Restaurant, Shabu Mein

- Bilingual skills preferred

- One year experience with large quantities of food preparation

- ServSafe certification is highly desired

- High school level or above is preferred

- Position: Cook-Food and Nutrition-Full Time

- Minimum High school diploma

- ServSafe certification is highly desired

- Hourly for part-time employees: $12.75 - $20.84

- Salary for full-time employees: $40,000 - $65,000

- Great benefit

- Position: Dietary Aide, Food and Nutritional Services-Full Time

- Minimum High school diploma

- ServSafe certification is highly desired

- Hourly for part-time employees: $12.82 - $22.44

- Salary for full-time employees: $40,000 - $65,000

- Great benefit

- Position: Cooks-Full Time

- Associate

- Valid Licenses as a Licensed Social Work Associate

- Contact: william.l.herbert3@mass.gov, 617-348-8473

- Position: Registered Nurse I Full Time

- Position: Social Worker I - Boston Region Full Time

- Salary range: $67,106.52 - $111,980.44 Yearly

- Bachelor's degree

- Valid Licenses as a Licensed Social Work Associate

- Contact: ADA Coordinator: Robert Arna (Robert.D.Arne@mass.gov) - 857-274-8824

- JP Fuji Group WoC, Ink Block, Assembly, Kendall | Shabu Restaurant, Shabu Mein, B Café, YoCha

- Position: Sushi Chefs or Helper

- Salary for full-time employees: $40,000 - $70,000

- Hourly for part-time employees: $12.82 - $22.44

- Great benefit

- Position: Kitchen Chefs or Helper and Dishwasher

- Salary for full-time employees: $40,000 - $65,000

- Hourly for part-time employees: $12.75 - $20.84

- Great benefit

- Experience preferred but no experience necessary

- Will provide training

- Contact: Sushi Chefs: Ming Cao – 617-816-3770

- Contact: Kitchen Chefs: Johnny Liang – 617-955-2895

- Johnny Liang – 617-955-2895

- Sushi Chefs: Ming Cao – 617-816-3770

- Contact: Catelyn Shen, yshen@mos.org

- Website: www.mos.org

- Website: www.mos.org

- Museum of Science-Boston, MA

- Position: Accounts Payable Specialist-Full Time

- Salary range: $22-$24 per hour

- Attention to detail, preparing and maintaining spreadsheets

- Experience with 1099s and abandoned property

- Position: Staff Accountant-Full Time

- Salary range: $55,000-$60,000 per year

- Bachelors of Science or Arts degree

- One or more years of accounting experience

- Demonstrated working knowledge of spreadsheets

- Contact: Catelyn Shen, yshen@mos.org

- Website: www.mos.org

- Servita-Boston, MA

- Position: Program Assistant Adult Day-Full Time

- Salary Range: $16 an hour

- High school diploma, Driver License

- One year work experience in providing services to older adults

- CPR and First Aid

- Position: Licensed Practical Nurse-Full Time

- Associate’s Degree in Nursing or state certification

- One year of work experience in nursing capacity

- CPR/FA and HIV/AIDS certification, BBP, and ACT training

- Contact: Hongmei Zhang, 617-782-8899, Hongmei.Zhang@servitahealth.com

- Website: https://servitahealth.com/
Tradition Meets Gentrification: Livia Blackburne on Her Novel Clementine and Danny Save the World (and Each Other)

By Christopher John Stephens

The balance between creating a trendy world in Fantasy novels or contemporary Young Adult (YA) fiction and managing to say something that matters can be tricky. More often than not, genre fiction asks only that the writer provide exactly what their audience wants, nothing more and nothing less. In Livia Blackburne’s sweet new YA novel Clementine and Danny Save the World (and Each Other) that balance is front and center. Blackburne gives us Clementine Chan and Danny Mok. She’s a Chinese tea shop blogger whose online forum discusses the culture as it stands?”

SAMPAN: You wrote your first novel while a student at MIT researching the science of reading, specifically how the brains of young people change and how they read changes as they get older. Cognitive neuroscience can get very heavy (excuse the pun) Do you miss those early days writing your blog? Are you still regularly updating A Brain Scientist’s Take on Writing?

BLACKBURNE: The 2010’s were a great time for blogs. I do miss the blogging community we had back then. Everybody was writing longform musings and talking with each other in the comments. That got replaced by social media, which is nice but not quite the same dynamic. That said, even if the blogosphere were still going strong, I probably wouldn’t have time for it these days. I stopped updating A Brain Scientist’s Take on Writing a while ago, partly due to time constraints, partly because I had contracted work to worry about now, and partly because I’m now quite removed from the neuroscience world. I do think I learned a lot while writing the blog though. I grew a lot in craft very quickly because I was always reading with an eye for writing techniques I could blog about.

SAMPAN: MIT and the city of Cambridge can seem a world away and apart from Boston’s Chinatown, back when you were a student and especially today. Gentrification, class division, and a rising tide of Asian hate (especially since the start of Covid) have combined to make things very combustible and they’re only likely to get worse. How did you perceive Boston’s Chinatown while you were a student here at MIT?

BLACKBURNE: I attended Park Street Church when I was in grad school, and it was a weekly ritual to have lunch at Chinatown with my fellow MITers after service. I have fond memories of Taiwan Cafe, dim sum, and Penang. I didn’t engage with Chinatown much beyond that though. It was a place to visit, but sadly I didn’t take the time to really get to know the community.

SAMPAN: Gentrification is a big theme in Clementine and Danny Save the World (and Each Other). Its consequences in California’s Chinatown are equally felt here in Boston’s Chinatown, probably more so now than ever. How hard was it to balance the political and racial elements of white-washed gentrification with the demands of genre writing? The YA and Fantasy genres have effectively dealt with such deep themes. For the former we can mention Renee Watson’s This Side of Home or Daniel Jose Older’s Shadowshaper. Your novel has the added element of a meet cute rom-com. Was it difficult to write a novel that fits YA convention as well as being socially conscious?

BLACKBURNE: I am drawn to stories that explore deeper philosophical issues. My earlier fantasy titles explored complex morality and issues surrounding life and death. When I wrote Clementine, I was really excited about delving into the nuances of gentrification. Of course, it’s a tricky balance to put in enough of a theme to make the story richer while not being so heavy handed as to become preachy or bore the reader. Because I do think the primary purpose of a novel is to entertain. I rely on my editor to tell me if I’ve hit the right mix. She thinks so, and I hope readers agree!

SAMPAN: Clementine and Danny Save the World (and Each Other) is your first contemporary YA novel. Did you draw from real-life inspirations here?

BLACKBURNE: After writing fantasy for my first five novels, it was quite a relief to write about the real world. For one thing, I no longer had to spend all that time on world-building. If I had to come up with a character name, I simply went through my mental Rolodex instead of having to mess with historical naming guides or natural language generators. And I did draw heavily on my lived experience as an Asian American female. There’s an encounter that Clementine has with a white guy in the first scene that’s an amalgam of encounters I’ve had with creepy dudes. The mahjong-loving Auntie Lin is based on my own grandmother, who was quite the mahjong shark. I was able to put so much of my upbringing and culture into the book, and I’m really grateful for that.

SAMPAN: Why do scientists make for such compelling writers? There’s Oliver Sacks and his accounts of everything from sleep disorders to music and the brain, Daniel J. Levitin on the brain and music, and MIT’s own Alan Lightman on the mysteries of time itself. Lightman is the only one of those who has ventured into fiction. How do you account for that? Could fiction itself be a more daunting prospect than theoretical physics and brain science?

BLACKBURNE: My first inclination is to guess that there are quite a few scientists who write fiction, especially science fiction and fantasy. I can think of several science-oriented friends who are into it. But perhaps it’s easier for scientists to be published in nonfiction because it’s their area of expertise. They’ve already done the legwork in their personal research, and a publisher is more likely to regard them as an expert.

SAMPAN: One of the more evocative moments in your novel comes at the start of Chapter 22. You write in an epistolary mode, with Clementine and Danny’s voices taking over alternating chapters. Clementine is a tea shop blogger and high school journalism blogger, and Danny is the son of Chinatown clerks soon to surrender to gentrification. Clementine reflects in her responses to our emailed questions about gentrification with the demands of the writing profession. And I hope readers agree!

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Back to School Concerns as COVID Cases Increase: How to Stay Safe

By Jeff Millman

As children in Boston return to school, the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) has some tips to stay safe and healthy. In mid-August, BPHC noted that COVID-19-related hospitalizations in the city were low but that the average level of COVID-19 particles in Boston’s wastewater was increasing. This trend has continued over the last few weeks. With the cold and flu season approaching as well, preparations include having COVID-19 rapid testing kits available at home, wearing a face mask (especially if you are at high risk of severe illness), washing your hands regularly, and disinfecting and cleaning high-touch surfaces. These are steps that all families with children can take to reduce the risk of infection over the next few months.

COVID-19 continues to mutate, with new variants spreading and case-loads expected to peak during the fall and winter. A lingering question on plenty of minds these days is when to get a new COVID booster, or whether we even should. There are good reasons for waiting a couple of months to get vaccinated. The first reason is that Pfizer and Moderna are currently working on a new booster targeting the most recent and dominant variants of COVID in the country. Waiting for this booster will increase your chances of being immunized against the variants that are currently circulating. The second reason is that getting boosted later in the fall will coincide with the timeframe during which cases are expected to peak.

Age, health status, and recency of COVID infection may also play a factor in the decision to get boosted. Dr. Paul Offit, a pediatrician at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia who sits on the FDA’s vaccine advisory group, opposes the broad recommendation that everyone get boosted. He advises elderly and immunocompromised people to get vaccinated, but is skeptical that vaccinating young, healthy people will have much of an impact. In an interview with the journal Science, Offit said “it comes down to the data… if [the CDC is] going to make that broad recommendation, show me why that is.” As always, you should consult with your doctor if you have questions about the vaccines.

Parents may be anxious about their children returning to school at a time of new COVID variants, but there is generally good news about the virus. WGBH reports that the number of patients with severe COVID-19 at Tufts Medicine in Boston has remained in the single digits since May. People’s immune systems are better equipped to handle infection, and there are fewer severe illnesses or deaths. The situation is drastically different from the early days of the pandemic.

Indeed, parents should perhaps be more concerned with the effects of absenteeism than with COVID or the flu. Over the past four years, chronic absenteeism in the US (defined as missing 10% of a school year) has doubled from its rate in 2018-2019. Nearly every state has seen increases, with Alaska reporting the most extreme rate: nearly half of all pupils in the state missed enough school to be counted as chronic absenteeism. Massachusetts has released data for the 2022-2023 school year, and the results are hardly encouraging—the rate hovered around 20%, whereas during the 2018-2019 school year the rate was 10%.

In an interview with the New York Times, Hedy Chang, the executive director of Attendance Works, a national organization promoting solutions to chronic absenteeism, said that parents and children must balance the dangers of illness with the dangers of missing school. “We actually have to shift norms again, to being judicious and thoughtful about when we keep kids home, and only keeping them home if we think it’s truly a problem,” she said.

The dominant opinion among most scientists and public health officials, after all, is that COVID is not going away. Lockdowns and school shutdowns will not eradicate the virus for good, so we must engage in preparatory and preventative measures while acknowledging that COVID will stick around. Students need to be in school, not only for learning but also for the social and emotional growth that occurs in the school environment. The Boston Public Health Commission’s recommendations are part of the plan to ensure that the learning losses and mental health issues that have affected our young population during the pandemic can be avoided for the next school year.

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2023 World Open Martial Arts Championship

This competition is hosted by the World Fighting Martial Arts Federation headquartered in New York and Huan's Tai Chi and Kung Fu Association in Cambridge, Massachusetts, with 10 martial arts schools in the Greater Boston area Co-organizer, a total of 25 students from martial arts schools in New England and students from other martial arts schools in the United States participated. This World Wushu Open is also the first competition held by the World Wushu Fighting Alliance in Boston.

Martial Arts 武术
Martial School Owner Sifu Steve Mulloy(L) and his Kung Fu team 功夫学校参赛者

(L-R) Championship President & Master Huan Zhang, Master Narcyz latecki Grandmaster Li Tai Liang, Master Committee Chairman Liang Long, two award-winning team members

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