

Over One Hundred Years Strong Through the Eyes of Two Centenarians

By Ryan Lundgren and Christopher John Stephens

The anxiety about growing old and dying can be obsessive for some but others embrace the challenge. Today, Sampan explores this duality through the eyes of two local centenarians and two experts on aging.

On January 1, 2024, according to the Chinese Lunar Calendar, Amy Guen turned 101 years old. She keeps health at the forefront of her mind. “If I don’t, the doctors will!” she chuckled as we wrapped up our long conversation about her family’s history as providers of traditional Chinese medicine, her long career as a pioneering social worker and activist in Boston, and her personal philosophy for keeping healthy.

Born in 1924 as the oldest of 6 children, Guen’s family lived above her family’s traditional Chinese medicine shop — at that time referred to as the Chinese Herbalism Shop in Boston’s Chinatown. Guen’s grandfather immigrated to the United States to open his herbalist business to serve the Chinese laborers who were busy building the tracks for America’s Transcontinental Railroad. Her father followed in her grandfather’s footsteps but unfortunately, Guen’s time with her father would be short, as he died when she was



Amy Guen

only 10 years old after her mother had died not long before when she was 8.

Guen graduated from Boston College with a degree in social work in 1952 and immediately found a job. She quickly became very interested in how she could improve the health of the neighborhood, much like her father and grandfather did as herbalists. She helped lead projects in the 70s and 80s like the South Cove Community Health Center and South Cove Manor, a nursing home for Chinese speaking senior citizens. With this long career as a social worker focused on public health, she became identified as a pioneer in Boston

一百年的坚强：在两位百岁老人的眼中

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作者 Ryan Lundgren 和 Christopher John Stephens

for culturally competent social work.

Guen firmly believes that eating simple foods with consistent balance is important for maintaining a healthy lifestyle. “I eat a lot of green vegetables, simple and natural foods. The trick is to eat with your head and not with your eyesight. Look for health with a capital H”. Dr. Alice Lichtenstein, a Senior Scientist and Director of the Cardiovascular Nutrition Team at the Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University, affirms Guen’s theory. about eating. When Sampan asked Lichtenstein how people can add years to your life, she encouraged us to : “Prepare the majority of food at home and take advantage of sales on healthy in-season foods. Stock the freezer with frozen vegetables and fruits. They tend to be more affordable than fresh and have a long shelf life. Nutritionally they are as or more nutritious than fresh. Because they are already washed and cut up they are convenient for incorporating into soups, stews and stir fries, making it more likely their presence in the diet will be increased. Eat whole grains instead of refined drains to maintain adequate fiber intake and try to get more protein from plant sources rather than meat sources as it’s good for both dietary quality and the environment.”

Phil Schwartz is 102 years old. He will turn 103 in February. He is a World



Phil 102 Birthday, (L) Amy Schectman, President & CEO of 2Life Communities (R) Phil Schwartz

War II Veteran who grew up during the Great Depression in a very poor home. His father supported the family by cleaning the streets through the WPA for quite a while and his mother was a particularly savvy cook who could make a lot with a little. He met Miriam Perlsey and married her shortly after he was drafted and sent to Italy for a few years, where he served in the 34th Infantry Division. He remembers that his wife Miriam (Mim) was wonderful. “If you knew her for five minutes, you liked her. My wife and I lived for each other, for many, many years. She passed from pancreatic cancer about ten years ago and she was the focus of my life.”

Schwartz describes that in the past ten years, he tries to exercise daily and uses the stationary bicycle in the building. He used to be a smoker but gave it up. “I think that’s helped me live longer. My doctor told me ‘you’re quitting’ and I went outside

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Chinatown YMCA Supports Migrant Families in Boston

By Tony Le

In the heart of Boston, where the city’s vibrant tapestry is woven with threads of diverse cultures, the migrant situation emerges as a narrative embodying the hopes, struggles, and resilience of those who have journeyed great distances in pursuit of a better life. At the forefront of this story is the Chinatown YMCA’s Migrant Support Program, integral to the city’s response to the challenges faced by migrants. Boston, historically shaped by waves of immigration, witnesses a resurgence of its immigrant population in the second half of 2023, due to political turmoil in such nations as Haiti. Through a combination of outreach, advocacy, and direct support services, the program has become a lifeline for many navigating the unfamiliar terrain of a new culture and society. From language barriers to legal complexities, the challenges faced by migrants are multifaceted, and the program’s holistic approach seeks to address these challenges comprehensively.

The Chinatown YMCA’s Migrant Support Program, led by Kathryn Sanders,



WANG YMCA of Chinatown

marks a pivotal moment in community-driven assistance. The urgency of comprehensive community support initiatives like the one spearheaded by the Chinatown YMCA, illuminate stories that paint a comprehensive picture of the complexities, triumphs, and ongoing efforts surrounding the migrant situation in Boston.

The program began in the fall of 2023 when the Massachusetts state government set up an overnight shelter for migrant

families. Kathryn Sanders, identifying a critical gap in daytime support, propelled the Chinatown YMCA into action.

“I’m proud of the fact that we all came together to make this happen,” Sanders said. “This decision transformed the YMCA from a recreational space to a hub of safety and nurturing for families in need... We grew from just providing basic necessities to becoming a comprehensive support system addressing not just

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physical needs but also offering emotional comfort and social connections. We really came through as a community, from material donations to volunteering efforts, demonstrating the community's commitment to the cause.

A remarkable achievement of the program lay in its exceptional capacity to foster unity within a diverse and eclectic community. Individuals hailing from a multitude of backgrounds and neighborhoods across the expansive city of Boston came together, seamlessly intertwining their strengths to establish a formidable network of support for the migrant families under the aegis of the Chinatown YMCA.

“We all come into this life with traditional boundaries that separate us,” Sanders said “This collective effort we all undertook as the city of Boston became a powerful catalyst, shattering pre-existing barriers and cultivating a profound culture of empathy and collaborative action. The

synergy of this diverse coalition not only exemplified the program's success but also underscored the transformative potential that emerges when people from varied walks of life unite for a common cause.”

For Sanders, it’s all about the shared experiences, mutual understanding, and an implicitly understood commitment to uplifting others that does not always need to be verbalized.

“The success speaks for itself,” Sanders added. “This program not only addressed the immediate needs of migrant families but also sowed the seeds for a more interconnected and compassionate community, where the tapestry of diversity is celebrated as a source of strength and resilience.” In short, the program would not be worth introducing without a commitment from all concerned to guarantee that this garden would bear fruit for many years to come.

The program encountered various challenges, including linguistic diversity and logistical issues. One of the most significant challenges was the language barrier. The migrant families came from diverse

linguistic backgrounds, making effective communication a critical issue. Sanders' team tackled this by employing a multilingual approach.

“We was the obvious need to recruit volunteers and staff members who spoke a variety of languages, including Haitian Creole, Spanish, and other languages relevant to the migrant communities,” Sanders said. “This strategy not only facilitated better communication but also helped in building trust and comfort among the families, making them feel heard and understood.” Sanders' makes a great point here to remind is that her team displayed resilience and innovation in overcoming these obstacles, utilizing the YMCA's multilingual resources and developing efficient logistical strategies.

Sanders envisions the YMCA playing a continuous role in supporting not just migrant families but all those in need across Boston. The potential for scaling this model to other YMCA centers in the city presents an opportunity for broader community impact.

“We needed to broaden the scope of support,” Sanders said. “To do that, the YMCA collaborated with local health clinics, legal aid services, and educational institutions. These agencies included the Department of Public Health, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, ABCD, and Governor Healy’s office. These partnerships allowed the program to offer comprehensive services, including health check-ups, legal counseling, and language classes. This holistic approach ensured that the families received support beyond immediate physical needs, addressing their overall well-being and integration into the community.”

The YMCA’s program also emphasized emotional and educational support, particularly for children. Sanders highlights the efforts made by the YMCA staff to provide a stable environment for children, engaging them in educational and recreational activities, fostering a sense of normalcy and stability. The program's approach was marked by a deep understanding and respect for the cultural diversity of the migrant families. This cultural sensitivity helped in building trust and ensuring that the support provided was relevant and respectful of the families' backgrounds and traditions.

“We needed to see this as an opportunity to establish long-lasting relationships with the families served,” Sanders said. “We needed to draw hope from the possibility that these families would eventually become active members of the YMCA community, reflecting the YMCA’s commitment to long-term community integration and support.”

For Sanders, The Chinatown YMCA’s program serves as an exemplary model for community-led initiatives. It demonstrates the effectiveness of local organizations in responding to societal challenges while fostering long-term community engagement and support.

“An integral part of the program's evolution was the continuous incorporation of feedback from both the migrant families and the volunteers. This feedback loop allowed for ongoing improvements, ensuring that the program remained responsive and effective in meeting the families' changing needs.”

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Looking ahead, Sanders and her team aim to expand the scope of their community support initiatives. This includes not only replicating the model in other areas but also integrating more educational and vocational support components, aiming to provide comprehensive assistance to families in their journey towards stability and self-reliance. Its comprehensive approach, cultural sensitivity, and emphasis on building lasting relationships set a new standard for community engagement and support.

Sanders reflects on lessons learned from this experience: “As Boston and other cities continue to welcome new populations, the lessons learned and the legacy of this program provide valuable insights and inspiration for future community initiatives.”

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Boston’s Vietnamese Community largely invisible in the news, civic leaders say *Advocates point to lack of political representation, Asian journalists, vocal leaders*



Fields Corner, Dorchester is home to a prominent Vietnamese population. Photo by Mitch Fink

This story was reported and written by Boston University students Mitch Fink, Frankie Puleo, Audrey Tumbarello and Ella Willis. The students were participants in the Fall 2023 Race and Gender in the Media Class in the College of Communications. Photos are by Mitch Fink.

The Vietnamese-American community has long been a thriving force in Fields Corner. They have raised families, built businesses and transformed a busy Dorchester Avenue stretch into Little Saigon, rich with cultural experiences.

But aside from cuisine and smattering of events, the city’s Vietnamese commu-

nity has been largely invisible in the local news. Coverage has been lacking on pressing social issues and is often misrepresentative of the rich cultural experiences of the people who call the area home.

In fact, news reports center mostly on the food, with little depth on the Vietnamese-American people who have transformed that area, according to an analysis of media reports and interviews with Asian-American civic and political leaders.

“In terms of the day to day, I would probably say it’s pretty rare to find any kind of coverage of the Vietnamese community,” said Tri Tran, former co-chair of the board of the Vietnamese Community of Massachusetts. “Anything specific to Fields Corner, anything specific to the Vietnamese community has been minimal, I would say, unless there’s something extraordinary of note to mention.”

The end of the Vietnam War in 1975, many Vietnamese immigrants found refuge in Fields Corner. They transformed the area, building homes and new businesses and becoming an essential part of the community. Vietnamese-Americans are 75% of the AsianAmerican population in Dorchester, according to Vietnamese American Initiative for Development, a nonprofit, community building organization.

Fields Corner, a diverse mix of Irish, Black and Asian people, holds the fifth largest Vietnamese population in the U.S. and is newly the fourth-cultural district in

Boston.

Today, Fields Corner is home to more than 13,000 Vietnamese residents. The Little Saigon District was officially recognized by Boston in 2021.

Despite this official recognition, the media coverage generally ignores key issues that affect the Vietnamese community in particular, such as housing, healthcare, and city policies that affect residents’ daily lives.

Local news coverage of the neighborhood — including in the Boston Globe and other prominent outlets — is often incomplete.

The neighborhood newspaper, the Dorchester Reporter, has provided adequate coverage adequate of the Vietnamese community, but local leaders say there is a lack of Asian American and Pacific Islander journalists covering the community overall, which means their issues don’t often get pushed to the fore.

According to a 2021 study by the Asian American Journalists Association, Boston is one of 13 designated U.S. market areas that underrepresents AAPI people. The study also notes that Boston’s WFXT — a local news channel affiliated with FOX — has no Asian American on-air staff.

A multipart series by WGBH, called The State of Race, is one example. While the project highlighted “Black and brown” disparities, it only included one Asian American expert and that person was not from Vietnam.

The harm of such underrepresentation assumes that the Vietnamese community has few disparities worth reporting, local leaders say. Coverage informs studies — if issues like adequate housing and civic services go uncovered, then policies will correspondingly neglect these issues, said Andrew Leong, a law professor at UMass Boston.

Undercoverage of distinct communities renders them invisible to a city’s policy development and larger public view issues relevant to the Vietnamese community.

The media is also often late in its reporting. For instance, Khoa Pham was ap-

pointed to his position as a former city liaison to the Vietnamese community in 2016 but didn’t receive coverage until a year and a half later.

These lapses suggested that “reporters wouldn’t cover anything that wasn’t hot off the press and didn’t want to attend the civil meetings,” said Pham.

Lack of Political Representation

Minimal political representation is largely responsible for the lack of Vietnamese media coverage in Fields Corner, according to Tran.

Tran said other communities have been able to rally around Boston lawmakers — such as City Councilors at-Large Ruthzee Louijeune, who is Haitian American, and Julia Mejia, who is from the Dominican Republic. But there has been no Vietnamese person elected to the council. In fact, Tram Nguyen, who was elected in 2018 to represent the 18th Essex District, was the first Vietnamese American woman elected to the state’s House of Representative.

“The Vietnamese community is the only major community in Boston that doesn’t have political representation,” Tran said. “I’d probably attribute the lack of coverage to that, as well. And that also attributes to the Vietnamese community’s kind of unassuming, low-key role within the city.”

Without representation in office, some in the Vietnamese community do not vote. Indeed, voting turnout has been a longstanding issue in Fields Corner, Tran said, plus the community hasn’t united around a political candidate — at least, not yet. “The Vietnamese community in Fields Corner hasn’t really found someone yet to be that standard-bearer,” said Tran.

Pham added participating civically can be a challenge for many Vietnamese residents of Boston.

“Coming here fighting gentrification, fighting cost of living, and just trying to make ends meet and you don’t get a chance to participate,” said Pham.

Lack of Disaggregated Data

Leong, the UMass Boston professor, said a lack of sampling data on the community is responsible for underreporting in healthcare and other matters in the Vietnamese community.

“We need to disaggregate much better in order to make sure that we serve our different communities in different ways,” said Leong.

He highlighted a 2022 study — “Data

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Signage for political candidates outside A.C. Farm Market, a Vietnamese grocery store in Fields Corner. None of the shown candidates are Vietnamese. Photo by Mitch Fink



VietAID, a community non-profit in Fields Corner where George Huynh is Executive Director. Photo by Mitch Fink

from the 2020 Decennial Census and American Community Survey” — from UMass-Boston’s Institute for Asian American Studies as an example of how researchers are still aggregating data on the Asian American population in Boston. “They’re not teasing it out,” he said. “They’re not disaggregating for folks in Chinatown versus in Fields Corner.”

Leong said specificity is important to understand the precise needs of a particular community.

He said he’d like to see more coverage of the effect of chemicals on Vietnamese men, many of whom work in floor refinishing businesses and Vietnamese women who operate nail salons.

The coverage of nonprofit organizations, like Vietnamese American Civic Association and VietAID are also lacking. “It was in the media, but it only came up for the most part when there was trouble,” Leong said. He emphasized a general theme of coverage appearing only surrounding negative events.

Leong brought up an assault involving actor Mark Wahlberg that occurred in Dorchester in 1988. Wahlberg assaulted two Vietnamese men while trying to steal beer and explicitly insulted them with Asian slurs. This incident, which sent one of the men to the hospital and Wahlberg to prison, is representative of some of the violence faced by the Vietnamese community in Fields Corner, which at the time was a part of a growing refugee resettlement process, he said.

“I remember specifically going on one of these local television programs...and talking about this particular incident,” Leong said. “But that informs you, when do we actually have a voice? When shit hits the fan right, when violence happens, when hate happens.”

Life on the line and he State of Race

In the past decade, three major stories on race and poverty documented key social justice issues of the time. But they each lacked Asian American voices.

In 2011, a Globe team chronicled poverty in Boston that featured the struggles of George Huynh, then in high school, and his brother as they dealt with poverty while being raised by a Vietnamese mother who did not speak English. But besides the brothers, there were no other voices explicitly from the Vietnamese community in the series or highlighting the AAPI community directly.

Huynh, who now leads VietAID, participated as a teenager and now looks back at the coverage with some discomfort, even though he and the reporter, Billy Baker, became friends.

“I’m not sure what to say about our representation there and how accurate it was,” Huynh said. He didn’t understand why his story was important and had to be convinced to participate.

Another multi-part series of in-person and virtual forums about racial issues, “The State of Race” was produced as a partnership between GBH News, the Globe and NAACP Boston. The project includes more than 10 subtopics, including “Environmental Justice,” “The Latino Housing Crisis” and “Equity in Business Ownership.”

But Asian American issues — not to mention Vietnamese issues, specifically — were not mentioned.

Leong said he feels “The State of Race” highlights the “erasure and invisibility of the Asian American communities.”

According to Leong, Shirley Leung, a reporter at the Boston Globe, is one of the

only Asian American voices represented in the series.

He said he sees a circular relationship between the media and the data on Asian American communities. “If they’re under-reported, they’re underserved,” said Leong.

Hope for Little Saigon

Huynh and Annie Le are two new faces of Vietnamese leadership in Fields Corner. While certain coverage has improved in the area since May 2021 with the establishment of the Little Saigon Cultural District, both Huynh and Le have visions for future coverage.

Passionate about preserving and promoting Vietnamese culture, Le is the board president of Boston Little Saigon. In the past, she noticed the media would cover the Vietnamese in Fields Corner when it was related to crime.

“I feel like the media covering Dorchester as a whole focused more on the negativity than on the positive that was happening,” said Le. “There used to be a lot more coverage about shootings and crimes.”

Le would prefer to see "more coverage around the policies that affect us.”

As executive director of VietAID,

a community development corporation founded in 1994 that provides economic and civic services for the Vietnamese community of Fields Corner, Huynh pointed to positive coverage when Asian-American journalists are probing the community.

Huynh highlighted a 2021 article in the Globe by reporter Deanna Pan that covered an Asian American self-defense course at VietAID in response to recent attacks on AAPI elders. Huynh the article accurately showed how Asian American students often feel overlooked and left out.

Huynh said he would like to see coverage around youth activism in the community. “It would be great to cover some of the actions that our community is taking to foster a new wave of young leaders whether in the community, youth development and climate resilience work,” said Huynh.

Pham, the community liaison, expressed a desire to see more news about what’s going on in the Vietnamese community, such as community organizations that provide food assistance in future coverage.

“Every day I see people waiting in line for hours just to get some groceries, like basic needs for them, especially the elderly community, but you know, that is not something that you would see in the media,” said Pham.



The office of Boston’s Little Saigon Cultural District in Fields Corner. Photo by Mitch Fink

One Hundred Years Strong

Continued from Page 1

and threw my cigarettes away and I never smoked after that.” He told Sampan that he lives in a good place. A woman prepares a weekly schedule for everyone and they have music. “I try not to miss any of that. And I’m fortunate to have my son nearby. He’s only ten minutes away. “

Both Guen and Schwartz work at “aging well.” They stay focused on their health and balancing all aspects of living. Sampan spoke to Dr. Thomas T. Perls, Director of the New England Centenarian Study and Professor of Medicine and Geriatrics at Boston University about creating a balance of the mind, body and spirit for a long life. He specializes in epidemiology, genetics of aging, and exceptional longevity. The New England Centenarian Study, started in 1995, is the largest and most comprehensive study of centenarians in the world. It

aims not to focus on the fountain of youth but on what Perls refers to as “the fountain of aging well.” He suggests that one reason why the mind/body/spirit connection may contribute to longevity is that it helps a person manage their stress.

Epilogue

At 102, Phil Schwartz says that he tries to be nice to everyone. “I don’t discriminate against anybody...I try to be as nice and as friendly as I can be. People have to be nice to each other because we

all have the same problems. Try to be good to each other. Try to help each other. Be friendly with each other.”

At 101, Amy Guen’s activism and deep commitment to community keep her moving. She still participates in activities which have important meaning to her. Sampan recently saw her at a Community Forum on Violence in Boston. Her active schedule has proven pivotal in living a long, healthy, happy life.

Real Women Have Curves Premieres in a Funny, Poignant, and Memorable Musical

By Harmony Witte

The American Repertory Theater has another big hit in the making with *Real Women Have Curves: The Musical!* (Book by Lisa Loomer, additional material by Nell Benjamin. The show opened recently to excited crowds and is introducing a new generation of people to the story of big dreamer, Ana Garcia. The musical is significantly different from the 2002 award-winning film (Josefina Lopez and George Lavoo’s screenplay based on the play by Josefina Lopez) in all the right ways. Aside from it being a musical, the story has been updated and some of the interactions with Ana’s overly protective mother have been made more palatable, possibly resulting in a product that’s somewhat less realistic in its hopefulness but makes for a good play. *Real Women Have Curves* is an empowering story that looks at the immigrant experience and what it means to dream big dreams and to truly be yourself when life throws you curves.

The musical is set in 1987 Los Angeles and 18-year-old Ana has just graduated high school and is ready to start an internship before she heads off to college in New York. Her dreams must be put on hold so that she can help her family in their garment factory. Ana’s mother expects her to sacrifice her dreams the way she herself had done for her family. Ana is faced with a choice, to follow the path she wants, or lay down her dreams for her family.

Actor Sandra Valls said “I play Ana’s

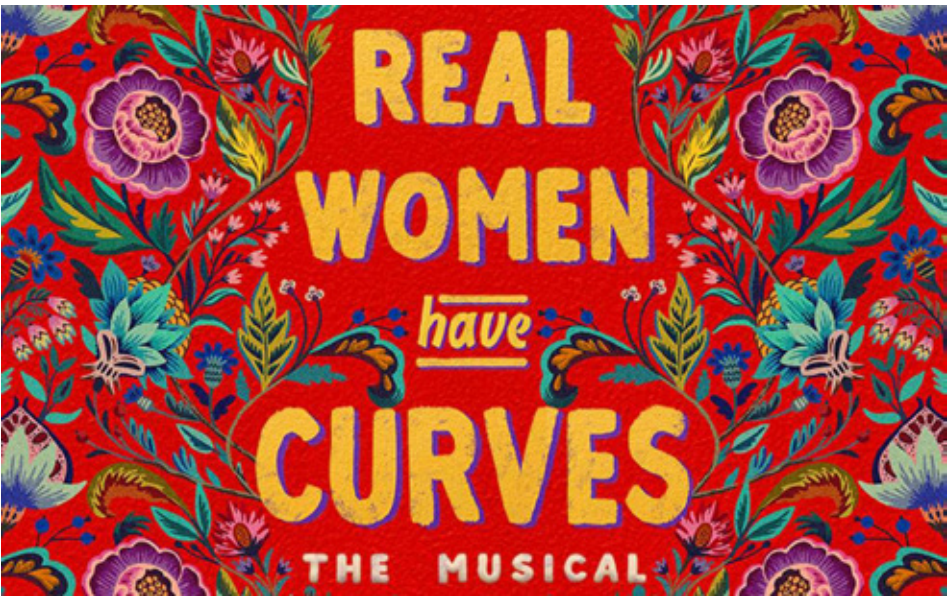


Photo courtesy of American Repertory Theater (A.R.T.)

queer cousin, Fulvia. I am so grateful for this role. Representation matters.” When asked about her favorite memory from the production she answered, “I have so many. But my very favorite was the very first time we danced the Curves number and rehearsed the disrobing down to our underwear. It was a closed rehearsal but still. This was huge for me. I’ve always loved my body but, like so many other people, I have had reservations about showing certain parts. I don’t ever wear sleeveless shirts nor tight clothes. I never thought this moment would be so empowering. This moment...this-is-me-take-it-or-leave-it moment...this-is-my body-and-I-love-it moment! I love it. Now, I have great love for my body now. It changed me. I hope it does the same for the audience.

The mother in the film version is withholding and cruel, lashing out for no apparent reason, never hesitating to put Ana down. This has been significantly toned down in the musical leaving a vacuum for an antagonist. In the musical this was filled by cutthroat businesswoman, Mrs. Wright played by Yvette Gonzalez-Nacer who plays a much larger role in this production than her counterpart in the film. Gonzalez-Nacer had a delightful musical number with some of the best choreography of the entire show.

There were several stand-out performers in this production. Lucy Godínez was a magnetic force as Ana. Satya Chavez stood out as Izel, a young undocumented immigrant who works in the garment factory. She had a beautiful song about being a bird flying free that was mixed with the perfect amount of humor and hope. Carla Jimenez stood out as Pancha who has excellent comedic timing and a powerful singing voice. Florencia Cuenca was pitch perfect as Estela, Ana’s older sister and the owner of the garment factory. Mason Reeves made for an adorably awkward love interest as Henry. His dance moves blew away the audience spotlighting the unique choreography by Sergio Trujillo who did double duty as choreographer and director. Justina Machado was the stand-out performer as Ana’s overprotective, goading mother. She managed to make the character sympathetic with her complex acting and compelling

singing.

Jennifer Sanchez, who plays Rosalie, said of the preproduction time leading up to the show, “The great thing about being with a project since the beginning is being able to watch it shift and grow, which is such a unique opportunity. It also allows room for input from the actor and that type of collaboration is the dream. But I knew when I heard the first demos (from our composers Joy Huerta and Benjamin Velez) that it was a really beautiful and special piece.” When asked about the pre production time, Carla Jimenez who plays Pancha said it was “Stressful! I haven’t done a stage show for a long time. It’s been years of being on a studio set, it was a little scary getting back to theater, but also exciting.”

A big theme in this musical is illegal immigration. Ana’s parents are in the US illegally and rely on her to deal with landlord’s and institutions. The threat of ICE raids or being picked up while going about their daily business looms large over the family and workers at the garment factory. It’s timely subject matter even though the musical is set during the Reagan era. When one of the characters is captured by immigration officials and held in detention Ana goes to visit. Ana states that she is a legal citizen and the guard sneers “you all smell the same to me!”

The music in the production is excellent and memorable. The songs linger in the audience’s mind, and they may find themselves humming some of the tunes long after the show is over.

The play features an original score by Joy Huerta, a Grammy Award-winning artist (who is also known for being half of the Mexican pop duo Jesse&Joy) as well as Benjamin Velez. The show had singular lyricism with a song that went from singing of juggling, to hustling, to struggling, the words rhyming and with notable lyrics such as “in this familia we have blood thicker than mole.”

This show is bound to follow in A.R.T.’s Jagged Little Pill and Waitress’ footsteps and find its way to Broadway where the music and the choreography, clever sets, wonderful acting, and the heartwarming story will ensure a long and successful run. There is a schedule available at <https://americanrepertorytheater.org> of access performances with ASL Interpretation, audio described, open captioned, relaxed, and Spanish captioning to ensure everyone can enjoy the show.

MASSACHUSETTS BAY TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY
10 PARK PLAZA
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02116

NOTICE TO BIDDERS

The Small Business Enterprise (SBE) Program promotes business opportunities for small business enterprises (as defined by the federal Small Business Administration (SBA). The SBE Program is designed to create and sustain opportunities for small businesses to participate in capital construction projects at the MBTA, as well as stimulate the Massachusetts economy by providing sustained revenue opportunities to local small businesses. This is an SBE Program procurement.

Electronic proposals for the following project will be received through the internet using Project Bids until the date and time stated below and will be posted on www.bidx.com forthwith after the bid submission deadline. No paper copies of bids will be accepted. Bidders must have a valid digital ID issued by the Authority in order to bid on projects. Bidders need to apply for a digital ID with Project Bids at least 14 days prior to a scheduled bid opening date.

Electronic bids for MBTA Contract No. **A91CN01, SBE SYSTEMWIDE TRANSIT RESTROOM ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS, NAICS CODES- 238220 Plumbing, Heating and Air Conditioning Contractors, 236210 Industrial Building Construction and 236220 Commercial and Institutional Building Construction- and Project Value-- \$1,200,000.00** can be submitted at www.bidx.com until two o'clock (2:00 p.m.) on **FEBRUARY 29, 2024**. Immediately thereafter, in a designated room, the Bids will be opened and read publicly.

The work consists of MBTA Subway Station public restroom accessibility improvements including, but not limited to: accessibility maneuvering and operating clearances, plumbing fixtures, restroom accessories and door hardware at (10) Stations.

Bidders’ attention is directed to Appendix 1, Notice of Requirement for Affirmative Action to Insure Equal Employment Opportunity; and to Appendix 2, Supplemental Equal Employment Opportunity, Anti-Discrimination, and Affirmative Action Program in the specifications. While there is no DBE goal associated with this contract, the Authority strongly encourages the use of Minority, Women and Disadvantaged Business Enterprises as prime contractors, subcontractors and suppliers in all of its contracting opportunities.

To view the full Notice to Bidders, please see link below.
http://bc.mbta.com/business_center/bidding_solicitations/current_solicitations/

On behalf of the MBTA, thank you for your time and interest in responding to this Notice to Bidders

Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority
Phillip Eng
General Manager & CEO of the MBTA

January 10, 2024

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to do what is right.”

- Martin Luther King, Jr.

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“Objects of Addiction” Exhibit Confronts America’s Profiteering in China’s Opium Wars

By Ryan Lundgren

At the entrance to “Objects of Addiction” , a new exhibit at the Harvard Art Museums, is displayed, front and center, a very large opium smoking pipe. Its size and elaborate design indicate that it was not a commoner’s opium pipe. This piece, being chosen as the front facing display of the exhibition, speaks to the widespread use of opium in China during the Opium War period and the powerfully consuming and destructive nature of this addiction.

The Opium Wars occurred between 1839 and 1860 and left behind devastating social, economic and psychological damage on China and its people. These wars saw China cede territory to foreign states and were a major contributing factor to the instability which led to the collapse of the Qing Dynasty which subsequently brought about the Chinese Civil War. The consequences of the wars however were not limited to within China’s borders; the wars continued to influence China’s diplomacy, led to vicious immigration laws that targeted the Chinese American community, and fanned the flames of anti-Chinese racism already present in American society at that time.

The Harvard Art Museums’ exhibition “Objects of Addiction” examines the intertwined histories of the origins and impacts of opium in China during the 19th and 20th centuries and the opium trade’s intersection with the histories of Harvard, the Chinese art trade and the role of Massachusetts merchants in the trade, and China’s relations with the West in a fight against imperialism. The exhibition also examines the individual and social impacts of addiction — both past and present — and allows visitors to draw comparisons between the Opium Wars era and modern America’s opioid crisis...and share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences about these two opioid crises .

In a visit with Curator Sarah Laursen, she shared with Sampan her extensive knowledge about the many pieces that

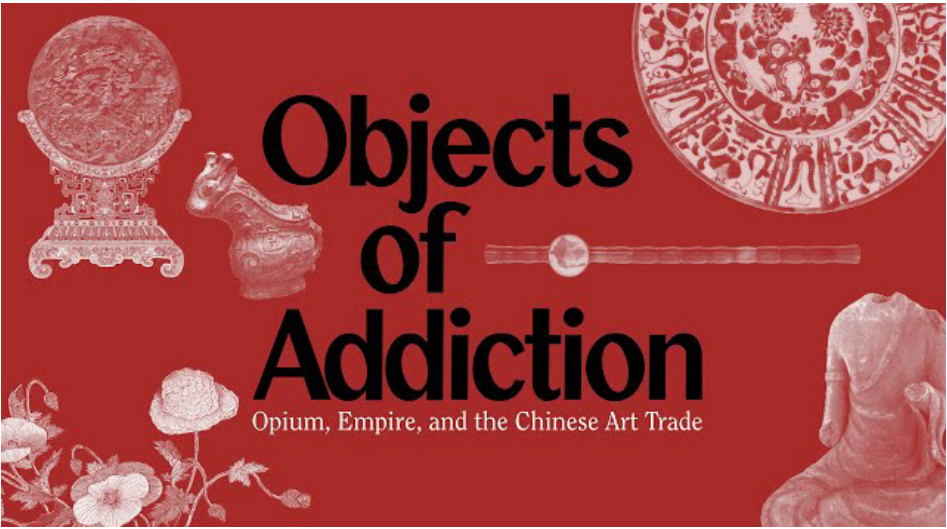


Photo courtesy of Harvard Art Museums

were carefully chosen for this show. The artifacts offer a unique glimpse into the past and present of addiction, colonialism, and racism. The stigma around opium initially resulted in the Qing government imposing harsh punishments for people experiencing addiction, rather than offering the empathy, treatment, and resources that people needed. “Today”, she said, “the overdose death rate in Massachusetts is topping 2,300 individuals per year ; we can learn from the past and choose to adopt harm reduction measures that will save lives.”

Setting the story straight about China’s Opium Wars is important. now than ever before because the economic and political tensions between China and the U.S. are at an all time high. This was especially true during the pandemic when Trump accused China of starting COVID 19. Laursen has been pleased to hear from many Chinese visitors and from Chinese social media posts that the show makes them feel seen and heard in new ways. Harvard did not sensationalize or politicize the history and tried to introduce as many nuances as possible. “We did our best to provide an accurate picture of who was involved in the opium trade and in early Chinese art collecting, even when the facts were unflattering to Harvard and the U.S.. I hope that this transparency will lead to an opening of communication and new collaborations with colleagues in China.”

Laursen walked us through the “Opioids Then and Now” section of the exhibit where addiction was not presented as a moral failing or a conscious choice. “ It can happen to anyone, and the purveyors of these drugs often sell them to people with full knowledge of their addictiveness and potentially fatal effects.” The exhibit leads the visitor to consider a person experiencing substance use disorders with respect and empathy, understand the challenges they face in recovery, and support them by promoting life-saving measures like Overdose Prevention Centers and distribution of Narcan.

Explaining the formal process for art and historical repatriation of some of the pieces displayed in the exhibit, Lauren described that international laws tended to change often during this time period and usually without much formal record keeping. “How did it come to Harvard?? In many cases, we do not know their precise sources nor the circumstances of their removal because in the past there was no demand for documentation. For most U.S. collections of Asian art it is rarely possible to reconstruct the complete chain of ownership. But there are some questions we can start to answer: How can we work with source countries to better document, care for, and understand these objects? How can we curtail the black market? What could ethical collecting or sharing of cultural property look like in the future?”

Laursen hopes that the exhibition and its insight into the art trade during the 20th century can help to make the practice of collecting Chinese art more ethical. “By reexamining the formation of early 20th-century museum collections—as well as the underrecognized consequences of these initial acquisitions—we become better equipped to shape our policies for ethical collecting in the future.”

The exhibit in the first room helps to illustrate the devastating impact of opium on Chinese society and the bubbling racism in Western societies. There are various images of people using opium, an image showing the dreadfully painful life of an addict that can be construed as a warning from Chinese officials to the public about opium. There are depictions of the Chinese from the West which utilized racist and unsympathetic stereotypes about Chinese people at that time. The second room takes a closer look at the history of opioids and how they continue to kill people in the present. There was an educational video from a Harvard edX course showing how opioids impact the body. There was a wall where people could write about their thoughts about the show and share their personal experiences. There was also a drop box where people could submit their writings to be preserved in the Harvard Art Museums Archives should they not want to display them publicly.

Laursen admits that, in Boston itself, Americans profited from opium which they trafficked and traded in and out of China. US museums built their collections in part through the chaos that followed the Opium Wars. “Just because that history has been invisible to many of us until now, it does not mean that we have not directly or indirectly benefited from this dark stain in US history.

The exhibition will be open to the public until this Sunday, January 14th. Visitors to the exhibition can pick up a 24-page booklet which ties together the themes of the exhibition with three essays and are welcome to explore additional programming online.

For more information:
<https://harvardartmuseums.org/exhibitions/6265/objects-of-addiction-opium-empire-and-the-chinese-art-trade>

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Representation, Discrimination, and Stereotypes in Ballet

By Angela Yuan

The classical art form of ballet that we know today was established in 18th century Europe. Many different countries such as Russia, France, Italy, and Germany, developed their own style of ballet that corresponded with the influences of the time. Around the 20th century, the art form spread across the world and widely retained the European style choreography until recently. In the United States, more and more companies are straying away from pure Eurocentric traditions and incorporating more diverse cultural influences.

One of the controversial productions is “Nutcracker,” usually showcased around the holidays, featuring Clara and a Nutcracker Prince traveling through different lands from different ethnicities. The classic Nutcracker story is based on E.T.A. Hoffmann's tale and later adapted into a ballet by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky. The choreography for the ballet was set by Marius Petipa and Lev Ivanov in 1892. The production's roots in Europe is an important aspect of the issues that arose due to the harmful depictions of the different ethnicities that these European choreographers decided on.

One of the issues that arises is the costume and makeup for the “Chinese Tea” dance, which is one of the lands that Clara

travels to. In many instances, dancers will infuse their makeup with saffron powder to add a yellow tinge to imitate east Asian ethnicities and wear geisha wigs with chopsticks woven in despite this hairstyle never being used in Chinese culture. Furthermore, eyeliner is used to slim a dancer’s eyes to mimic the stereotypical “small eyes” that east Asians often have. In terms of the choreography, dancers usually enter the stage shuffling and bobbing their heads while excessively bowing. These stereotypical portrayals of Chinese people have negatively affected Asian dancers' representation in ballet.

These instances of using makeup in a mocking demeanor can negatively affect individuals by perpetuating harmful stereotypes, fostering an environment of discrimination, and undermining efforts toward inclusivity. Additionally, the costumes that many companies use for an ethnicity group are often misrepresentative. For example, American Ballet Theatre Soloist Zhong Jing describes in an interview in “What's the Tea?” that she noticed “Some of the productions mock the costume, face, and fingers” of the Chinese people that doesn't resonate with “Chinese culture at all.” And another Chinese principal dancer, at Philadelphia Ballet, who played the main lead in the dance said “the costume was not Chinese at all.” Like many others, he had to wear a paddy hat with a fake ponytail wig along with a mix of random colors as



Dancers from Ballet West perform the “Chinese Tea” dance in 1950. Note the use of makeup to slim down the eyes, and the costumes designed to mock Chinese culture. | Courtesy: Ballet West



Dancers using pointy fingers, rice paddy hat and Fu Manchu mustache for the man and geisha wigs for the women. Photo taken at City Ballet in 2015. | Courtesy: City Ballet



Birmingham Royal Ballet’s production of “The Nutcracker.” Photo portrayal of dancers in yellowface makeup and pointed fingers. | Courtesy: Birmingham Royal Ballet

a shirt. These misrepresentations not only reinforce existing stereotypes but also address an inaccurate message to Chinese people that their “culture” is a source of entertainment often made fun of.

It also doesn't just stop at Chinese people. Many of these issues faced by Asian dancers have affected African and Middle Eastern dancers as well and even to a stronger degree. Many dark-toned dancers face issues in inappropriate uses of blackface and are underrepresented in ballet supplies. In 2019, Misty Copeland, a principal ballet dancer at ABT, called out a Russian ballet theater for its use of blackface in “La Bayadère,” a tragic love story set in India. The director's response was that “the ballet had been performed the same way for many years” and rejected her criticisms. In many similar circumstances, directors of prominent companies have responded to complaints with the excuse that it's been a tradition for many years. However, dancers like Copeland are not asking them to cancel the dance but rather revise it with more accurate and appropriate representations of minority groups. Additionally, dark-skinned ballerinas, more than any other minority group, face challenges in finding ballet attire that matches their skin tone. This lack of representation stems from the fact that ballet attire was always designed for white dancers and rooted in Eurocentric ideals. As a result, dark-skinned dancers spend extra money and time to alter ballet attire to match their skin tone, highlighting one of the many disadvantages that they face.

Additionally, people of color often face discrimination in casting due to preconceived notions, stereotypes, or traditional expectations, resulting in roles not solely based on talent. Lia Cirio, a principal ballet dancer at Boston Ballet, expresses how ballet casting directors make assumptions about “her ethnicity and body and decide not to cast [her] for a specific role.” To add on, one of the directors even said they didn't like the way her face looked and decided she could not play any of the “softer” princess roles. Former Pacific Northwest Ballet soloist Kiyon Gaines also recalls a time when he wasn’t casted for a ballet because “there wouldn’t have been people of color in the aristocracy at the time and [the choreographer was] trying to stay authentic.” Such instances undermine talented individuals who don't fit the ideal “European look” of a princess/queen and become subject to play roles that seem more “fitting” based on their looks: suppressing them of opportunities and limiting the recognition of their true artistic capabilities. This issue plays into a larger problem of representation in the ballet world. Young dancers, who seek inspiration from professional dancers, may find it disheartening

when lead roles are consistently limited to specific appearances that don't align with themselves. Nonetheless in recent years it has become apparent that more and more companies are diversifying their dancers.

Chen Daoyuan, Artistic Director of N&D ballet, a company based in Lexington, MA., spoke with SAMPAN about the benefits of diversity in ballet:

“The increased number of principal dancers from diverse racial backgrounds is really great. The dancers with different backgrounds can showcase their talent and passion for the art form.”

Pacific Northwest Ballet, based out of Seattle, has a current roster of more than 50% Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC). It is in the vanguard of the many American companies that are striving for a more inclusive ballet world.

Fortunately, ballet companies have started working on adjusting their choreography and costume designs to showcase genuine Chinese culture. In 2018, according to Balanchine Trust, which owns the rights to Balanchine’s work, the organization allowed companies to change the choreography. Following that, numerous companies such as New York City Ballet, Ballet West, and Boston Ballet, have begun changing the choreography to something that resonates with Chinese culture. For example, Ballet West changed the original dance to feature a Chinese warrior fighting a Chinese dragon, Boston Ballet has introduced new choreography inspired by Chinese ribbon dancing traditions, and City Ballet has modified the shuffling and bowing choreography with more generic hand gestures. Changes like these are crucial in representing cultures as accurately and non-offensively as possible.

More and more organizations and initiatives are forming to elevate different ethnic cultures in ballet productions. Final Bow for Yellowface is an initiative spearheaded by Phil Chan and Georgina Pazcoguin that works with almost every American ballet company to create more positive and nuanced representations of Asians in ballet. They are also hosting a 2021 Virtual Choreography Festival called “10,000 Dreams” which showcases works from Asian choreographers, creating ethnic representations that are culturally meaningful and engaging to all audiences.

It is important to reflect on the progress that ballet companies are making to promote diversity and ensure accurate cultural representations in productions, recognizing that each step forward is a stride toward a more inclusive and vibrant future for ballet.

Events Calendar

- **Free Admission to Franklin Park Zoo & Stone Zoo on MLK Day 2024**
When: Monday, Jan 15, 2024, 9am - 4pm
Where: Franklin Park Zoo (& Stone Zoo). 1 Franklin Park Rd.Boston, MA
Please note: Last admission is at 3:00 p.m.
<https://www.zoonewengland.org/engage/free-admission-on-martin-luther-king-jr-day/>

• **Martin Luther King Jr. Day: Free Admission to ICA Boston**
When: Monday, Jan 15, 2024, 10am - 5pm
Where: Institute of Contemporary Art. 25 Harbor Shore Drive, Boston, MA 02210
<https://www.icaboston.org/events/martin-luther-king-jr-day-free-admission/>

• **Free MFA Admission on MLK Day 2024: Museum of Fine Arts Open House**
When: Monday, Jan 15, 2024, 10am -5pm
Where: Museum of Fine Arts. 465 Huntington Avenue, Boston, MA
<https://www.mfa.org/>

• **Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service**
Join us as we celebrate and honor the legacies of activism here in the City of Boston!
When: Monday, Jan 15, 2024, 11am - 4pm
Where: Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.
- 25 Evans Way, Boston, MA 02115
<https://www.gardnermuseum.org/calendar/dr-martin-luther-king-jr-day-service-01152024>

• **Yoga in the deCordova Museum**
When: Monday, Jan 15, 2024, 11am -12:30pm
Where: deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum. 51 Sandy Pond Rd. Lincoln, MA 01773
Admission: \$20 non-members/16 members
<https://thetrustees.org/event/196241/>

• **Boston Children's Chorus: "In The Name Of Love: 21st Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Tribute Concert"**
When: Monday, Jan 15, 2024, 4pm - 9pm
Where: Symphony Hall. 301 Massachusetts Ave, Boston, MA 02115
Admission: \$15-75
<https://bit.ly/BCCInTheNameOfLove>

• **Real Women Have Curves: The Musical**
When: Wednesday, Dec 06, 2023 7:30pm - Sunday, Jan 21, 2024 2:00pm
Where: Loeb Drama Center. 64 Brattle Street, Cambridge, MA 02138
Admission: \$30+
<https://americanrepertorytheater.org/>

- <shows-events/real-women-have-curves/>
- **Lunchbox Moments by artist Amie Bantz**
When: Friday, Oct 27, 2023, 1pm - Saturday, Feb 17, 2024, 5pm
Where: Pao Arts Center, 38 Ash Street, Boston, MA 02111
Admission: FREE
<https://www.paoartscenter.org/>
- **Don't Close Your Eyes: Ukrainian Artists Respond to the War**
When: Thursday, Jan 11, 2024, 9am - Saturday, Feb 17, 2024, 9pm
Where: The Umbrella Arts Center. 40 Stow St, Concord, MA 01742
Admission: FREE
<https://theumbrellaarts.org/don%E2%80%99t-close-your-eyes-ukrainian-artists-respond-war>
- **Generals Park Ice Rink: FREE Outdoor Ice Skating in Quincy**
Friday, Dec 01, 2023, 12pm -Sunday, Feb 25, 2024, 8pm
Where: Generals Park. Ross Way, Quincy, MA 02169
Admission: FREE
https://quincyma.myrec.com/info/activities/program_details.aspx?ProgramID=28657
- **Ice Skating at MarketStreet Lynnfield**
Tuesday, Nov 14, 2023, 3pm - Sunday, Mar 03, 2024, 8pm
- Where: MarketStreet Lynnfield. 600 Market Street, Lynnfield, MA
Admission: \$12 / \$5 skate rentals
<https://marketstreetlynnfield.com/event/the-rink-2/>
- **Ice Skating on Jack Kirrane Ice Skating Rink**
Monday, Dec 11, 2023, 1:15pm - Sunday, Mar 03, 2024, 11:45am
Where: Kirrane Skating Rink. 23 Newton Street, Brookline, MA
Admission: \$5+
<https://www.brooklinerec.com/152/Kirrane-Ice-Skating-Rink>
- **Ice Skating on the Frog Pond at Boston Common**
When: Tuesday, Nov 21, 2023 10am - Sunday, Mar 10, 2024 9pm
Where: Frog Pond. Boston Common Frog Pond, Boston, MA
Admission: \$10+
<https://bostonfrogpond.com/ice-skating/>
- **Boston Tea Party Ships & Museum**
Monday, Feb 20, 2023, 10am - Sunday, Mar 31, 2024, 4pm
Where: Boston Tea Party Ships & Museum. 306 Congress St, Boston, MA
Admission: \$34
<https://www.bostonteapartyship.com/>

Job Corner

- Tufts Medical Center-Boston, MA**
- **Position: HVAC Tech, Full Time, Day shift**
-High school diploma or equivalent
-Current HVAC/Refrigeration License
-Three (3) years of experience as an HVAC Technician required
 - **Position: Public Safety Officer 1 Part Time**
High school diploma
Valid State issued driver’s license
- Website:** tuftsmedicalcenter.org
- Boston Medical Center-Boston, MA**
- **Position: Project Management Specialist, Full Time**
-Bachelor’s degree required; degree in health administration preferred. In some areas, equivalent work experience, particularly in healthcare, may substitute for education.
-Three to five years minimum of project or healthcare administration experience required
 - **Position: Certified Nursing Assistant - Per diem, Part Time**
-A high school diploma or GED certificate
-Certification in basic life support (BLS), including CPR certification (must be current or obtained within 30 days of employment)
- Apply at www.jobs.bmc.org**
Contact: [Caroline Cafer, 617-414-7066, caroline.cafer@bmc.org](mailto:Caroline.Cafer@bmc.org)
- Boston Centerless**
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-Dependable and great customer service skills
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- **Position: Security Supervisor, Full Time**
-Dependable and great customer service skills
-Salary: \$25 per hour
 - **Position: Attendant-Room, Housekeeping Department Full Time**
-Dependable and great customer service skills
-Starting wage \$19.74 , 12 Month wage \$28.20 per hour
- To apply visit:** <https://jobs.hilton.com/us/en/hilton-boston-logan-airport-jobs>
- Boston Public School**
- **Position: Principal Account Clerk , Full Time**
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-Knowledge of basic accounting principles
-City of Boston residency required
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-Current certification in CPR, First Aid, & AED
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 - **Position: Senior Computer Repair Technician Grade 29 Full Time**
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-City of Boston Residency Required
- Website:** <https://www.bostonpublicschools.org/>
Contact Info: Recruitment@BostonPublicSchools.org
- City of Cambridge Career Center**
- **Position: Emergency Telecommunications Dispatchers, Full Time**
-A high school diploma or GED is required
-Applicants will undergo a multi-part Dispatcher Screening Process.
-Applicants must have the ability to touch-type at least 30 WPM (net of errors). A typing test will be administered during the hiring process

- Salary \$27.20 - \$37.73 hourly
 - **Position: Social Worker / Baby U Coordinator, Full Time**
-Master's Degree Social Work and LCSW required, LICSW preferred
-Salary \$60,448 - \$71,688 annually
 - **Position: Community Schools teacher, Full Time**
-Two years' experience working with school age children and a HS Diploma/GED required.
-Salary \$23.03 - \$27.04 hourly
- Website:** <https://phe.tbe.taleo.net/phe02/ats/careers/v2/viewRequisition?org=CAMBRIDGEMA&cws=37&rid=433>
- City of Boston**
- **Position: Senior Housing Officer to End Family Homelessness, Full Time**
-Minimum of four (4) years of experience in policy development; program evaluation and design; stakeholder management, or related professional experience is required, including two (2) years in a project or program management capacity. Additional experience preferred.
-A bachelor's degree in Policy, Public Administration, Public Health, Business or Social Welfare/Work may be substituted for two (2) years of the required experience.
-Boston residency required
-Salary range: \$76,143.23 - \$111,049.62
- Contact:** Kelly.Shay@Boston.Gov
- Museum of Science**
- **Position: Sales Representative, Part Time**
-HS Diploma or equivalent
-One or more years of sales experience
-Salary \$17.00/hour
 - **Position: CRM Systems Administrator, Full Time (40hrs/ week), Tuesday-Saturday**
-Proven track record in providing technical support to end-users, addressing system-related issues, and coordinating with developers for resolution required
-Experience overseeing CRM or similar system upgrades, patches, and migrations, ensuring stability and minimal user disruption.
-Salary range (\$70-85,000 per year)
 - **Position: Mechanical Systems Technician I, Full Time**
-3 or more years' experience in the maintenance of building mechanical systems, or relatable mechanical trades work required
-Able to obtain OSHA 10 certification
-Salary range \$25.00-31.00 per hour
- Apply online at:** <https://mos.applicantpro.com/jobs>

The Devastating Impact of Gun Violence Upon Victims and Loved Ones : But New Data Points to Positive Trend in Human Behavior

By Zoe Liu

Year-end prognosticators and ruminators spent the last few weeks of 2023 compiling and discussing their “best of” lists in newspaper articles, podcasts, and news programs. An unfortunate record broken by early December 2023 was the record-breaking 636 mass shootings, resulting in at least 2500 deaths. As noted in The Daytona Beach Journal, 2023 was the second bloodiest year since 2021, when 690 mass shootings were reported. “Mass” shootings are defined as 4 or more people, which makes the “smaller” homicidal incidents (1 to 3 people) just more additions to the horribly violent year that was 2023.

Other records only serve to amplify the crisis state in which we find ourselves—still—with gun violence. Texas has 39 mass shootings by mid-December. Dr. James Alan Fox, Lipman Family Professor of Criminology, Law, and Public Policy at Northeastern University, teamed up with USA TODAY and the Associated Press to launch the Mass Killings database—a public facing website that uses interactive graphics and visuals to break down data on incidences of mass killing in the United States. He notes:

“In the face of hyperbolic media coverage and public fear, we tend to embrace easy solutions and quick fixes that don’t necessarily work and sometimes make matters worse,” says Fox, “as opposed to some really important and fundamental changes that in the long run could make our nation safer.”

Add the December 21, 2023 mass shooting at a university in Prague, Czechoslovakia, resulting in the death of 14 and injury of at least 25, and the alarming nature of this violence becomes all the more apparent. Mass shootings are more common here in the USA, more routine, and perhaps more absorbed into the nature of American culture. Why?

It is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore the bombardment of news reports about gun violence these days. Headlines about mass shootings storm the page more frequently than we can keep up. While gun-related accidents and suicides bring attention to the issue of gun control and gun rights in the U.S., the question is brought up of what psychological wounds remain after the dead are laid to rest and those injured are cured. Whether directly involved in an incident of gun violence, witnessing a shooting, or reading about the horrific events on the news, one can develop symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression or other mental illnesses.

Gun violence is a public health epidemic; Mass shootings are happening at an increasingly disturbing rate. Daily gun violence impacts people from all around the U.S., coming from every race, religion, and socioeconomic background. From the Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project’s HCUPnet data, the most recent data compiled from 2013, 2014, and 2016 show that every day 327 people are shot in the United States.

“We cannot normalise people dying from gun violence every day”, says the Tennessee House of Representative Justin J. Pearson at the recent 2023 annual gala Community Heroes Celebration in Boston, Massachusetts.

Although U.S. gun suicide rates tend to get less attention than gun murder rates, suicides have been a leading cause of the majority of U.S. gun-related deaths. According to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 6 out of 10

firearm deaths in 2010 were accounted for by suicide.

There is no doubt that gun rights are a national issue, as the CDC has reported about 8 in 10 U.S. murders in 2021 involved a firearm. With the number of U.S. total gun deaths rapidly rising by 45% from 2019-2021 due to the pandemic, the U.S. is exceeding their highest number of total gun deaths every year.

“Don’t tell me there is no such thing as gun violence.” says the father of Jaime Guttenberg, who grieved for his daughter who was killed when former student Nikolas Cruz opened fire at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland Florida on February 14, 2018. Jaime Guttenberg’s mother says, “Every day I live with the fact that Jaime’s life was cut too short and that she was unable to show the world her fullest potential.” That day when 17 people were killed in the mass shooting on school grounds, an amass of parents empathized with Jaime’s parents when her father said, “Jaime will be forever 14, but it was not supposed to be that way...I couldn’t wait to teach her to drive. I couldn’t wait to throw her a Sweet 16 party. I couldn’t wait to see her have her first boyfriend, and yes, I had my dad’s speech all worked out for whoever that boy was gonna be.”

The rapid overall increase in gun deaths has raised an alarming concern for the children’s livelihood and well-being of the U.S. Since 2019-2021, these past two years that the CDC has been able to amount full data for, the number of gun deaths among children and teens under 18 rose 50% in just these two years, from 1,732 in 2019 to 2,590 gun deaths by the end of 2021. It is now the number of our children in the U.S.; the reports by the Pew Research Center have stated that homicide was the largest reason for gun deaths among children and teens in 2021, accounting for 60% of their deaths that year.

Survivors, victims, parents, children, teachers, and schools have spoken out that gun violence should not be a part of growing up. Hannah Dysinger, a survivor herself who lost her best friend to a gun shooting in Draffenville, Kentucky in 2018 voices, “My childhood was snatched from me in a way. I should have had the normal 15-year-old girl experience.”

It may come as a surprise that according to Quinnipiac University Poll Finds for U.S Support for Gun Control, more than 97% of Americans as well as gun owners, support universal and expanded background checks, including 80% of Republicans. The question remains then why the number of gun violence events and deaths continue to appear and increase drastically.

“There is no democracy when people are silenced, and unable to vote. These are choices that state legislators are making to do nothing...Gun violence happens in the most economically oppressed communities without access to healthcare, and these communities are all designed.”, declares Tennessee House of Representative Justin J. Pearson.

Experiencing a mass shooting can be incredibly traumatic, and lead to emotional states of shock, despair, and distress. Those immediate feelings never fully fade away after the event, and may develop into major depression or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as they were observed to be the most common psychiatric conditions seen in a study led by the dean of the Boston University School of Public Health Sandro Galea, and Assistant Professor Sarah Lowe of Yale University. In their interview with Scientific American, victims were also

found to sometimes develop anxiety disorders, panic attacks, substance use disorders, phobias and other issues.

Due to the increasingly common occurrence of mass shootings, about 96% of U.S. public schools have “active shooter” or “lockdown” drills, however, it is found in a survey published in the Journal of Adolescent Health in 2020 that 60% of young people reported feeling unsafe, scared, helpless, or sad as a result from these drills. After engaging in such drills, students showed higher increases in anxiety, stress and depression.

Survivor and 11-year-old Miah Cerillo, of the Robb Elementary School massacre in Uvalde, Texas, feared that the gunman would return for her so she smeared her friend’s blood on herself and played dead to stay alive. Her mother explains her daughter’s psychological scars from the event, “Miah was too scared to speak on camera, or to a man, because of what she experienced, but she told CNN she wanted to share her story so people can know what it’s like to live through a school shooting. She says hopefully it can help prevent a tragedy like this from happening to other children.”

With mass shooting events imprinting psychological wounds on the survivors, devastations like the ones in Uvalde, Texas, and Buffalo, New York, can lead to other lingering mental distress among the survivors. Some studies look at what Assistant Professor and psychologist Sarah Lowe at Yale University calls “nonspecific psychological distress”, such as feelings of fear and unease.

With survivors struggling to find ways to deal with the trauma, the use of antidepressants is on the rise. According to a recent study in 2020 led by Maya Rossin-Slater, an associate professor of health policy at Stanford University, there is a 21.4% increase in antidepressant prescriptions for people under the age of 20 in the local area of a school shooting compared to areas 10-15 miles away. This study, which included prescription data from 44 communities impacted by school shootings, found an inflated use of antidepressants over the 2 years after the incident.

According to the National Center for PTSD, 28% of people who witnessed a mass shooting develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and roughly a third develop acute stress disorder. Researchers have discovered that people most vulnerable to long-term psychological effects are the ones who already are battling preexisting mental health problems and then experience a traumatic experience like a mass shooting.

Although the adverse effects of the event can overwhelm the survivors, there are resources and things that the survivors can do in order to gain some sort of closure and heal from the detrimental effects of their mental health. “Emotional support (feeling like people are there for you), informational support (knowing what resources are out there) and tangible support (such as money and physical assistance) are things that can really matter,” associate professor Sarah Lowe at Yale University says. After the event, mental health professionals suggest a recommended approach called “psychological first aid” to deal with the immediate effects of denial, shock, and disbelief. This aids in educating those impacted with possible mental health symptoms, and providing information and access to care.

A shared grief process often leads to healthy mourning and coping. “Bringing

people together to promote connections and collective healing after a tragedy is often what strengthens families and communities the most,” says the assistant psychology professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara Erika Felix.

Community connections and continuing access to mental health support can help survivors recover from experiencing a traumatic event like a mass shooting. “There’s nothing more powerful than people power.”, emphasizes state representative Justin J. Pearson at the Gala.

Memorial events that are student and community-led are helpful in recovering after a mass violence event, explains a study conducted after a killer started firing his gun, stabbing people passing by, and then struck his car into a crowd near the campus of the University of California, Santa Barbara in 2014, murdering 6 people and injuring 14 others. The memorial “paddle-out” the night after the devastation let thousands of people remember the victims of the event and help the community heal together, says Erika Felix, who led the study.

These mass shootings do not only directly affect the victims and survivors, but they also impact people watching from afar through news coverage. People have reported symptoms of mental illness from watching television or from social media, Sandro Galea emphasizes, “the baseline rate of depression is already quite high now, with the prolonged impact of the COVID pandemic. This is not a good time to have more traumatizing events.”

In the long term, some survivors enter periods of adjustment and relapse, or will no longer need continuous mental health support. Some survivors have even reported that they feel a greater sense of gratitude for life and having survived the shooting, only to have missed a crucial normality of childhood. But for others, flashbacks, debilitating anxiety, or self-medication can grow into larger problems of mental health or substance use disorders.

These news reports of mass shootings have become too familiar and allowed viewers to become desensitized to the public outcry over the issue of gun violence in the U.S. With the growing frequency of mass shootings and gun-related deaths, how many more bodies, particularly children will it take for something to change, and allow those haunted by the psychological traumas to finally rest?

While this news of mass shootings is certainly grim, readers can take some solace in the news that in general, as reported in a January 11, 2024 New York Times newsletter, “The number of murders in U.S. cities fell by more than 12 percent—which would be the biggest national decline on record. The spike that started in 2020 now looks more like a blip, and the murder rate is lower than it was during the 1970s, ’80s and ’90s.” The article concludes that “during Covid, murders increased. As life has returned to normal, they have decreased.”

Massachusetts residents can also take some relief knowing that stricter gun laws in this state have resulted in an absence of mass murders and a 3.4% ranking of gun violence in 2023 (compared with Mississippi, with a high of 33.9%.

As we settle into 2024, the question posed regarding how many more bodies will it take for something to change may soon be replaced (logic willing) by more consistent, strong, and permanent gun control legislation, in Massachusetts and nationwide.

IN THE NEWS

FIRST NIGHT BOSTON 2024

Since 1976, Boston’s First Night has been a New Year’s Eve celebration of artistic performances, the wonders of the season, and the beginning of a new year. In keeping with this fantastic Boston tradition, the First Night celebration opens 2024 with an array of performances.



First Night Parade



Fist Night Boston 2024 Celebration

波士顿首夜

自 1976 年以来，波士顿的第一夜一直是除夕庆祝艺术表演、季节奇观和新年开始的节日。为了秉承波士顿这一美妙的传统，首夜庆祝活动以一系列表演拉开 2024 年的序幕。

Photos Courtesy of City of Boston 照片由波士顿市政府提供



Michelle Wu, Mayor of Boston



Boston Mayor Michelle Wu and Boston residents

Tufts’ Cherish Chinatown Restaurant Challenge

“Students, faculty and staff from Tufts University made nearly 500 purchases at local Chinatown restaurants and bakeries for the university’s 3rd annual Cherish Chinatown Restaurant Challenge.”



Cherish Chinatown TischTeam



GCR Team Photo at Gaga Seafood in Chinatown December 2023

塔夫茨大学珍惜唐人街餐厅挑战赛

“塔夫茨大学的学生、教职员工在当地唐人街餐馆和面包店购买了近 500 件商品，参加该大学第三年度珍惜唐人街餐厅挑战赛。”

Photos courtesy of Tufts University 照片由塔夫茨大学提供



Students, faculty and staff from Tufts University



TUSDM Students with Dean Karimbux for CCC 2023