After a summer of protests and a nationwide movement for black lives, former Minneapolis officer Derek Chauvin has been found guilty for the murder of George Floyd.
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HOW FOOD SYNERGY HELPS US FIGHT FREE RADICALS

The Best Combinations Earth Has To Offer

BY MICHELE STUEVEN

Acording to Abbie Gellman, a registered dietician and chef at the Institute of Culinary Education, food synergies are methods of pairing foods together strategically to enhance their health-related benefits. Generally, this helps us better absorb or access certain nutrients, thus increasing the benefits of certain foods or ingredients. She shared some examples and tips with L.A. Weekly on how to keep synergy in our lives:

1. Non-Heme Iron and Vitamin C:
The iron found in plants, such as leafy greens, is not readily accessible by humans. Pairing it with vitamin C helps us better absorb the non-heme iron. For example, sauté kale with bell peppers or add some lemon juice. A little vitamin C goes a long way to unlock that iron absorption, so a simple squeeze of citrus or 1/4 cup of bell pepper is adequate to get that synergy going.

2. DHA and Curcumin:
Fish is an abundant source of omega-3 fatty acids, including DHA. While curcumin is the active ingredient in turmeric. Research shows that omega-3 fatty acids may play a role in reducing the risk of heart disease and other issues such as cancer, arthritis and Alzheimer’s. But together, omega-3s and curcumin combine to enhance those anti-cancer effects. Studies have shown that curcumin is a powerful antioxidant, which protects healthy cells from free radicals that may cause damage and lead to cancer. Curcumin also helps the body destroy mutated cancer cells, so they cannot spread and cause more harm. So how to pair this dynamic duo? It could be as simple as sprinkling curry powder, which includes turmeric, on a piece of fish before cooking. You can also add turmeric to chili, stew, or braised meat or vegetables.

3. Curcumin and Black Pepper:
That same nutrient, curcumin, will be unleashed with the power of black pepper. Black pepper contains piperine, which is similar to capsaicin (active ingredient in chilies). Piperine has been found to enhance absorption of curcumin in our bodies. Essentially, when you have that turmeric, be sure to include some ground black pepper in the mix!

4. Extra Virgin Olive Oil and Tomatoes:
From a flavor perspective, it’s really a no-brainer, olive oil and tomatoes. But beyond the taste, there is another reason to put these two together. Raw tomatoes paired with olive oil allows us to better absorb the lycopene and other antioxidants found in tomatoes. Lycopene is a plant pigment in the carotene family that has a high antioxidant capacity, playing a crucial role in protecting our bodies against damage from free radicals. A high intake of carotenoids, including lycopene, helps decrease the risk of cancer, heart disease and other issues. Raw tomatoes can be chopped and added to salads, tossed with pasta, or paired with cheese. Simply drizzle with that high quality extra virgin olive oil and presto!

5. Cooked Tomatoes:
Tomatoes that are cooked, such as canned tomatoes, allow for us to more readily absorb lycopene. (The synergy here is the tomato and the cooking process.) As mentioned before, lycopene is an antioxidant that fights free radicals in our bodies. So reach back into your pantry and be sure to open those canned tomatoes and add them to your next braised meat or vegetable dish, pureed soup or sauce.
Meet Jess Phoenix. With a cool name and an even cooler profession, she definitely lives up to her memorable moniker. TV host, author, professional volcanologist, field scientist and committed CEO of non-profit Blueprint Earth, Phoenix has piqued our interest with her fascinating memoir “Ms. Adventure: My Wild Explorations in Science, Lava, and Life,” telling the larger-than-life tales of her real life.

“The parts that I chose to write about were basically the moments, to me, that are like an episode,” Phoenix tells us in an exclusive interview. Ms. Adventure
chronicles experiences in her career and life that stood out as extraordinary. From being chased by narco-traffickers in Mexico, to dodging armed thieves in remote Peru, racing horses across Mongolia, working on the world’s largest and most active volcanoes, piloting the Jason 2 submersible to study an undersea volcano, and working in the often dangerous mines of the Australian Outback, she tells of it all.

“I really kind of centered the book on that shared human heritage, that curiosity as our birthright,” Phoenix explains. “It’s incumbent on all of us as humans on this crazy journey around the sun to be as curious as we can and to explore our worlds to the best of our ability.”

While many of her adventures have been recorded for television – she’s previously appeared in shows for Science Channel and Discovery – the ones featured in Phoenix’s book are written in a way that transports the reader alongside her as she vividly remembers her best adventures.

“It’s not enough for me to take a cool photo for Instagram,” Phoenix tells us. “I want to give people the sense that they can understand a tiny portion of what it’s like to smell the sulphur when you’re up close to an erupting volcano, or to stare in wonder at the valleys of the ancient Incas in Peru. That’s what I tried to deliver in the book.”

Her new show, Hunting Atlantis, is produced by Morgan Freeman’s Revelations Entertainment and debuts on the Discovery Channel this spring. She joins British writer Stel Pavlou on a hunt for the city that has captured imaginations for centuries.

“Stel is someone who has been obsessed with Atlantis his whole life,” she laughs. “Stel is very, very smart.” He wants to know if the myth as we know it has a basis in fact. Is it Pluto’s amalgamation of several different civilizations, created to make a point? Or is it an actual historical place?

Her role in hunting down Atlantis is that of a scientist and explorer. From rappelling into sinkholes, kayaking deep into the ocean, and diving on ancient cities, the duo takes viewers to some places that aren’t typical Atlantis search-show fodder.

What makes this show about finding the famously elusive city different from past recordings? A new hypothesis, rooted in science and backed by data. “I had [Stel] explain it to me before I agreed to do the show and he was pretty convincing in some ways,” she says. “So I said, ‘Alright, you know I’m open to this, let’s go test the hypothesis!’”

“With the show, what I am going to have the opportunity to do is basically show TV audiences that scientists don’t just look like Indiana Jones,” she continues. It’s important to her that her show is inclusive of all genders and people of
color, with one host being a female scientist (instead of the older white male trope we see play out so often) and the other being a P.O.C.

Also known as “Volcano Jess,” Phoenix is a regular guest correspondent for CNN, and a well known public speaker. Her talks on politics, climate change, natural disasters and relief efforts have been featured on TEDx, as well as hosted by the Natural History Museum, UCLA and California State University, Los Angeles.

“I’m a little bit concerned with how we deal with information illiteracy,” Phoenix explains of her work in trying to bring scientific exploration to the public. “Because that is our big challenge. We’ve got this tidal wave of info in every direction that we look – with more data than ever before – and yet a lot of people don’t know what to do with that.”

“So many choose to reject [facts] over ‘I believe’ and the issue with belief is it’s not at all an intellectual exercise to believe in something,” she continues. “Intellectual exercise requires analysis, and belief is all about accepting something without questioning. So I think that when people think that their opinion is equal to scientific fact we have a really big problem on our hands. I think a lot of it goes to scientific literacy and information literacy fundamentally.”

In fact, Phoenix ran for Congress in the 25th District in California in 2018 on a platform dedicated to informed decision making and a greater importance being placed on data in general.

“When I ran, I realized I wasn’t making too many friends on the establishment side of things, but I also was able to really stand by my principles and my core, which is that we need science to inform policy-making because we have big-picture challenges like climate change.”

Her nonprofit, Blueprint Earth, works to preserve the Earth’s environments through scientific research and education. The work done at Blueprint Earth includes cataloging unique ecosystems and providing hands-on experience for students; safeguarding knowledge of how our planet functions for future generations.

“I’m all about opening doors in science for people, and so we make the research training that we do… at no cost to the students. So they get to work with some world-class scientists and get training,” explains Phoenix. “It’s been pretty rewarding. We have 76% women participants (college and university age), 54% students of color, and 60% of our researchers come from low-income backgrounds. So it’s pretty diverse and really shows that if you give people the opportunity to do this hands-on science research they will take it and they will run with it.”

Science is for everyone, Phoenix explains. Curiosity is innate to our species and we have a shared birthright as natural scientists and explorers. She hopes that through her work, she can inspire others to follow their threads of curiosity into lifelong pursuits of knowledge and meaningful change.

Having accomplished so much already, Phoenix has set her sights on increasing female representation in the sciences, including what we see on TV.

“I’m hoping that this platform shows Discovery and other big networks that yes, women are badass adventurer explorer scientists too,” she says. “The new Indiana Jones is female.”
Tashaki Miyaki Return with Sophomore Castaway Album

BY BRETT CALLWOOD

Ten years into their band-life, four years after the release of the debut full length album The Dream, L.A.’s Tashaki Miyaki are back with Castaway. The sophomore album is a stunningly beautiful body of work and a glorious mass of contradictions—in turn esoteric and accessible. Always thought-provoking and emotion-stirring, yet spatial and relaxing. Lush and orchestral, yet somehow wonderfully sparse. Essentially, it all works.

They’ve come a long way. The band formed in 2011, the same year as the Tashak it to Me debut EP, though initially it was simply a recording project for singer, drummer and producer Paige Stark. She had been left frustrated by her former band, Stone Darling, and the lack of cohesiveness over an agreed sound.

“I had an idea in my mind of what I wanted things to sound like and they just weren’t coming out that way,” Stark told us by phone. “So I started learning how to play drums. In that band I played guitar. I was writing songs with a simpler drum beat, inspired by Moe Tucker and that early Velvets stuff with the glam rock shuffle. We weren’t trying to start a band, I just wanted to make recordings that sounded cool. I put it on Bandcamp as a way to share it with my friends and it got picked up by blogs in the UK. Suddenly we were being flown to the UK to play shows. To be honest, we weren’t ready to play shows but I was super young and excited, so I just did it. The first time we went to the UK, we had no bass player.”

Word such as “dream pop,” “shoegaze” and
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“psychedelic” have been used to describe the band over the years, but to Stark they are simply a rock band.

“I feel frustrated that, in music now, everyone is like, you have to be in a box of a genre that someone else understands,” Stark says. “I don’t like that. To me, we’re a rock band with a lot of different influences.”

In ten years though, the sound has evolved. Initial desires to sound like a blend of My Bloody Valentine, the Jesus & Mary Chain and Mazzy Star gave way to ambitions for something more unique.

“Now I’m trying to figure out how to have those influences plus the myriad of other influences I have, and still make it unique to me and have it not be in a pile with other stuff,” Stark says. “I want to be my own thing. We dialed back the fuzz and reverb on this one.”

One thing that definitely has influenced the Tashaki Miyaki style is geography. All of the band – Stark, bassist Sandi Denton and guitarist Luke Paquin – are from California. Stark and Denton are specifically from Southern California. They refer to themselves as “children of California.”

“Geographically and quite literally we’re children of California,” says Stark. “My parents were both born in L.A. I think when you grow up in California, specifically Southern California, people are laid back. Because the weather isn’t very extreme here, there’s a thing that happens where you start to not have a concept of time passing because there’s no marker. It affects everyone and your sense of being in the world. I’ve started expanding into doing our visuals, and people say to me that my stuff is a love letter to L.A. This is the world that I know. I’m inspired by what’s around me, and I think Luke and Sandi are too. We’re eating tacos and are very much into the music of California.”

That’s all very much on display on Castaway, which is due out on April 24 (subject to COVID-related delays with the vinyl). We ask Stark if she’s pleased with it, and her answer betrays her artistic, perfectionist personality.

“Yes and no,” she says. “I’m one of those people that, everything I do I’m super aware of the mistakes I made and what I want to do differently next time. I think that’s a standard way to work so I don’t judge myself too harshly on it. But I’m proud of [the album].

At a certain point, you have to let it go and not be a perfectionist.”

While most of Castaway was written prior to the pandemic, Stark says that the songs have taken on new meaning given the current conditions that we’re living in.

“I think the pandemic happening as I was finishing the record kinda changed the record in a way,” she says. “Everything had a different feeling. Like, I was writing about being isolated and stuck before we were literally isolated and stuck, so then when we were actually isolated and stuck, I was like oh my god, this feels heavy. I think that’s ok because everyone experiences things like that in their lives. A lot of the songs are about those things – growing up and looking at things differently.”

The band’s name is worth a mention, if for no other reason than it doesn’t mean anything at all. In fact, it’s an inside joke.

“I was telling a story about the director Takashi Miike, and I said ‘Tashaki Mike,’” she says. “Tashaki is not a real name or a place. I kept saying the wrong thing over and over again, and my friend thought it was really funny. It was about a moment of time that nobody else experienced.”

Stark, who has also helped local female artists LA Witch, Cherry Glazerr and Poppy Jean Crawford with production and general guidance, has a lot to be proud of with Castaway. And plans are afoot for 2021.

“We’re setting up some live things as much as we can,” Stark says. “I don’t know if it’ll be streaming or prerecorded. It’s still to be figured out. I’m going to keep making videos for as long as I can. That’s a way to connect with people on the interweb. Different outlets are reaching out to us about some streaming stuff. So there will be some of those. Maybe a livestreamed concert, but I don’t want to make promises I cant keep.”

Tashaki Miyaki’s Castaway is out April 24.
WHAT THE TOP FARMERS ARE GROWING IN 2021

These are the strains some of the world’s top cannabis farmers are excited to grow in their gardens this summer.

BY JIMI DEVINE

Now that you’ve gotten all that 4/20 excitement out of your system, it’s time to talk about April’s second most exciting annual pot topic, what the killers are growing this year.

While there are a lot of people growing great pot in California, this list is dedicated to that heat heat heat. Across the list, you’ll see a lot of cutters and growers giving their insights into what the legal operators are getting ready to grow is Dan Adler-Golden of Node Labs. Node Labs produces thousands of elite disease-free cuttings every month that are then further propagated by commercial nurseries into moms that become tens of thousands of cuttings a month for farmers.

Dudes are super stoked on Horchata this year,” Adler-Golden told L.A. Weekly. “There is going to be a lot of Horchata. That’s great. That’s partially due to us. The other one is Cocoa Pebbles, as well as Motorhead. You’re also going to see quite a bit of Watermelon Mimosa.”

Adler-Golden explained some of the new factors for the market going into summer 2021.

“I mean, it’s taken off pretty well,” Adler-Golden said. “You have some really big nurseries coming onto the scene this year which didn’t exactly exist last year. You know you have what Phinest is putting on the map, which is like some of the repeats of last year, like the Fatso and the Wedding Pie. The Natura nursery is putting a lot of what I just mentioned out there as well and then you got the guys down in SoCal. They’re doing the Peanut Butter Breath and some of those other Peanut Butter crosses. A lot of peanut butter.”

Adler-Golden told us he expects to see the new Seed Junky nursery putting a lot out into the market this year too. Who doesn’t want their Ice Cream Cake cut from the mothership?

“You’re gonna see a ton of Ice Cream Cake and Runtz on the map this year, of course. It just got so flooded. It just so out there dude, just so many, 1000s and 1000s and 1000s of those fucking cuts,” he said.

Adler-Golden is expecting a lot of Blue Dream to make a comeback this year too. Some expected that to play out last year, but a lot of the Blue Dream grown here left the state, as is the way. This year there will probably be more sticking around locally.

Here is what some of our favorite farmers are growing this summer:

Massive Creations

One of the first folks to chat with us on their summer prospects was Shiloh Massive of Massive Creations. Among the prospects for 2021, a few that really jumped out to us included the Northern Lights #5 x Neville’s Haze, Grape Mintz, and a Diesel Stardawg Pakistani.

“I’d be lying if I said I wasn’t stoked on every single one. I started messing around with pineapple ocimene dominate stuff cause it’s Taylor’s favorite,” Massive told L.A. Weekly of his adherence to the happy wife happy life mentality. “However, it seems to be a lot of people’s fav as well. Karma bx2 x Pineapple Thai x master Kush 13 also has me excited.” Massive said he’ll release the name of a super dope and secret male he’s been working with later in the fall.

Ridgeline

The team at Ridgeline said they’re hyped on Gelonade, Fish Scale, and Georgia Pie to begin their quest to capture a third Emerald Cup after a year off the podium.

“Been smoking the Georgia Pie lately, taste like OG with fruit, delicious. The Fish Scale is pretty amazing dark purp and has a citrus candy smell,” Ridgeline owner Jason Gellman told L.A. Weekly. “Also, Apples n Bananas should be good. Still think Cheetah Piss is a winner even though the cup didn’t, but that was the third smoked-out round.”

Gellman noted they’re always going to run some Ridgeline Runtz and Green Lantern. And for his personal stash? “I am going to do a small batch of Zkittles just so I can jar it because it’s still one of my favorites.”

Cookies

The team at Cookies told us they’re generally also hyped on Ridgeline’s summer plans. They have upcoming drops of the Ridgeline Runtz and Green Lantern. “Jason has been an incredible Cookies family cultivator and his deep connection to Humboldt, its culture and rich history, has allowed him to hone his craft and produce some of the finest organic cannabis,” Cookies’ VP of Marketing Tori Cole told L.A. Weekly.

Sonoma Hills Farms

Aaron Keefer of Sonoma Hills Farms and dope Michelin star vegetables fame told us the Pink Jesus we highlighted on the cover of L.A. Weekly last year will feature prominently in their summer lineup. But they’ve got some other new stuff to get excited about.

“Bodega Sunset is a Cherry Cheesecake/Double Rainbow Sherbet mix,” Keefer said, “Budview Snowsweet is an Emerald Triangle secret back breeder for 20 generations on it. Very classic high.”

Keefer will also be popping some seeds he’s been sitting on for years.

“Rasta Fuel - NYC Sour Diesel from 2005 mixed with a backcountry Jamaican landrace that a musician friend scored while staying upcountry for six months and jamming with locals,” Keefer said. “He got the seed the last week he was there from the best he had had his whole time in Jamaica. I used to grow it indoor back around 2007 to 2009 when an 11-week flower still made sense numbers-wise. One of my favorite highs. Fingers crossed I get the pheno I remember.”

Royal Key Organics

The team at one of the most fabled flower and hash companies on the planet are getting ready for a massive seed propagation to hunt down some fresh flavors. They told us gear from Humbold Seed Organization and the underrated heat at Biovortex will feature prominently during the hunt. Saint Ashley’s Mazar is very high on the list. It’s the Black Dog BC6 x Mazar.

Terp Hogz

We chatted with Tony Mendocino about what the Terp Hogz and their championship stable of genetics is putting in the dirt this year. Mendocino prefaced his response by saying he didn’t want us to think he was being a hater, but his favorite new one is Nanya, a Papaya x Banana cross. He sent an audio recording attached noting he didn’t want us to think he was telling us to mind our own business. He also said you can expect to see the Passion Lemon, Zsmoothie and a Larry x Headband. The Blooberry Zkittels they premiered last year will also be coming back strong.

Sierra Nevada Cannabis Co

The Sierra Nevada Cannabis Co team is hyped to run their Strawberry Mimosa again this year. They’re also super pumped to run Sherbinski’s Mochi, “which gets that real deep purple tone.” A Biker Kush heavy pheno of Headstash from Karma Genetics and testers of Trace Dog OG round out the pack.

Alien Labs

While most associated with some of the best indoor on the planet, Alien Labs usually has some very heat “Moongrown” offerings come harvest time.

“This is the first year we’re doing tunnels and this giant wind screen so I’m just hell excited to see the quality of our outdoor go up and the quality of the live resin go up because of that,” Alien Labs Founder Ted Lidie told L.A. Weekly before pointing to the next round of apples as extra exciting. “Atomic Apple was my favorite live resin pen this year so probably the crosses of that.”

Biscotti X Atomic Apple, Atomic Apple x Kryptochronic.

Anonymous Trapper #1

We reached out to Anonymous Trapper #1 deep in the hills of the Emerald Triangle to see what he’s growing this year. He said a big chunk will be higher yielding winners like GMO, Ice Cream Cake and Wedding Cake.

He said he doesn’t care what’s popular this year. “I think they’re gonna dump dude. I’m just growing it because they are way healthier and just way more vigorous than the other shit, you know? It’s great pot. The quality is there for sure, but I’m definitely a weight and vigor grower,” he told L.A. Weekly.
Choose the ratio that's right for you from California's best selling cannabis wellness brand.*

*Source: Headset Retail Data, January - March 2021 total units sold sublingual/capsule categories, segment CBD. www.headset.io
The designers behind Glendale’s Pentagon LA store are making a statement about the Armenian Genocide by melding art, fashion and hip-hop

BY SIRAN BABAYAN

If you’re in and around Glendale and certain parts of Los Angeles during the month of April, you’re likely to see Armenian flags on cars and in windows of local businesses in commemoration of the Armenian Genocide. You also might notice the phrase Our Wounds Are Still Open: 1915 printed on T-shirts, hoodies, caps, signs and decals.

Armenians march and wave flags every year on April 24 to bring attention to the killing and ethnic cleansing of their people (over a million) by the Turks of the Ottoman Empire during World War 1. But even if you know this history, you might wonder about the meaning and origin of these words now written everywhere.

Los Angeles locals R-Mean, Tina Chuldzhyan and Alex Kodo are behind the clothing line and slogan, taken from one of rapper R-Mean’s lyrics. What started as a rap song written 15 years ago about the Turkish government’s denial of the genocide has now become a popular, politically-inspired streetwear line, and a rallying cry for youth in the Armenian community and beyond.

Born Armin Hariri to an Armenian-Persian mother and a Baha’i Persian father in L.A., R-Mean grew up just outside of Amsterdam before moving back here in 2004. He rapped as a hobby in high school. In 2006, he released his first record, Broken Water, which included the song “Open Wounds” – (“We’re praying to God to make ’em admit it – we’re still hoping / But they still won’t and that’s why these wounds are still open”).

R-Mean has since recorded six albums and projects on his label Pentagon Records. In 2013, he re-released “Open Wounds” and shot a video wearing a black T-shirt with the wordage design written in white slash-style font with the letters R, I and P in red.

“Everyone started asking us, ‘Where can we get that shirt in the video?’ R-Mean shares with L.A. Weekly. “We would get stopped every single time. It became a tool to educate people.”

The T-shirts took off with R-Mean’s fans and on his website, and soon dozens of neighborhood shops started carrying them. Currently some 60 stores in L.A. sell the T-shirts around April, and profits from sales benefit the Open Wounds 1915 nonprofit, which in turn collaborates with many other Armenian organizations around the world.

In 2017, R-Mean, Chuldzhyan and Kodo opened The Pentagon LA retail space in Glendale, selling hip-hop-themed apparel, many with patriotic, Armenian images on them, as well as an “LA” logo design also created by the trio.

From keffiyeh scarves and Che Guevara shirts to anti-Trump pink “pussyhats,” clothing and activism have always gone hand in hand. Nothing connects young people to a cause faster these days than integrating fashion and hip-hop.
“Having speeches by professors at commemorations is boring and not enough,” says R-Mean. “Sometimes you can spread a message so much better through art, music and movies. It was time to do something different. People need to look outside the box.”

The three even enlisted help from celebrities. The Game, Cardi B, Post Malone, DMX, Xzibit and other hip-hop heavyweights have all been photographed on social media either wearing or holding the T-shirt. (The designers shared a video of DMX wearing the shirt on their Instagram just last week following his death.)

“She actually had a full conversation with us about it,” remembers Chuldzhyan of Cardi B. “She’s a history buff. She was really inclined. That photo got spread all over social media, and you can’t pay for that kind of advertising.”

The store displays framed covers of hip-hop albums on its walls in addition to works by artists Shepard Fairey, Van Saro and former L.A. Weekly cover subject Robert Vargas, who recently painted the Eddie Van Halen mural in Hollywood, and is currently creating what will become the largest mural by a single artist in Downtown. With a pool table and basketball hoop in the front, the space also functioned as a sort of hang out, hosting pop-up events for other rappers and local designers, until it shut down in March 2020 due to COVID-19.

L.A. saw more business closures than any city in the U.S. during lockdown – approximately 15,000 across L.A. County.

Like many small businesses hit by the pandemic, Pentagon LA sustained itself with online sales.

“We had to really shift our gears and work online,” says Chuldzhyan. “It was really tough being able to afford having employees again when you haven’t had a high level of sales anymore. Our online community and our music helped us heavily during this time. If we didn’t have those we wouldn’t have survived. I feel bad for businesses who were just starting out because they were the ones who got hit the hardest.”

In September, Azerbaijan launched a military attack on Artsakh, a small, long-disputed region in the South Caucasus, also known as Nagorno-Karabakh, that’s recognized as part of Azerbaijan, but is mostly populated by ethnic Armenians. The conflict killed thousands of soldiers and civilians and displaced many residents, leading to protests by Armenians all over the world. A ceasefire agreement was reached in November.

Though they were still dealing with COVID, R-Mean and his co-owners responded by turning their store into a drop-off station, collecting $500,000 dollars’ worth of donations for local charity Armenia Fund (armeniafund.org). “We were head to ceiling in boxes,” recalls Chuldzhyan. “We bound together as a community and it helped a lot.

Before the shop reopened in February, R-Mean continued releasing new music during quarantine, including a duet with Capital Cities singer Sebu Simonian and a collaboration called Armenian Emcee Cypher 2020, which includes several other local Armenian rappers and System of a Down bassist Shavo Odadjian. He also recorded “King James,” a LeBron James-inspired track produced by Scott Storch and featuring rapper Jeremih, which was used on an ESPN commercial.

R-Mean also started the #ArmeniansforBlackLivesMatter hashtag on social media with Mihran Kirakosian, a dancer who’s toured with Madonna and Britney Spears, as a show of solidarity for BLM and the struggle for racial justice in the wake of George Floyd’s death.

“We wanted to show the youth in our community that we’re standing up for any kind of injustice, not just our own,” R-Mean, whose other designs include the words We Are Still Here and just the year 1915. “We’re showing the African American community that we’re really behind them. I’m a hip-hop artist and he’s a dancer, and obviously we’ve been influenced by hip-hop. It’s been a big part of our lives. It was only right that we speak up and do whatever we could.”

The Pentagon LA, 1207 W. Glenoaks Blvd., Glendale. (818) 523-3803, thepentagonla.com and openwounds1915.com
L.A. REACTS TO DEREK CHAUVIN’S GUILTY CONVICTION IN DEATH OF GEORGE FLOYD

Nearly 11 months after the death of George Floyd created a movement that sparked political activism in L.A. County, the Minneapolis officer Derek Chauvin has been convicted of second-degree murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter

BY ISAI ROCHA

Former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin was found guilty of two counts of murder and one count of manslaughter in the death of George Floyd, Tuesday, with an expected sentencing in eight weeks.

Chauvin was convicted of second and third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter in the May 25 death of George Floyd and may still submit a written argument this week.

L.A. County had been on high alert for the possibility of civil unrest coming from the Chauvin trial verdict. Businesses boarded up their storefronts, planned adjusted hours of operation and law enforcement pleaded for peaceful protest.

As of this writing, there have been no reports of unrest, but LAPD was put on tactical alert out of an “abundance of caution.”

As the verdict was read and confirmed in Minnesota, multiple notable Los Angeles officials and leaders responded, as Floyd’s death left an imprint on the city nearly a year ago:

Co-founder of Black Lives Matter Los Angeles, Melina Abdullah said: “I want to say that this is not justice, but it is a semblance of justice. That fool is guilty on all counts. That means he ain’t ever getting out. I don’t believe in the carceral state, but as long as there are prisons and jails, let the murderous ass cops be the first ones in them. Derek Chauvin should be in there for the rest of his life for taking the life of George Floyd.”

The People’s City Council Activist Organization said: “Convicting one cop will not stop the police from killing in the future. Abolition is the only way.”

City of Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti addressed the media saying: “Today justice was served, but let’s be clear that George Floyd is still not here with us. Justice was delivered, though, for his family. For our nation and this country took a critical step forward towards healing. This verdict has sent a message far beyond Minneapolis. Beyond that courtroom that we all witnessed today that says clearly: that no American is immune, the badge does not make you immune, that America can become better, that black lives matter and that we can grow and change. This is about more than one police officer, it also a moment to look at a system that is predictable as it is pernicious.”

L.A. County Sheriff Alex Villanueva said
in a statement:
“As we have all seen with the verdict in the Derek Chauvin case, we must have faith in the judicial process. The law will take its course, and justice will prevail. If a crime is committed, regardless of who the perpetrator is, they will be brought to justice.”

L.A. City Councilman Curren Price Jr. simply stated:
“The world stopped today with all eyes on Minnesota as we held our breath waiting for the judge to read 6 letters-GUILTY.”

L.A. City Councilman Mitch O'Farrell, who canceled an event in light of Tuesday's decision, said:
“Nothing can eliminate or heal the pain that George Floyd's murder has caused. But now the jury has spoken decisively and ensured that Derek Chauvin will be held accountable. I stand in solidarity with the Black community and will continue working with my colleagues on the Los Angeles City Council to transform what public safety means moving forward.”

Councilman Marqueece Harris-Dawson said:
“The demands for change are loud, forceful and uncompromising. They have pushed promising plans for transforming how we keep everyone safe into the public discourse. This moment of collective grief poses the question what can we do to stop this from happening again today, tomorrow or ever again? The system makes us feel as though the public has little control over the police, and that the police have absolute control over the public. This must change to ensure that deaths like George Floyd never happen again. As heavy as this moment is, our ancestors before us have carried heavier loads and achieved greater change by holding on and struggling through.”

Councilman Mark Ridley-Thomas said:
“Although today’s verdict in the Derek Chauvin murder trial is a victory for justice, a victory for accountability, and a victory for common sense – George Floyd's life was cut far too short. Mr. Floyd’s legacy will live on. I am committed to the continued work in L.A. along with with movements all over this nation to collectively reimagine policing and reckon with systemic racism.”

California Gov. Gavin Newsom delivered a statement saying:
“The hard truth is that if George Floyd looked like me, he'd still be alive today. No conviction can repair the harm done to George Floyd and his family, but today’s verdict provides some accountability as we work to root out the racial injustice that haunts our society. We must continue the work of fighting systemic racism and excessive use of force. It’s why I signed some of the nation’s most progressive police reform legislation into law. I will continue working with community leaders across the state to hear concerns and support peaceful expression.”

Supervisor Janice Hahn said:
“This is what justice looks like. The path to healing begins with justice.”

President of United Teachers L.A., Cecily Myart-Cruz said:
“Justice looks like care, community, and compassion for one another. Justice looks like seeing each other clearly. Justice looks like this never occurring again. We still have so much work to do.”

**Mayor Garcetti Proposes Monthly $1,000 Plan For Low-Income Households.**

Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti proposed the largest city budget in his tenure, Monday, while proposing financial aid to businesses struggling through the pandemic as well as a universal basic income plan.

The $1,000 monthly universal income pilot would be the largest in the country according to Garcetti and would be distributed to 2,000 households for 12 months.

“We have budgeted $24 million to provide $1,000 a month to 2,000 households, no questions asked,” Garcetti said in his State of the City address. “We’re betting that one small but steady investment for Angeleno households will pay large dividends for health and stability across our city and light a fire across our nation.”

This would be in addition to a south L.A. plan that would provide $1,000 to 500 single-parent households in the area.
Los Angeles City Council passed the south L.A. basic income plan in an 11-4 vote this March. The mayor also announced a $25 million “comeback” program that would provide $5,000 to 5,000 small businesses in the city of Los Angeles, saying, “This money will help L.A. businesses roar back.” In support of street vendors, Garcetti said $1.3 million would be allocated for street vendors to obtain proper selling permits and “authorized carts.”

“If we want a strong economy, we have to help small business owners thrive,” Garcetti said. “Today, too many Americans don’t have that access to capital or to stable housing. We must build a better future for our most vulnerable residents.”

The largest budget allocation the mayor announced was $1 billion that would go toward homelessness. While Garcetti did not get into specifics of how the money would be allocated, he did say the city would create more than 1,200 “vouchers to help people find homes.” Garcetti also noted that the city only allocated $10 million toward homelessness at the start of his first term. “We know the key to ending homelessness is homes. Let’s rent them. Let’s buy them. Let’s build them brand new,” Garcetti said.

In his State of the City address, Garcetti proposed multiple citywide efforts including memorials for lives lost to COVID-19, installing WiFi hotspots in more neighborhoods, as well as a ban of Styrofoam and single-use dining products.

Live Indoor Sports and Entertainment Now Allowed in L.A.

L.A. Public Health updated its COVID-19 health order, allowing indoor entertainment such as pro sporting events and music concerts for the first time in 13 months. California gave the OK for indoor events to start on April 15, and L.A. County will align itself with those measures. “These changes align with the state changes to the Blueprint for a Safer Economy regarding indoor live events and performances, private events such as conferences, receptions and meetings, and private informal gatherings,” L.A. Public Health said in a media release. “The updated Health Officer Order reflecting these modifications will be posted online on Wednesday along with changes to the protocols for each of these sectors.”

Among the measures for indoor events will be a capacity limit of 2,000 people for large venues such as Staples Center or The Forum – a number that can increase to 25% capacity if everyone in the arena is either vaccinated or shows proof of a negative COVID-19 test. The Los Angeles Lakers immediately allowed 2,000 fans to attend a game at Staples Center as they hosted the Boston Celtics on April 15, the very first day the county allowed indoor venues to reopen. “We are incredibly excited that the state of California announced guidelines today that will allow Lakers fans to return to STAPLES Center,” the Lakers said in a statement before the first game. “Now that we have the guidance, we will work with L.A. County Public Health and STAPLES Center to finalize our plans to have fans safely attend our games starting with the Lakers vs. Celtics game on April 15th.”

There is also a possibility of having separate sections within the venues where fully vaccinated people may sit shoulder-to-shoulder, while non-vaccinated people may be seated in a curated, socially-distanced manner. For smaller venues that hold 1,500 people or fewer, there will be a capacity limit of 15% or 200 people, whichever is fewer. All indoor sporting events and concerts will be open to California residents only. Conferences, receptions and meetings will also be allowed starting April 15, with no more than six unvaccinated people per table and assigned seating. Masking and social distancing measures are also required.

More Than 2 Million Angelenos Are Now Fully Vaccinated

L.A. Public Health said more than 2 million people have been fully vaccinated as more than 6 million doses have been administered in L.A. County. L.A. County expanded its COVID-19 vaccine eligibility to all adults, without restrictions last week after more than 70% of adults older than 65 already received at least one dose. Johnson & Johnson, one of the three vaccine producers in the U.S., has not yet restarted its vaccine distribution after blood clot concerns in patients, but L.A. County has supplemented 70% of those doses with Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, receiving 362,000 doses for the week. As of Monday, more than 10 million Californians have been fully vaccinated with 25.7 million vaccinations being distributed statewide and 51% of adults receiving at least their first dose.

Nationwide, positive COVID-19 cases have increased by 22% as businesses reopen and lockdown orders lift, but as vaccination numbers increase in the county, L.A. Public Health said increased COVID-19 transmission rates are not “inevitable” in Los Angeles. “While in the past, high rates of transmission on the east coast have translated a few weeks later to increases in cases in L.A. County, I don’t believe this pattern is inevitable,” L.A. Public Health Director Barbara Ferrer said Monday. “Our circumstances are different now than in the past because we have millions of residents and workers vaccinated, however, to maintain the gains we’ve made, we must continue to take care of ourselves and each other, especially as we are reopening.”

As of this writing, L.A. County has recorded its lowest positivity rate since the beginning of the pandemic with only 1% testing positive for COVID-19. The positivity rate divides the number of positive COVID-19 tests by the number of tests taken and then multiplies it by 100. Overall, since the beginning of the pandemic, L.A. County has recorded an 18% positivity rate out of more than 6.2 million COVID-19 tests, with a peak of 20% being recorded in late December of 2020.
O ur nation’s bookshops have been cultural heroes of the pandemic. Their fights to stay open, pivots to the Zoom, reimagining of launch events and book clubs, support of independent authors, small publishing houses, and local poets and artists has been a lifeline for so many. And now they finally get to reopen in person, just in time for Indie Bookstore Day, for browsing and for breathing in that glorious new (and very old) book smell. Here’s some poetry, some art career advice, and some innovative cultural histories to get you started.

Poetry.

Rich Ferguson, Beat Poet Laureate of California

When the National Beat Poetry Foundation selected Rich Ferguson for the 2020-22 term as California’s Beat Poet Laureate, it was May of 2020. Halfway through his term he did what any self-respecting writer would do – he released a book. Everything is Radiant Between the Hates (Moon Tide Press) is a collection of free verse and prose poems flush with the intoxicating blend of drummer’s rhythm, fearless vulnerability, evocative imagery, and irreverent humor that garnered Ferguson the accolade.

Which doesn’t mean releasing a book during a pandemic was easy. But as Ferguson tells the Weekly, responding not only to the pandemic, but to the year’s protests and politics – and through it all to his role as a parent – was both clarifying and necessary. “The book is dedicated to my four-year old daughter,” he says, “I wanted to document this moment in real time for her, for later.”

With saving this history in mind, and as someone who has also written novels, why then create it as a poetry book and not a more linear narrative? “For me it was better to express what’s going on these days in poetry,” says Ferguson. “So much of this year it’s felt like our souls, spirits and senses were being attacked on a psychic level. And I felt that poetry for me is a better language for expressing how things hit the heart. Poems are like time capsules, little moments that seem pressing to me right now, that also may well be shaping her future. We talk so much about the world we are leaving our children,” he says. “But what are we teaching them?”

Another reason to write the story of 2020 as poems is that there is a real feeling out there, especially in the younger generations accustomed to a verbal culture of fragments and bytes and snippets, that poetry would be attractive to
them. Novels may take years, but poems – some poems – can live in the world by tonight. “There’s a match to the modern condition,” says Ferguson. “It’s no longer anachronistic. It has a potential for instantaneity, and that’s the same way we move through the world, making everything out of bits and pieces.”

Send them all / loving and luminous messages / through the dark and dead of night, / typed on the telegraph keys of your heart. Everything is Radiant Between the Hates assembles poems carrying advice from a fascinating but imperfect parent, the introspections of a modern urban man, the accidental humor of our cultural short-hands, the physical and spiritual traumas of the worst of our society, the unexpected silver linings of an online life of collaboration alongside the lonely deprivation of the human touch, the sins of politicians, the saintliness of everyone, advice from the ancestors, gifts for the descendants, a good laugh, a good cry, elevated and fresh-faced wordplay, and occasionally a love story. rich-ferguson.com.

Visual Culture.

This Is Not a Gun, Edited by Cara Levine (Candor Arts | Sming Sming Books). This Is Not a Gun is an ongoing multidisciplinary project across art, activism, exhibitions, programs, writings – and an elegant, affecting book which encapsulates its striking premise. While the goal of the work is to propagate awareness, systemic reform and collective healing specifically from the intertwined violence of racism and police brutality. Simply put, This Is Not a Gun catalogs the astounding array of ordinary objects that police officers have allegedly mistaken for guns, resulting in the shooting of unarmed civilians – broomsticks, bibles, keyrings, ipods, sunglasses, Skittles, soda cans, pizza and prescription bottles – with contributions from 40 artists, writers, healers and activists in moving words and horrifically ordinary images. thisisnotagun.com.

The Tarot of Leonora Carrington

The New Oil Painting: How To Art. Kimberly Brooks (Chronicle Books). Oil paint is one of the most ancient mediums on earth – but there's a downside to the richness, depth, mythic stature and durability of this classical material. The solvents long assumed to be requisite for using oil-based pigment are really quite toxic. But as painter Kimberly Brooks demonstrates in-depth through research and most importantly, studio practice, you don't need harmful chemicals to paint like an Old Master. (Talent might be another story.) HARD to believe, most of what is currently taught about how to handle oils is based on centuries-old understandings of the science and has not been updated in far too long. Better yet, these insights are imparted with wit, precision, instructions, illustrations and actionable exercises. newoilpainting.com.

Make Your Art No Matter What by Beth Pickens (Chronicle Books). A sort of twist on the professional advice/self-help/journey of creative realization genres, this book is a beautifully told guide to overcoming prevalent causes for the dreaded creative block. With humor and empathy and often surprisingly intimate perceptions into the artistic psyche, Pickens unpacks thoughtful ways to move past anxiety, time pressures, money worries, fear, lack of confidence, isolation, and other studio demons. Her very good advice on getting life out of its own way is also coupled with philosophical underpinnings and practical resources. bethpickens.com.

Tripping Over Canvases by Dontae T. Muse (Above Art Studios). Growing out of a larger practice giving career advice, industry guidance, exhibition space, and creative mentorship to independent visual artists, this most recent book is a comprehensive yet concise guide for those on the precipice of making their art their full-time profession. From advice on working with galleries to how to make social media work for you, how to file business papers with the tax office, how to value media work for you, how to file business taxes. A beautifully told guide to overcoming the professional advice/self-help/journalism. Pickens includes a full-size facsimile of her Major Arcana; and an introduction from her son, Gabriel Weisz Carrington, along with analysis exploring the significance of the occult and other kinds of magic within Carrington's work.


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