

BY THE EDITORIAL BOARD In the first half of the 20th century, the students at Boston's best public high school, Boston Latin, included a brash kid named Leonard Bernstein, who would one day compose "West Side Story"; another boy named Thomas L. Phillips, who would build the Massachusetts manufacturer Raytheon into a bulwark of

American defense; and Paul Zoll, who would pioneer the use of electricity to treat cardiac arrest while working as a doctor at a Boston hospital. I Most any American city of that period could produce a similar honor roll of kids raised on its streets and educated in its public classrooms who went on to leave a mark on the world. Back then, cities supplied the keys for unlocking human potential: an infrastructure of public schools and colleges, public libraries and parks, public transit systems and clean, safe drinking water. The very density and diversity of urban life fostered the accumulation of knowledge, the exchange of ideas, the creation of new products. American cities were the hammering engines of the nation's economic progress, the showcases of its wealth and culture, the objects of global fascination, admiration and aspiration. They were also deformed by racism, bled by the profiteering of elites and fouled by pollution and disease. But in their best moments, they offered the chance to slip the bonds of prejudices, second-guessing and limited horizons. They offered opportunity. ¶ Then, cities worked. Now, they don't. ¶ Well before the coronavirus pandemic posed its own threats to the life of American cities, they were struggling. Over the last half century, their infrastructure of opportunity has badly decayed. Their public schools no longer prepare students to succeed. Their subways are reliably unreliable. Their water runs with lead.

The photographer (Mrs Soth closted two resighborhoods in Chicago where the difference in energy life to I a se much as 30 years. His emones throughout this section of affile. The plantagrapher (see See See Institute of Englanced show how — just right miles from each other — to Speciale worlds, with different horizons of apportunity

Our urban areas are laced with the consequences. invisible but increasingly impermeable boundaries separating enclaves of wealth and privilege the nation's 100 largest metropolfrom the gaptoothed blocks of agittan areas, about a third of low-intite is hard and, all too often, short. Cities continue to create ing to a Brookings Institutionyast amounts of wealth, but the sembles the New York skyline. A and everyone else in the shade.

The pandemic has prompted some affluent Americans to wonder whether cities are broken for them, too. It has suspended the charms of urban life while accenhoary American tradition of regarding cities with fear and oathing - as cesspools of disease, an image that all too easily aligns with prejudices about poverty and race and crime. Even New York's governor, Andrew Cuomo, has described New York City's density as responsible for

homes, and the crisis has prompted a flurry of fantasies about abandoning cities altogether, rooted in the idea that we'd all be better off at least a little farther apart - social distancing as the salvation of society. This is dangerously mis-

Our cities are broken because MDuent Americans have been segregating themselves from the poor, and our best hope for building a fairer, stronger nation is to

But to realize the potential of cities, we need to change the hoods into which Americans are born delimit their prospects in life their chances of graduating from high school, of earning a decent living, of surviving into old age. In Chicago, the difference in verage life expectancy for peoole born at the same time in diferent neighborhoods is as much as 30 years. Please pause to consider that number. Babies do not choose where they are born. In Streeterville, a neighborhood of white, affluent, college-educated families living comfortably in ould expect to live to 90, Eight

and services. Lower-income workers in the San Francisco Bay Area often live outside of the Bay Area: Last year, more than daily commutes of at least three hours. In Montgomery County, Md., an affluent suburb of Washington, fully 44 percent of the county's own employees live in other counties, often because they can't afford homes in the

And we need to ensure every unerican can obtain a high-quality education regardless of the value of their family home. The economic gaps between people are compounded because fundng for public institutions is ghtly linked to the wealth of local communities. In underfunded urban school systems, even the nost successful students struggie to rise. The Boston Globe last year tracked down 93 of the 113 ents named valedictorians at Boston public high schools, ining Boston Latin, between 2005 and 2007. Nearly a quarter those students had said they oped to become doctors, but re than a decade later, not one graduated from medical school. Among a group of valedictorians from the Boston sub-

urbs, 12 percent were doctors. solation of the poor has broad quences. The economis Paul Romer won the Nobel last year in part for his work demonance of cities, the way that dense gatherings of people facilitate the aring of information and the In effect, segregation reduces

he size of a city. It limits the number of people, the number of interactions, the number of ideas. A study published in 2018 found ldren from families in the top I percent of the income distrition were 10 times as likely to file for a patent when they grew up as were children from families the bottom half of the income distribution. The difference is not anote ability: Rather, the poor kids are excluded from opportunity. They do not know inventors, not encouraged to become inventors, they do not interact with others trying to solve he problems of the day. In a seprate study, the same researchers sought to estimate the mpact of moving children to a better environment. They found that Seattle children whose lower-income families used federal housing vouchers to move to more affluent neighborhoods would earn an extra \$210,000 in the course of their lives and Hispanies primarily suffer

Most poor whites live in inixed-income neighborhoods, Ining buildings and vacant lots come whites - 3.4 million people where jobs are scarce and where - lived in high-poverty urbanneighborhoods in 2014, accordanalysis. By contrast, 72 percent." intribution of those gains re- of low-income blacks, or 5.2 million people, lived in high-poverty. urban neighborhoods, as well as 68 percent of low-income Hispan-

ics, or 6.7 million people. The pandemic has exacerbated the inequalities of urban life. Lower-income Americans, generally unable to work from home, are dying at higher rates. And the very idea of abandoning cities is a luxury reserved for those who move. The poor are bound to the The beauty and peril of cities in

that we all are bound together. The affluent, the economist Joseph Stiglitz has written, havethe best houses, the best educations, the best doctors, and the best lifestyles. But there is one thing that money doesn't seem to have bought: An understanding that their fate is bound up with how the other 99 percent live." In March 1968, Martin Lither

King Jr. traveled from Detroit to one of its affluent suburbs Grosse Pointe, with a police officer sitting on his lap to shield him from violence. That night, he told a crowd gathered at the local high Americas" - one in which white children grew up in "the sunlight where black children were raised never come out." Every American city was divided, he said.

As African-Americans migrated from the rural South to industrial cities in the early 20th centheir political leaders, aggressively funneled the new ar-

rivals away from white neighboring codes that specified where blacks could not live. Even in the townhomes and high-rise condo- Jim Crow era, that was considminiums along the shore of Lake ered a little much, the Supreme learned that it was easy enough to achieve the same goals without being quite so explicit. Chiing code in 1923 that made no mention of race - but largely re-

lines on the ageney's maps. In Detroit, a developer persuaded the government to back loans in a new, white subdivision in 1941 by building a half-mile wall, six feet adjacent black neighborhood. An agency manual also recommended highways as barriers to maintain racial segregation. Between 1934 and 1962, whites got 98 percent of the govern-

ment-backed loans. Congress outlawed such explicit racism in the Fair Housing Act of 1968, but the checkerboard created during the building boom the postwar years endures. The wealth gap between blacks and whites allowed suburban through zoning laws restricting the construction of denser, more affordable housing. The nation old industrial centers - not just places like Peoria, Ill. and Syracuse, N.Y., but also New York City. and Boston - remain some of the most racially segregated cities in ..

In recent decades, racial segregation has modestly declined in ny cities as richer black and more affluent neighborhoods. But economic segregation has increased sharply. As knowledge workers like lawyers, bankers and software engineers flock to cities like Raleigh, N.C.; Austin, Texas; and Seattle, the concentration of well-educated workers and well-paid jobs has left much

Perhaps more surprisingly, the poor residents of the boomtown

ave also been left behind. In 1970, 65 percent of the restients of large metropolitan areas lived in neighborhoods with me dian incomes close to the median for the entire area, according to n nnalysis by the sociologists Kendra Bischoff and Sean F. Reardon, Most neighborhoods, in other words, approximated the conomic diversity of the broader community. But by 2009, only 42 percent lived in such share residing in either very affluent or very poor neighborhoods more than doubled from 15 percent to 33 percent.

This trend has reshaped central cities, filling downtowns with buildings invariably described as apartments. In Chicago, for ex-In the United States, blacks the share of census tracts with ample, a recent analysis found . concentrations of either wealth



FULFILLING THE PROMISE OF OUR CITIES BY JAMES BENNET

It turns out that New York does sleep, or, at least, that it

can be induced to. Through the collective efforts of its people, its racing pulse has been slowed to a deep, muffled beat, one they strain to hear as they walk by padlocked playgrounds, down emptied streets. ¶ With other diversions closed off to them, rich and poor pass in Central Park, masked and more strange to one another than ever, yet also with more in common, given the tough new adversary they share. Along the southern edge of the park - Billionaires' Row, it's called - the unfinished luxury towers jabbing at the sky seem less like middle fingers raised to those who can't ever hope to live in them than like decaying monuments of another age. That's silly, of course. The buildings will be finished - construction has already started up again across the city. Wealthy people will move in. The masks will also come off one day. And then maybe New Yorkers will recognize, in one another, something new. It's a dark hour for American cities, but the only road to a more just and successful society runs through them, and crises like this have transformed them for the better before. Central Park itself sprang from an effort to combat disease out of a 19th century belief that fresh air would prevent malaria. Now, in the depths of this pondemic, the public square in many circs is expanding, as streets close to core and open to walkers I America's hit, but they were failing, too, as the lead editornal in this second chapter of our The America We Need series explains (the whole series can be found at nytimes.com/ americawenced). For all the bigotry and other cruelties they indulged, these cities also fostered invention and progress - in literature, music, art, food, science, business - by stirring together vast numbers of people from different cultures and classes. But over the decades, affluent residents have clustered within their own neighborhoods, with their own schools and services, leaving poor neighborhoods to wither. ¶ A baby born in one neighborhood in Chicago is now expected to die 30 years sooner than a baby born in a wealthier neighborhood just eight miles to the north. A child's ZIP code has become a kind of prophecy. I "My students do not normally advance beyond where they were born," Amir Tehari, a high school teacher in Sacramento, said in response to questions that Times Opinion asked teachers across the country. "The story of ZIP codes is a story of dreams stolen away from children." I Throughout this issue of the Sunday Review you'll find a number of big ideas to fulfill the promise of American cities. There are two recurring themes I'd like to emphasize. One is the crying need for affordable housing, salted throughout cities rather than concentrated in a few areas. (It may seem costly, but have we really considered our existing priorities? As Binyamin Appelbaum writes, we could house all the nation's homeless for the cost of an aircraft carrier.) The second theme is the foundational importance of public education. We could make such strides if we'd confront bad choices we've made, about financing and segregation, that are wasting untold human potential. ¶ As our contributing writer Annalee Newitz writes, as far back as the Bronze Age, radical inequality evidently brought once-powerful cities to their knees. But there's good news, too: Humans have learned a few things across the millenniums. It's within our power to save the American city so that it works for all its resi-

James Bennet is the editorial page editor.

dents and, in doing so, advances civilization itself,

ery metropolitan area except fare of those on the other side of New York These suburbs creatinvisible lines, is shortsighted. sivity, have become increasingly many of its citizens have no send their children to what are effectively private schools. Cars every American with the freehave obviated the need for ser- dom that comes from stability vants to live close by, or to be tol- and opportunity - the freedom erated as participants in the to make something of one's life. serve the affluent must find

airline passenger cabin: sepaareas, separate bathrooms. The in affluent neighborhoods. Village of Indian Hill, a wealthy In this, it is hardly unique. Hun-

Even in cities where the rich could afford to rent. and poor continue to live under support for common, egalitarian ers donate generously to beauti- fordable housing. fy Central Park while resisting tain parks in neighborhoods they

same polity. The people who There can be no equality of opportunity in the United States so long as poor children are segre-Life in America resembles an gated in poor neighborhoods. And there is only one viable solurate entrances, separate seating tion: building affordable housing The federal government can erty taxation and school funding

suburb of Cincinnati, acclaims its help. In 2015, it provided \$139.8 is an important first step. But eqrural atmosphere, its "firm ad- billion in payments, tax credits uity requires a reversal of the ministration of zoning ordi- and other forms of housing subsinances" and its "proximity to the dies - and 60 percent of that cultural life of a large city." It is, in money went to households earnshort, a parasite, taking what it ing at least \$100,000, according to values from Cincinnati while con- the Center on Budget and Policy tributing as little to it as possible. Priorities. Imagine what could be accomplished if the government dreds of similar suburbs encrust used that money instead to build cities across the United States. housing that poorer families The government also should

the same local government, eco-require communities that want federal funding for roads and other infrastructure to allow the infrastructure. Rich New York- development of denser, more af-

But federal interventions can the taxation necessary to main-only go so far. Perhaps the most enduring legacy of Brown v. Board of Education is not its con- enced teachers. parents in wealthier neighbor- demnation of racial segregation, hoods contribute lavishly to par- but the bitter lesson that much of

or poverty increased from 28 per- cans in asserting the privilege to beginning at an early age. In cent in 1980 to 47 percent in 2010. cans in asserting the privilege to beginning federal government sequester themselves, to retain 1965, the federal government of the program for lower-in-But most wealthy families con-the benefits of their wealth started a program for lower-intinue to reside in the suburbs that within the boundaries of their come children called Head Start. provide the bulk of housing in evpoverty in Louisiana to head the Ford Foundation, has credited ed to maintain economic exclusivity have be economic excluthis nation is ailing because so his escape to "the young woman the street who knocked exclusive. Residents live in what chance to chart their own destinon our door," to sign him up for are effectively private clubs and ies. A return to health requires a the program's first cohort. A available to only 11 percent of eligible kids below the age of 3, and

36 percent of those ages 3 to 5. The United States is virtually in devoting more public resources to educating affluent children than poor children. Breaking the link between propprovide an equal education to Netherlands, for example, funds schools at a standard level per for each student whose parents did not graduate from college.

A vocal group of critics has long questioned whether more public spending would improve education. Such arguments are those critics really believe is on display in their own communities, which generally provide lavish funding for well-tended schools stocked with the latest technology and staffed by experi-

Cities also need to try harder to equalize opportunity within



west Washington each raised more than half a million dollars in 2017, while several schools in southeast Washington don't even have parent-teacher organizations. Last year, for the third time since 1970, the residents of Gwinnett County, Ga., which sits on the edge of Atlanta, refused to fund an expansion of the regional transit system into their subur-

ban county. The consequences of segregation are particularly stark in pub-

Most urban areas are divided into dozens of school districts, each funded primarily by taxes on local real estate. Affluent famllies pay for access to high quality public schools by buying homes in those districts. Cook County, Iii., for example, is divided into over 100 school districts, ranging from the giant Chicago school system to the Sunset Ridge School District, which operates only two schools. Sunset Ridge spends three times as much per student as Chicago, according to the Education Law Center.

Even in the South, where school districts historically have operated at the county level, fragmentation is increasing. In 2018, for example, the North Carolina legislature voted to let four suburbs of Charlotte create charter schools, funded by local property taxes, that could grant priority admission to local students. In October, the overwhelmingly white and affluent residents of the southeastern corner of East Baton Rouge Parish in Louisiana voted to create a new city, St. George, as the first step toward seceding from the parish school system. The parish is 47 percent black; the proposed city, which requires state approval, would be 12 percent black.

The logic of school secession is straightforward. Said the mayor of Gardendale, Ala., which waged an extended campaign to extricate its schools from the district that serves Birmingham and its less white, less affluent suburbs, "It's keeping our tax dollars here with our kids, rather than sharing them with kids all over Jeffer

The success of affluent Ameri-

getting worse bocause Ameri-cans with wealth and power don't want to help Americans without

The necessary corrective is for states to take back some power from local bastions of privilege. Oregon set a valuable precedent last year by banning single-family zoning in all cities of more than 10,000 people. Similar measures have been proposed in other states, including California and Minnesota. Beyond increasing the supply of affordable homes. such measures have the additional benefit of opening opportunities for the construction industry, helping to stimulate activity and preserve jobs during a reces-

sion that will surely hit hard. Federal and state officials also can crack the walls of those bastions by more vigorously enforcing existing laws against racial segregation. Last year, Newsday reported that real estate agents on Long Island routinely steered black customers to black neighborhoods. The paper conducted a matched pairs of customers white and black, to the same agents. That is a well-established procedure for rooting out discrimination in real estate, so perhaps the most startling takeaway from the paper's investigation of New York does not conduct such testing on a regular basis.

The construction of better citles, more fair and more equal, is the work of generations. Tri umphs of egalitarian infrastructure, from the baths of Rome to the subway system of New York, require policymakers to keep their eyes on the horizon. Neighborhoods are made slowly and remade slowly. It can take years to build an apartment building When Minneapolis eliminated single-family zoning last year, officials estimated that it would take decades to see a substantial shift in the composition of the city's neighborhoods.

can make a meaningful differbetween private wealth and the quality of public services. The most viable escape route

In the meantime, governments

within the average school district reduced segregation by less than I percent compared with a simple policy of assigning every student to the closest school.

The racial and economic integration of public education increases the test scores of minorities and lower-income students. and improves their fortunes in later life. Perhaps as important, it inculcates empathy and a sense of community in students from

every walk of life. Shared experience is the foun dation of a successful polity, and it is not a stretch to think that simply educating children in integrated schools would begin to close the divides that have parayzed our politics and made it impossible to address the problems

that are crippling the country. America's cities are being prooundly tested by a pandemic that has caused the deaths of tens of thousands of people and forced the suspension of urban life Even in cities so far spared the worst of the health crisis, the colapse of tax revenue is forcing elected officials to consider draonian cuts in public services. In ream about what might be.

Yet crises can be clarifying, enforcing a focus on what is necesary and what is important.

nequality is an inescapable fact of urban life. The Greek phi opher Plato, prefiguring Dr. King by a few thousand years, wrote in "The Republic" that any city, however small, is in fact divided into two, one the city of the poor, the other of the rich." But the crisis is a reminder that lives depend on one another The rich need labor; the poor need capital. And the city needs both. Reducing segregation requires affluent Americans to share, but not necessarily to sacrifice. Building more diverse neighborhoods, and disconnecting public institutions from pririch the lives of all Americans and make the cities in which they . . live and work a model again for . from poverty is a good education. the world.



A DECLINE OF HOPE

HE life expectancy in most. York, the gap is 21 years. In Chi-American metro areas is cago, it's 14 years. In Los Angearound 80 years. But it var- les, it is 11 years.

David Leonhardt

Marring, The Times's delly nees-soured.

expect to live 10 to 20 years long- of opportunity - often exacerer than lower-income people. Na- bare inequities today. tionwide, the largest gaps are in Over the past 50 years, the av. growing share of jobs, income. Washington, D.C. (27 years). Co-grage income in nearly every wealth, venture-capital funding humbus, Ohio (26 years), and motro area has soared. But the and more.

same people over the course of their lives. Studies that do track the course of people's lives show an even more alarming pattern Many people who grow up in low-

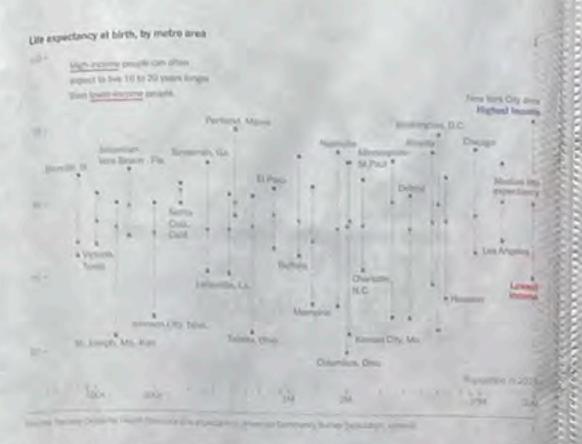
and middle-income families are struggling to climb the income

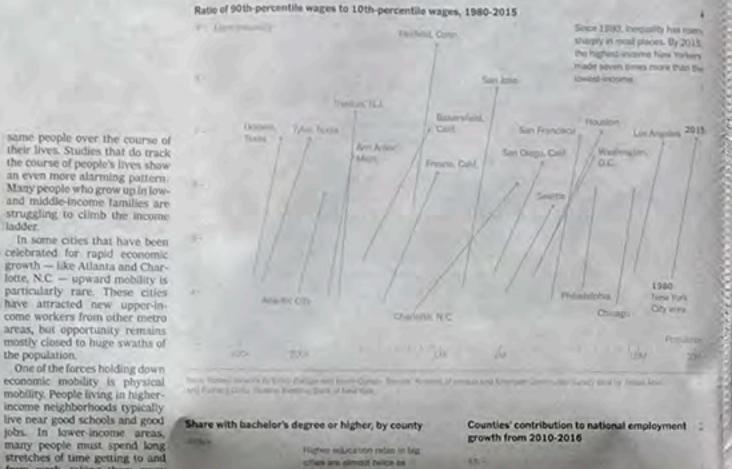
In some cities that have been celebrated for rapid economic growth - like Atlanta and Charlotte, N.C - upward mobility is particularly rare. These cities have attracted new upper-income workers from other metro areas, but opportunity remains mostly closed to huge swaths of

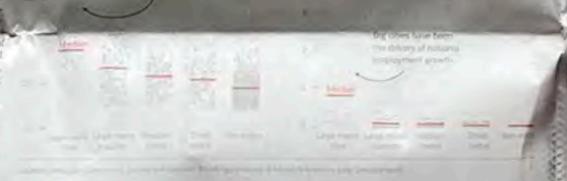
the population. One of the forces holding down economic mobility is physical mobility. People living in higherincome neighborhoods typically jobs. In lower-income areas, many people must spend long stretches of time getting to and from work, taking them away

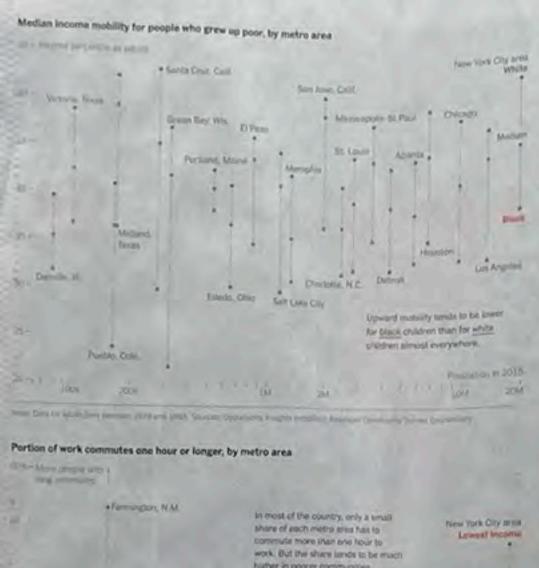
areas account for a large and

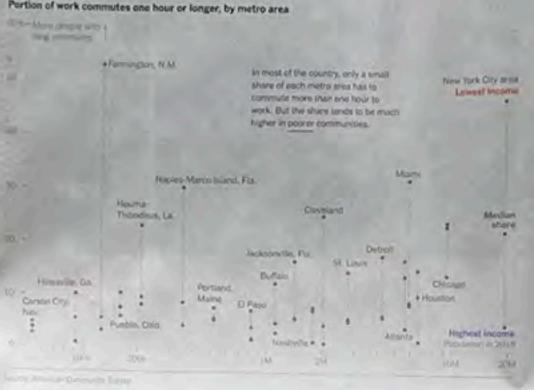
Kansas City; Mo. (23). In New averages don't tell the full story. Cities are still the country's They have risen in part because most economically dynamic incomes for the affluent have places. But they are also a microcosm of the extreme inequality letter Yaryna Serkez a graph And the income numbers are that shapes so much of American snapshots, which don't follow the life in the early 21st century.











Share with broadband access in 2018, by county Venture capital investments in 2019, by state



'ZIP CODE HAS A GRAVITY' BY LORA KELLEY

MERICA'S teachers are on the front lines of connecting young people to opportunity, in the form of learning, employment and emotional and

But teachers too often are working within structural inequalities that impede many students from achieving their potential. These issues begin with poliution and the stresses of poverty and extend to economic segregation and inadequate school funding.

We asked teachers in cities across the country to share the experience of how the neighborhood that children are born into affects their futures. Over 500 teachers wrote in.

All of the teachers we heard from went out of their way to praise the hard work and talents of their students. But each also discussed the challenges that students in low-income schools face that students in wealthy ZIP codes

In their own words, here are seven public-school teachers on the question of how where students are born shapes their lives. All photos were taken by the subjects or people close to them. These accounts, drawn from interviews and submissions, have been edited and condensed.

Lora Kelley is an editorial assistant in the Times Opinion section.



Jay Wamsted High school math,



Maya Brodkey High school English, Oakland, Calif

Paul and present raction still netter- 1 orn a fourth year leacher at a nonturns, true much of my numbered for charter pulses high actual in the Out-

I have laught many children who fought their way through and have gone on to its emerge things. Many wonderful, brilliant kids have come to my school. I have laught many children who have fought their way an issue, Middle-class students and through and gone on to do amazing white students tend to flock to one or things. But those stories happen less two schools. here than they would if these kids lived As a while teacher with a muster's in the wealthy part of town. If you look at all the metrics, like test scores, high school graduation, college graduation, future employment — all of that

just tracks worse for students in my ZIP code. The success stories that get publicized let people hide and say where you're born doesn't matter. But it's not that simple. Against these anecdotes but it operates with something tike to work 40 hours a week to help supgravity it exerts a tremendous pull on port their family.

school need to be seen by the adults in students. But if you shrink class sizes to a more ideal number like 20, teach-

equality, the schools are always going is a testament to how incredible they to struggle. There's no fixing schools are, My students are incredible in the without fixing those issues. This pan- resilience that they show. demic has exposed what I think has always been true. I've never seen it as starkly.

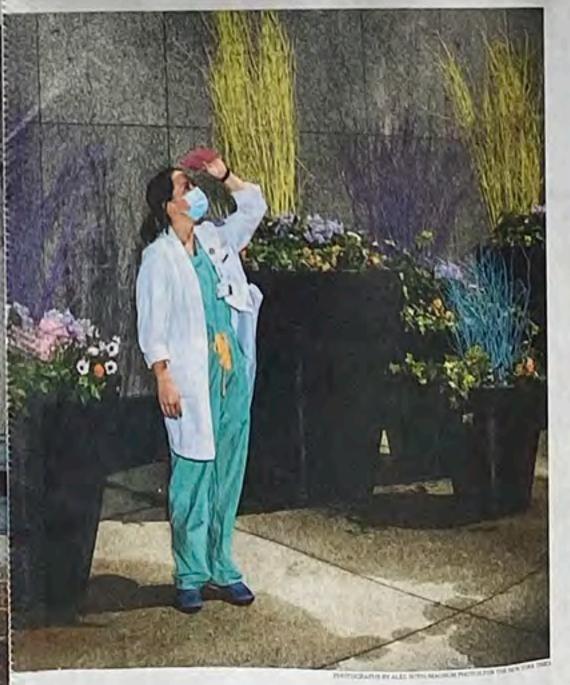
ace and me still drawn along reach. have 100 percent students of color. and 95 percent receive free or re-duced-price kinch.

degree coming from a middle-class background teaching in this neighborhood, I got fed the narrative about teaching that Oh, education is the great equalizer, right? That's the narrative that we have as a society: If you work hard enough and you study in school, you can be successful. And then coming into my school. I'm like, is the aggregate of millions of children Oh, well, that's a lie, right? I have kids - and data says that rich kids tend to who work incredibly hard. And I have stay rich while poor kids tend to stay kids who have the academic potential poor. So ZIP code may not be destiny. It do incredible things, but they have

its children, for good or for ill. Can you Even if my students were geniuses break the pull? Of course! But most receiving a top-notch education, that won't. The rich will stay rich and the doesn't change the fact that they live poor will stay poor ZIP code has a in a two-bedroom apartment with 12 other people; that they hear gunshota The No. 1 thing schools that are every night: that they have a parent in struggling can do is to decrease class jail or ICE detention, that they don't sizes. Kids who are struggling in high have food at home. If students' basic the building. I've laught classes of 42 met at home, how can they succeed academically? We need a stronger soers can know every child better. You cial safety net. We need to eradicate, can know their first names, last or at least alleviate, poverty to give names, how many siblings they have, students like my kids a chance at whether they like the Buils or the Pis- "making it." I think we need to guarantons or whether they were up late tee a right to good, stable housing. working a double shift the night be- My kids aren't starting at the starting line. They're starting from 100 feet Without fixing poverty and unembehind the starting line. And the fact playment and jobs and income in that they make it to the finish line at all







50%

but the screedipity or chance help essential workers and pro-

monutains that the city street that the health of drivers, since

Moco bas already been written apart thould also continue usus

Boston, among each city's most portive web of friendship - that

gracious public spaces. In Paris, cholera epidemics in the ISDOs led

Yet for all the superficial ser-

to the grandest sewer system in Europe - and not incidentally to endipty of social media, for every online happy hour that somehow

avoids being simultaneously bor-

ing and stressful, the public

spaces of the internet are impov-

erished when compared with a

simple sidewalk. Just like Hudson

Yards, our online platforms

mostly give us shiny, narrow sim-

ulations of public life - but only

enough to sustain private profit

And as with any shopping mall,

the shared spaces of virtual life

are accessible only so long as we

support the commerce on which

they are sustained. For online

spaces, the price is almost always

the value of their surveillance of

us. The local controversy around

the Google sibling Sidewalk Labs'

data-driven "city of the future" in

Turonto, which was canceled re-

cently, highlights how queasy we

become when the business of in-

formation, space and citizenship

become more obviously entwined.

and accessibility (and ser-

endipity) has the same effect. The

same small-business owner who

mourns the current demise of foot

traffic also mourns the invisible

algorithms that present content to

those who wander on the screen.

With the death of unexpected dis-

covery comes the death of cre-

ative, and economic, opportunity

in any kind of space. If our newly

strengthened reliance on virtual

spaces, and their ever more inter-

twined relationship to public life,

makes us demand more account-

ability and access online as well,

then the result will also help en-

There will be more predictable

uncertainty to follow for the met-

ropolitan web of physical and dig-

ital space that emerges from our

current crisis - not least from the

to come. For in the end, urban re-

sure our civic health.

Online or offline, a lack of equity

red Frederick Law Olmsted's

fork and the Emerald Necklace in

cholera epidemics in the 1830s led

the grand boulevards and public

tem. In Barcelona the same dis-

case, rampant in cramped, lower-

class neighborhoods, helped cre-

-are the vast, open grid of the city's

extension, or Example, designed

by Ildefons Cerdà in 1859 and fin-

ished in 1897. (At the time, be-

cause of its resemblance to the av-

enues of New York City, it was cri-

Even today, these projects help

embody the idea that the health of

cities is connected to every part of

a complex metabolism - equal

and effective circulation above all.

Yet from Musion Bay in San Fran-

ciges to Hodson Yards in Manhat-

tah, too much urban investment of

tio past decade has focused on

creating or revamping dense,

pentitable urban centers, not on

improving and expanding the

spaces between them. But it is on

these in-between spaces - on our

journey's, not destinations - that

our shared economy most de-

While it pains me to say it as an

urban designer, we often do not

need entirely new ideas to im-

prove our cities. But sometimes, it

appears, we need a crisis. In the

past few weeks, to allow for a

safer, more widespread and not in-

cidentally more equitable access

ing municipal bus travel free, to part of public life.

tiqued as "too American.")

spaces on top of that sewer sys-

igns for Central Park in New

WHY CITIES FAIL

outpost in what is now

Ugarit, a city-state on the coast of technical know-how.

perate letter to his boss, Urtenu.

who lived in the rich metropolis of

Syria, "There is famine," he wrote.

"If you do not quickly arrive here,

A long drought had left the hin-

terlands around Ugarit in a state

of famine, wars were brewing, and

the last years of two wealthy cit-

les, Ugarit and the Greek city-

fore the Greeks invented democ-

racy and the Romans undermined

it with imperialism, these city-states of the Bronze Age infla-enced civilizations in many parts

Annalee Newitz a science

MARKET CONTRACTOR

journalist and contributing Opinion

coming "Four Lost Cities: A Secret History of the Urban Age."

writer, is the author of the forth-

state of Mycenae, that dominated

we ourselves will die of hunger."

BY ANNALEE NEWITZ

down Josephine Quinn, an archaeologist at the University of Their scholarship puts the achievements of the Bronze Age in a new light. The kings of Mycenae and Ugarit worked with the wealthiest merchants to get rich. They consolidated economic and political power to stamp out competition from smaller city-states or independent merchants. Mr. Cline described a letter from an who reported that be didn't have vented by the ruling class.

When their cities were swal lowed by fire, the Bronze Age ruling classes lost everything, including the subjects they once controlled. Greece's population dropped by roughly 50 percent during this time, probably because of a combination of war, drought and migration, according to Sarah Murray, a classics professor at the University of Toronto and the author of "The Collapse of

The merchants of Tyre and Siwith no formal political ties. With the collapse of the old kingdoms, they had the freedom to sail unknown seas. Tyre's traders venrured much farther than the repre sentatives of Ugarit ever had, and settled in the territory that be-

came Spain, Morocco and Tunisia. In other words, the demise of Bronze Age civilization was not an all-out collapse. More accurately cal power in cities. Instead of a rigid, international power structure that controlled the whole eastern

One of the reasons historians ii this transition period a rook lapter in that writing all but disappeared. Ms. Quinn said that may

BOUT 3,190 years ago, a mer-chant in Emar, a trading that gave this period its name. Made with tin from Afghanistan northern Syria, sent a des- and copper from Cyprus, bronze was the ultimate achievement of long-distance trade as well as But the Bronze Age was also a time of extreme inequality. Cities were ruled by wealthy urban aristocrats who controlled trade, relied on various kinds of forced labor, and placed heavy tax burdens there may have been plagues as on their client states and agricul-

More than a thousand years be Ugarit and Mycenae.

Will we face a violent uprising in the wake of economic collapse? Perhaps, but today's 1 percent might not suffer the way Bronze

Age kings did. For one thing, local trade networks are no longer as robust as the ones that existed in 1000 B.C.E., when merchants from Tyre traded with nearby villages, who then traded with other neighboring towns. "We really have demolished local manufacturing and supply systems," Ms. Murray said. "It is a bit sad to reflect on the

contrast between the Bronze Age

to pay any import tax when his boats returned from Crete loaded up with grain, beer and olive oil. Apparently, tax breaks for the rich are one of the oldest tricks ever in-

the outside at Mycenae, so violence must have come from within. Given what's known about these societies, he concludes that the city's lower classes may have gotten fed up and burned it all

the Mycennean Economy." After the uprisings, the Mediterranean was no longer dominated by cities like Ugarit and My cenae. Smaller cities such as Tyre and Sidon, which still stand in Lebanon today, emerged from the Bronze Age unscathed and became centers of culture in the region. It was as if the fall of New York and San Francisco left room for Philadelphia and Oakland to

take up the slack. don thrived in this new world. They were local business owners

Mediterranean, there were local

They used a form of writing that was phonetic, based on sounds rather than logographs like Egyptian hieroglyphs. This script, dubbed Phoenician, was easy to learn and easy to adapt to local languages, and it became the basis for the modern Roman alphabet we use today.

As we live through what could millennium, the people of the nesses are likely to survive." Tyre. Their fancy homes may have

burned down, but they could af-

ford to buy new ones. of the most prosperous kingdoms the kingdoms themselves.
in a thriving economy that grew Until recently, historians

New research has challenged

state protests. The kings of Ugant and Mycenae kept a tight leash on their client states by using written records to track their wealth and

records to track their wealth and levy taxes. Farmers and mer-chants, she said, might have supposed writing things down to revade the kings' control. Writing returned to the region a few centuries after the fall of Ugarit, thanks to traders from Tyre and other independent cities.

bet we use today.

be the first big catactysm of the late Bronze Age have something to teach us. "Invest in the local community, because no matter who is in charge at the top, local said Ms. Quinn. Of course, she added, the ultrarich companies will survive, too. The biggest traders of Ugarit didn't disappear. because they had political connections in the surviving cities like

well. Urtenu may not have realized it, but he was living through Modern cities can learn from the eastern Mediterranean Sea during what historians call the Bronze Ave. from roughly 3000 to

of the world. Homer recorded the myths of the era in "The Iliad" and Historians and archaeologists "The Odyssey." Although the don't know all the reasons these rulers of the Bronze Age somecities collapsed. But there is evitimes went to war, the true source dence that both burned to the of their might was economic power secured through trade. The final decades of Ugarit and Mycenae tell us a lot about why cities too. For centuries after these fail — and what survives amid the events, there are almost no written records. It was as if literacy Ugarit and Mycenae were two and culture evaporated along with

this whole story. Eric Cline, a classicist at George Washington Uni-kings of Ugarit did. One thing reversity and the author of *1177 B.C. The Year Civilization Col- depends on sustainable local net lapsed," explained that there's no works, not tax breaks granted by . evidence of invaders coming from kings.

along coastal trade routes linking blamed this collapse on maraudtoday's Greece, Turkey, Syria, ers known as the Sea People, Sup-Lebanon and Egypt. Their markets sold everything from imported olive oil to local grain, kingdoms of the Mediterranean to while artisans crafted sculptures be menaced by pirates or worse.

case, in which a few elites bore the brunt of the suffering." These days, local traders and small towns rely on international supply chains as much as the mains certain. Our survival still

Tola Atewologun High school economics, Seattle

The come in triaching in a roundshour way I studied public policy and then went to work for the federal government. Eventually I decided to become a feacher. My initial goal was to work at a low-income public school in Seattie, and my limit job was just that, After a year, I was let go, and I was picked us by a high-income public school. I've

It's largely a different job. The way that I teach is different, the questions that I get are different. These two schools are 15 minutes apart. At the low-income school, I had starting who were homeless. There were all sorts of people with made presumous procurements. And desiry with

been tracking there for the past two

fect, was a part of our pion. At the current school, the rate of Which those issues occur is very, very, yeary street, event with value only and low-income. One student had a frame powersation with me, and he said "Mr. Tola, my friend's dad does most of

the stuff for me." Poor people from richer places do better than poor people from poorer places. I think the reason is there are more examples set forth by the commursty at large. If you're a 16-year-old kid in a very difficult circumstance and you go home with your friends, the Ekelhood that they're in a difficult orcurretance is smaller. So you begin to see what a good circumstance looks

If you create economic integration, statorts will see the things that are available, not because I've told them. But because they'll see a dad who lives: in a nice house who has been a carpenter for 30 years and owns his own business, or you'll see someone over There who's an officer in the military slowly taking college classes. Great models of how to succeed in a variety. of ways would be more common, wherein the kids at the low-income school see one way to success; collegs. Everything we promote as college, college, college, And I'm a teacher who thinks this college-orhast mentality is fraught with tremen data risk, especially for the med vulnerable. I focus on trades. Some of these trades have tremendous re-

man and the second second

The spaces that make cities fairer and more resilient.



WHAT HAPPENS IN BETWEEN BY NICHOLAS DE MONCHAUX foundation, and that of the urban renaissance that followed, was the that flowed through, and con-

nected, the city: Four decades and a continent ades, is the ability of physica away, America's latest Gilded Age space to bring many cities togethhas widened divisions in our soci- er, unexpectedly and instrument ety, even as the urban landscape often collapses them into a single gaze. From the needle-thin condolowers of contemporary Manhattan to the needle-strewn gutters of the surface on which all the atoms

prospect of profound inequity: to work often took me walking vides a restaurant owner, some through just such a landscape: nomeless encampments squeezed or a midnight clubgoer the chance to the left of a sidewalk in downtown Oakland, Calif.; shiny, nable result. The equality of ac-shaded-window tech buses idling ceas to a busy city street, comto the right, those in the middle bined with the creativity and skill. N A COLD, dear April 3, 1379, the city the known as first two local circumstances are also as old as urban life itself. Effectively, many cities overlap within a single physical space, offering radically different opportunities of granite and tile spread act of care and repair, new spread act of Far too abundant in today's Ameritocratic mechanism at the ica, such circumstances are also heart of urban life. Over time, citas old as urban life itself. Effec- ics developed streets to hold and

piece projects and large-scale Yet this physical overlap also plans, of course, arrived with the creates the enormous potential 1992 Olympics. But their fluid that our cities have to create opportunity and bring people togeth-er. This power, well understood by welcoming river of public space Barcelona's planners and community organizers as they walked from the shadow of their gray dec

tally. And to begin to create out of

many cities, one. Like a chemical catalyst, the sidewalk and the street edge are San Prancisco's tech-gentrifying of a metropolis come together, re-Tenderloin, it is hand to escape the acting with one another and producing energy. In practical terms, Until recently, my own journey this is because public space proone posting dog-walking services. ust trying to squeeze in between. required to thrive there, is the channel shared infrastructure

> In our current crisis, we see the absence of street life in the devas-

to open space, cities across the world have closed streets to cars and opened them to pedestrian and bicycle traffic Oakland has been a leader, transforming to percent of its streets into public promenades. San Francisco, New York and others have followed. Already in Scattle, there is talk of making such changes permanent. The idea that safe, generous climate crisis that encloses our and accessible common space is current tragedy. Equal, accessible.

fundamental to public life is an es- and resilient public space can prosential American idea - as old as mote civic health during a pana single physical space, offering radically different opportunities

But the equal and accessible public space created by streets is the the Boston Common - but if our demic. Over the long term it will current catastrophe can help re- promote the health, welfare and lic space created by streets is the capture this birthright, it will have equality of our cities for decades most essential infrastructure of served a small purpose. Today, our common space is silience is not purely a physical, more than sidewalks and parks. In social, or economic goal. It is one, these times, cities such as Seattle, like well-made streets and side-Los Angeles and Denyer are mak- walks, that should connect every

tating effect of shelter-in-place or ders on small businesses. But weall feet this loss, with its own deveastation, in the joylessness of life

showperse projects and personnel for the many bewhoever you were, it seems to receive you are the morning head of architecture at the Managertusetts institute of Technology.

St. Louis Whitney Curtis







Atlanta Johnathon Kelso

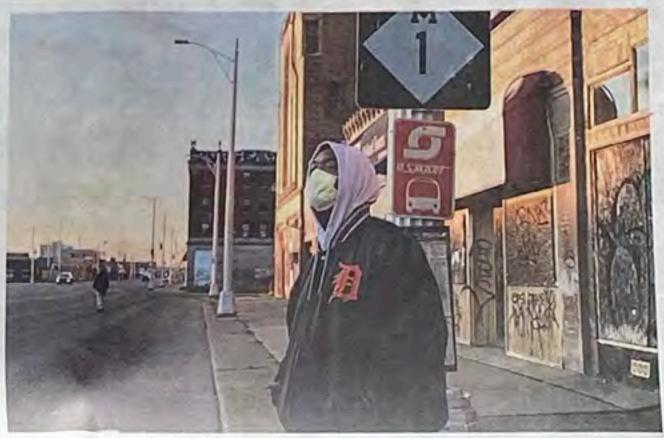






Detroit Brittany Greeson







DENSITY IS A HEALTHY CHOICE BY MARY T. BASSETT

The image of cities as caldone in the interest of contagion is a very old one. In the 19th century, rapid urbanization was accompanied by literal squalor and surged.

Bood news, three most of human. States, over half of the populations of one minor residents are concernated in the less dense, more distributed in the less dense dense by definition, do not inevitably support explosive viral transmission. But the less dense dense by definition, do not inevitably support explosive viral transmission. But the less dense dense by definition, do not inevitably support explosive viral transmission. But the less dense dense by definition, do not inevitably support explosive viral transmission. But the less dense dense by definition, do not inevitably support explosive viral transmission. But the less dense dense by definition, do not inevitably support ex

Why are there so many crowded households in New York, including in its less densely population in the common roots and missions, be
their urban space. Their urban space worker, including in its less densely population in the common roots and missions, be
their urban space. It is no surprise that public limagine a low-wage worker, who holds two jobs to support her require cities — we have also seen small towns ravaged. Rather, cities are many divides of our society. lated neighborhoods? The answer cause the quality and availability to work during this pandemic be-

It's wrong for the 'haves' to seek out remote, isolated housing.

ters and nursing homes can be their urban space

not because of their density. The where the wealthy have sought kinder to the environment. It

is simple: the high cost of housing. public transportation cause her job is "essential," who first stop. It's not that there are too run, society's stability. The way to great care in congregating with works when sick because she has no sick leave. She travels on a crowded bus, putsoff medical care crowded bu and many of them are members of workplaces. then returns to an apartment then returns to an apartment then returns to an apartment crammed with young children and crammed

she fills in on the night shift as an might be best to get far away from tation, building standards, and the those people who endure house introduction of sidewalks and they can build more affordable aide at a pursing home.

This all conspires to make her

This wording and its risks.

It's wording and its risks. This all conspers to the core especially vulnerable to the core especially

walkers and bikers. Above all,

Cities will remain a destination for families wanting a better fu- . .

WHERE

BEGINS

American Cities.

demic to an end.

THE SIDEWALK

"Streets and their sidewalks the main public places of a city - are its most vital organs," wrote Jane Jacobs. the architecture critic and urban theorist, in "The Death and Life of Great

The streets of our cities don't just take us from one place to another; they're where we shop. where we play, where we loiter, and where we'll meet once again as we work to bring this pan-

Even as our public interactions are profoundly limited by social distancing, our sidewalks remain the essential stage of public life. Times Opinion asked photographers in Atlanta, Detroit, St. Louis, San Antonio and Washington to shoot the sidewalks around their communities. (You can see more photos at nytimes.com/americaweneed.) Their photographs show us the landscape of the current crisis, but also, still, the landscape of pictures, we see both home and homelessness, hope and fear, abundant resources and those

Our streets divide our neigh-borhoods, and neighborhoods in America have always been divid-ed by wealth, race and class. Yel

sidewalks, too, connect - a single surface supporting every moment of our shared life in the city. Sidewalks belong to no one; that is another way of saying they belong to all of us.

Connecting the dots between their outbreaks. The virus ap- 2018

But in recent years, U.S. cities could be be be be be be be simple transmission seems to be si you want to live longer and healthier than the average American,
then come to New York City. Mayor Michael Bloomhers

Though the pandemic of the pandemic

or Michael Bioomberg declared.
This advantage continued with his successor, Bill de Blasio.

New York have believe yething we know so far about the coronavirus tells us that about the coronavirus tells us that blaming density for disease is mis-Successor, Bill de Biasio

New York had an average life experanncy that was roughly 2.5 years larger than the nation's in which data are evaluable. This is good news, since most of human. States, over half of the less dense, more distance of the less dense is missing that some 80 years ago established a legacy of racial resistance of the states. Alternated in the less dense is missing that some 80 years ago established a legacy of racial resistance of the states. Alternated in the less dense is missing that some 80 years ago established a legacy of racial resistance of the states. Alternated in the united in New York City track historical redining that some 80 years ago established a legacy of racial resistance of the states. Alternated in the united in New York City track historical redining that some 80 years ago established a legacy of racial resistance of the states. Alternated in the united in New York City track historical redining that some 80 years ago established a legacy of racial resistance. Alternated in the states of the states of the states. Alternated in New York City track historical redining that some 80,000, has among the highest covid-19 to the lightest covid-19 to the population density rates of the states. Alternated in New York City track historical redining that some 80,000, has among the highest covid-19 to the population density of the states. Alternated in New York City track historical redining that some 80,000, has among the highest case rates in the United States of the states and the states of the states of

tionally, 2 percent of people live in

The walkability of urban areas a least two reasons. First, the city' is not to blame for the during this epidemic has proved deadly. Covid-19 has shown how risky crowded settings like home-less shelters, jails, detention cen-less shelters are also a principal during this epidemic has proved deadly. Covid-19 has shown how risky crowded settings like home-less shelters, jails, detention cen-less shelters, jails, detention cen-less shelters are also a principal to use the navirus – with the result that her navirus – with the result that her navirus – with the result that her navirus and destination to the least two reasons. First, covid-19 will be with us for some and the District of Columbia. It has reached all 50 states and the District of Columbia. It has reached the White House It after the lived experience of individuals and how they navigate of the lived experience of individuals and how they navigate of the lived experience of individuals and how they navigate of the lived experience of individuals and how they navigate of the lived experience of individuals and how they navigate of the lived experience of individuals and how they navigate of the lived experience of individuals and how they navigate of the lived experience of individuals and how they navigate of the lived experience of individuals and how they navigate of the lived experience of individuals and how they navigate of the lived experience of individuals and how they navigate of the lived experience of individuals and how they navigate of the lived experience of individuals and how they navigate of the lived experience of individuals and how they navigate of the lived experience of individuals and least two reasons. First, Covid-19 will be with us for some and the District of Columbia. It has reached all 50 states and the District of Columbia and the District of Colum

water was used to fill buby bottles

and sippy cups of unsuspecting Funt kids who just happened to be

born in the wrong city Now we're being ravaged by another pre-

With over 200 deaths, the county

where Flint is has more Covid-19

All of us who live or work in this

beleaguered community know somebady who has died from the

disease caused by the core-navirus There's Wendell Quinn.

the gentle gians of a hospital pub-

he safety officer who always gave

me a warm smile and a nod when I

walked into work; and Ruben

Burks, the dedicated United Auto

Burtley, the first black superin-

tendent of Flint schools; and Kar-

en Desier, the kind and loving cus-

todian at the early child care cen-

ter. And bringing a level of grief

Calvin Munerlyn, a Family Dollar

store security guard and devoted

and killed after telling a shopper

m wear a musk. The epidemic of

gun violence has compounded

At a multigenerational level of

loss, there are the Jones and

Brown families. Within weeks, a

Flirst elementary school principal, Kevelin B. Jones II, lost his father,

Pastor Kevelin B. Jones; his uncle

Freddie Brown Jr.; and his cousin

Freddie Brown III. At the com-

bined burial for her husband and

only child, Sandy Brown waved to

the parade of cars that drove by as

she stood alone next to two freshly

dug graves. Reflecting on the

losses, a church elder, Keimba

Knowlin, spoke on resilience, a

quality that I've long observed

and admired in the people of Flint

"We're going to rise above this

The will to survive and endure

can be the deciding factor be-

tween a child who overcomes adversity and a child who never makes it to adulthood. But how long can we ask people born in the

wrung ZIP code to "rise above" and persevere in circumstances. beyond their control, no matter

how central the idea of overcoming is to our archetypal American

identity? When Hazim Hardeman, a 2019 Rhodes scholar, was asked about his journey from public housing in North Philadelphia he spoke a truth that we all need to

ently accept the status quo. Just as the New Deal sprang from the Great Depression and public

health best practices were born in

response to a previous plague, we

need to embrace the bold innova-

lish policies and practices rooted

in science. And science tells us

that where you live matters. For

children raised in places replete

with the stresses of misfortune,

these adversities rooted in his-

toric and systemic bias are scar-

ring. Just as new Covid-19 cases

can represent a time lag from in-

fection two weeks earlier, adversi-

ties in early childhood play out lat-

er, filling our hospital beds and de-

Addressing the upstream root

teriorating the public's health.

causes is the only answer. This

strengthened and enforced so that

To begin with, we need to estab-

tions that are certain to arise.

and get past this," he said.

tragedy upon tragedy.

lather of six, was recently shot

faralities than 19 states to date.

Babies don't choose where they're born.



DEADLY NEIGHBORHOODS

BY MONA HANNA-ATTISHA

to live almost 20 fewer years than a child born elsebaby like any other, with wide tered by deindustrialization; rac-safety protections, along with eyes, a growing brain and a vast, ist banking and real estate prac- benefits like paid parental and bottomless innocence - too inno- tices; white flight and population sick leave. This means establishcent to understand the injustices loss; austerity cuts to public edu-ing desegregated and well-funded that without her knowing or cation, public health and safety public education, starting with choosing have put her at risk. have the bad luck to be born into of environmental regulations; untethered from employment and

Only a few miles away, in a more- ation. And so much more. affluent community, the average of Covid-19, which disproportionening this gap even further.

geography defines and describes inequities in health, wealth, mobility and longevity. The reasons for this are both visible and hidden. Life in a distressed neighborhood means limited access to health care and healthy food. It means living with violence, racism, poverty and uncertainty. It means bearing the brunt of environmental injustice - not having sale and affordable water, as Flint knows borhood, have a far greater likeli. These big and bold ideas are not too well, or living in the shadow of hood of challenges later in life. new They are proved to improve a polluting factory. More air pollu- From addiction to eviction, these health, quality of life and longevity. disease and reduces student achievement. We are also begin-achievement. We are also begin-level — and make them sick. The we are moving in the same direcning to understand the interplay effects of toxic stress can be as diswith Covid-19 seventy.

Mona Hanna-Attisha is a pedatrician and professor at Michigan State University College of Human Medicine in Flint. She is elso the director of the Pediatric Public Health Initiative and author of What the Eyes Don'l See: A Story M Crisis, Resistance, and Hope in

an American City."

FLINT, MICH. neighborhoods are rarely acciden-BABY born in Flint, where I tal; they are the product of puram a pediatrician, is likely poseful policies and practices that have widened gaps in income and means mandating universal basic opportunity: Over the decades, income and living wages, for a where in the same county. She's a city inhabitants have been but-start, and enhancing health and net programs; the corporate-driv- child care, as a fundamental right. Some of the babies I care for en weakening of unions; dilution Universal health care needs to be neighborhoods where life ex- housing and nutrition insecurity; free of racial disparities. And envipectancy is just over 64 years. and racially driven mass incarcer- roumental regulations need to be

and people of color, are surely wid-Throughout the United States resources and to not expect kids to 'rise above.'

posed to multiple adversities, both rode - can breathe clean air and in their home and in their neigh- drink safe water. pressures change children on a - standards that most developed molecular, cellular and behavioral countries employ. And to ensure ruptive as environmental policio visiveness and tigotry need to be tion on their bodies, increasing treated as the deady, life-thort-These disparities between risk for chronic diseases like ening contagions they traly are. lowering life expectancy. Expo- form the concept of resistance

sure to six or more adverse childfrom an individual trait to one that hood experiences can cut a life describes a community — and soshort by as much as 20 years. ciety — that cares for everyone. The pandemic hot spots in Rather than hoping a child is Michigan follow this pattern: OutMichigan follow this pattern: Outmountable in the insur-Michigan todow das person, the mountable, we must build resiltroubled Flint area has been hardtroubled Flint area hardtroubled Flint area has been hardtroubled Flint area has b

Science tells us that children ex- all children - no matter the ZIP

This is how we begin to transest hit. In Flint, we just marked the turing and just — where all chilest hit. In Flint, we just too dren can thrive. This is where presix in anniversary is a six in a six in

Americas cities could house everyone, if they chose to.



VICTIMS OF INDIFFERENCE BY BINYAMIN APPELBAUM

ONIGHT, more than half a and nonrecurring. The cure for nillion Americans will sleep homelessness is housing, and, as in public places because it happens, the money is availthey lack private spaces. They will huddle in crowded New in annual federal subsidies from York City shelters, or pitch tents rich homeowners to people who under highways in Washington, D.C., or curl up in the doorways of San Francisco office towers, or dig holes in the high desert of northern Los Angeles County. They are homeless, and their adults and children in the wealthilives are falling apart. They strug- est nation on earth cannot afford a

gle to stay healthy, to hold jobs, to place to live. Government propreserve personal relationships, to maintain a sense of hope. They are victims of America's reached \$12 billion a year, accordwealth - and its indifference Homelessness in the United at the University of Pennsylvania States is the most extreme manifestation of a broader housing cri-Rather than provide housing for sis. Even in the fat years before the homeless, cities offer showers,

Americans struggled to pay the avert our eyes from the people rent, particularly in prospering who sleep where we walk. We The federal government could render homelessness rare, brief will die on the streets.

Binyamin Appelbaum a a

grams focus on palliative care Annual spending on shelters has ing to Dennis Culhane, a professor and an expert on homelessness.

the coronavirus plunged the econ- day care centers and bag checks. omy into recession, millions of Collectively, we are choosing to have decided to live with the fact that some of our fellow Americans

able: Congress could shift billions

Instead, Americans have taken

to treating homelessness as a sad

fact of life, as if it were perfectly

normal that many thousands of

don't have homes.

"There's a cruelty here that I don't think I've seen," Leilani Farha, then the United Nations special rapporteur on adequate

countries that, unlike the United ies.

pared conditions there to those in Angeles and other American cit- that New York faces a *mass in-

Tve never seen anything like Americans have filed for unem-land by done outcome have filed for unem-It, and I've done outreach on every ployment benefits in the last two lessness in America. Instead, in less population to continent," Dame Louise Casey, months, almost 40 percent of recent decades, wealth and home less population is concentrated in New York, the city who directed homeless policy for workers in households making lessness have both increased a local dornia and a few several British prime ministers. several British prime ministers, less than \$40,000 a year have lost stark illustration of the inequal-

crease" in homelessness.

personal tragedies, the result of States, lack the money to care for And homelessness is poised to In the decades after World War first law of money to care for their citizens. increase. More than 36 million II, some experts predicted that homelessness to bomelessness to homelessness, too: Location, loca-

paid professionals have flocked to a month affordable to a family livthose places, driving up housing ing at the poverty line. prices. And crucially, those cities and their suburbs have made it enough housing to keep up.

\$600 is the most a family living at the poverty line can afford to pay in monthly rent while still having enough money for food, health care and other needs. From 1990 to 2017, the number of housing units available below that price shrank by four million.

Most hard-pressed people manage to stave off homelessness. While there are roughly 80,000 homeless people in New York on any given night, more than 800,000 New Yorkers - more than 10 times as many people are scraping by, spending more than half their income on rent

Those who do end up homeless burdens. They are disproportionately graduates of foster care or the prison system; victims of domestic abuse or discrimination; veterans; and people with mental and physical disabilities. Some end up on the street because of addictions; some develop addictions because they are on the street. Whatever problems they face, however, they are much more places without enough affordable housing. According to one analysis, a \$100 increase in the average is associated with a 15 percent increase in homelessness.

Consider a simple comparison In 2018, eight out of every 10,000 The government provides up to Michigan residents were homeless. In California, it was 33 per just a little help, for example to 10,000. In New York, it was 46 per pay a security deposit. For those

lessness with greater success erans whose economic problems than the United States, including are compounded by other issues, Finland and Japan, begin by treat-ing housing as a human right. In abuse, the government provides

prosperity. Well-educated, well- several times more than the \$600

Proposals for a big increase in affordable housing construction inevitably call to mind the troubled public housing projects of the mid-20th century. They offer one clear lesson: Avoid housing that housing as part of mixed-income developments and to spread the not just in cities but also in the surland, a city of just 600,000 people, income housing a year. That's a

lessness. Fortunately, we already know how to do that. Over the last decade, the federal government duced the number of homeless veterans by 50 percent - from

As Ben Carson, secretary of housing and urban development, monthly rent in a large metro area ness is not an intractable problem

Countries confronting home- are housing vouchers. And for vet-

success shows "that homeless-The program uses a triage approach, calibrating aid to need.

The cure for homelessness is housing, and, as it happens, the money is available.

liticians decry the problem but live plus counseling and care: York lass December 'to end long- then intervening intermittently. orm street homelessness as we. One study found that in the two!

what is necessary to end homelessness - is an important first step for New York and for other places that are failing this basic

test of civic responsibility. The next step is simple but expensive. The federal government which encompasses Seattle, already provides housing vouch- would need to increase annual ers to help some lower-income spending on homelessness to families. The families pay 30 per-roughly \$410 million from \$196 cent of their monthly income toward rent; the government pays 22,000 homeless families, accordthe rest. But instead of giving ing to a study by McKinsey. That's vouchers to every needy family, the government imposes an arbitrary cap on program spending. Three in four eligible families

don't get vouchers. gible households would cost another \$41 billion a year, the Congressional Budget Office estimated in 2015. Where to get the money? Well, the government annually provides more than \$70 biilion in tax breaks to homeowners, including a deduction for mortgage interest payments and a free ness instead of subsidizing man-

Vouchers alone, however, won't be enough. We also need more af-

Without a significant expansion in the supply of housing, adding vouchers would be like adding players to a game of musical chairs without increasing the

number of chairs. Market-rate construction can help: More housing would slow tory, the nation now faces a greatthe upward march of housing prices. New York and San Francisco are the nation's most tightly regulated markets for housing construction, and it is not a coincidence that they also are the as an international model for its mentary school students spend ! cent years, while New York's prices in Tokyo held steady as

New York prices soared desperately, construction will require significant public subsidies : land, tax credits, direct governstory apartment building that meets minimum standards costs an average of \$425,000 per unit, according to researchers at the the city's largest. University of California, Berkeley.

the United States, by contrast, po- "supportive housing" - a place to aim for more modest goals. Mayor This is cheaper than leaving Bill de Blasio's promise to New people to remain homeless and

most homeless people in the city
live in shelters, not on the street.
Reframing the debate — asking that is necessary to and have psychiatric hospitals and four fewer days in prison.

Extending this approach to the entire homeless population would be expensive. To take one example, Washington's King County, million to help each of the county's about \$19,000 per family.

For King County, that's a lot of money - about 5 percent of its annual budget. For the federal government, it's a rounding error. The program costs about \$19 Even if the cost per person were billion a year. Vouchers for all eliless population could be housed for \$10 billion a year - less than

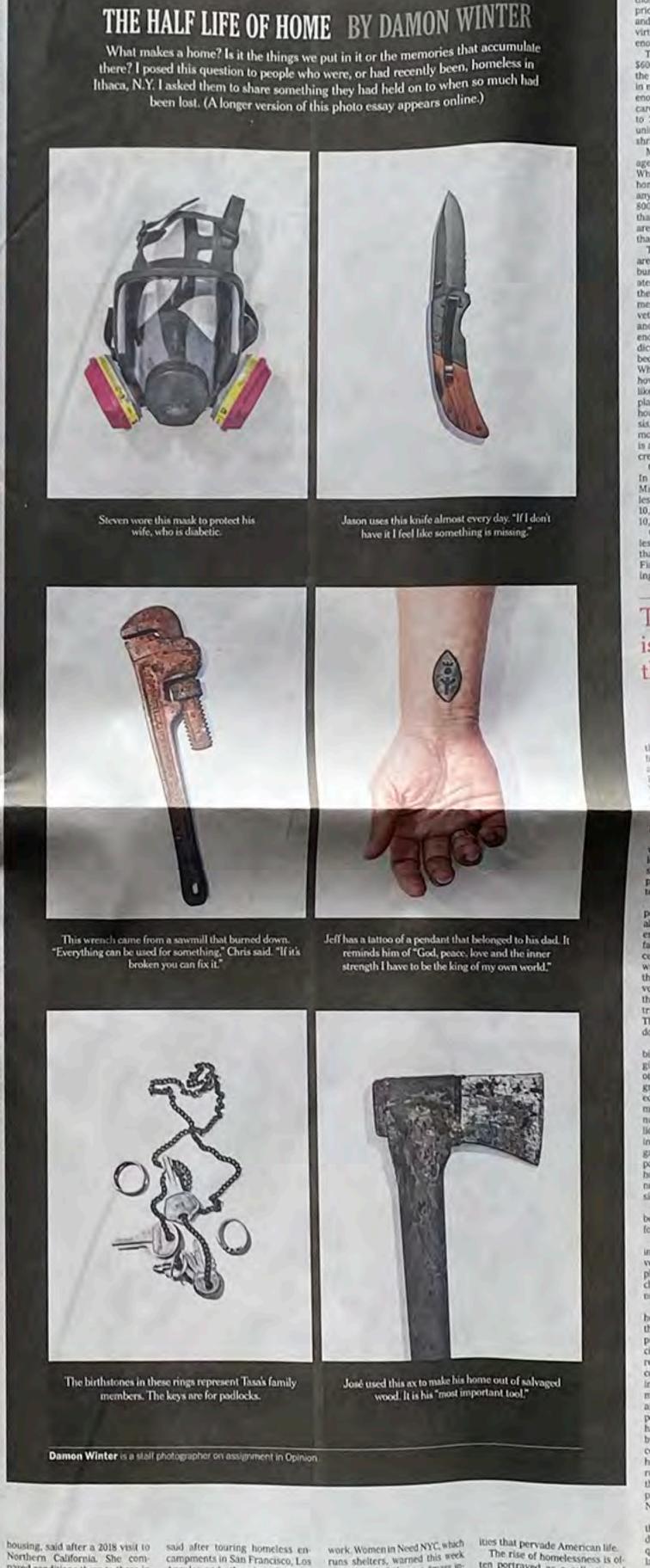
the price of one aircraft carrier The coronavirus pandemic has prompted a surge in spending on : elessness, thanks in part to \$4 = billion in emergency federal funding. Cities have converted convention centers into shelters and pass on some capital gains from rented out hotel rooms to house home sales. Let's end homeless- the homeless. In Seartle, the city accelerated construction of a project to provide "tiny houses"

for some homeless people. But there is worse to come. Homelessness rises during recessions, the federal funding is temporary and state and local governments face huge drops in tax reve-

Having falled to address home- = lessness during the longest economic expansion in American hiser challenge under more difficult : circumstances. Yet the imperative : remains: Everyone needs a home. No one should be left to die on the

Americans must decide most expensive. Tokyo, often cited whether we are willing to let elepermissive development policies, nights in guarded parking lots, has expanded its supply of homes like ones I saw proliferating by roughly 2 percent a year in re- across the Western United States. We must decide whether it's housing supply has expanded by worth spending just a little of this a roughly 0.5 percent a year. Over nation's vast wealth to ensure that the past two decades, housing no 60-year-old woman needs to sleep on the same bench in downtown Santa Monica, night after But in the parts of the country night, because, as she explained to that need affordable housing most me, it's relatively flat and easy for the police to see her from their cars. We must decide whether it's tolerable for people to live in tents ment spending. In California, for on the scraps of green space along example, construction of a five- a highway in Washington, D.C., just a short walk from the block where the richest man in America combined two mansions to create

Addressing homelessness is a Without public aid, the apart- within our power The question is .





High school science,

The ZIP code I teach in is 10453, in the Bronx. It's one of the ZIP codes that has been really hard hit by Covid-19. Many of my students are considered essential workers. Whether it's fast food, whether it's Starbucks, many of my students work in retail service jobs. so they cannot stay home. When students have their bosses calling them in for eight-hour shifts, and if they don't go in, they're fired, romote loarning is really hard for them. They are contributing as breadwinners to their households. Many of their parents work in hospitals and don't really have. the option of working from home, es-

Many of my students are struggling with Covid-19. I don't think any of the some have become very, very sick. They've lost family members. As a teacher, it is really hard for me to keep on rolling when I realize that my students have so many other concernstances that they're dealing with 1 feet they are dealing with 1 feet the and of suburtan students and pur-

The Brots has the highest rates of asthma in the entire country. And asthma often means that students miss school because they get sick with seasonal respiratory dinesses, or a cold might mean that they get a lot sicker. That's not anything that's their fault. It's just the ZIP code.

If I could wave a magic wand, I would make internet access evallable to all of my students. I also really wish the schools my students attend had less teacher turnover. Students have told me that a lot of teachers who work in the Bronx tend to leave. I feel like the stability of having a group of adults. whom they can trust to kind of guide them through the four years is important. I have been teaching in the Bronz.

for most of my 12-year career. Teachers, students and parents try their hardest in the Bronx. In fact, I'd wager to say that students here try harder than the average suburban stu dent. But there are so many students who get bogged down by homelessness, poverty, domestic violence and other issues in their immediate environment. My students work very, very the counter to know.



WHERE WE MEET BY MIN JIN LEE

between the front door and the this. entryway, which was sealed off "Hello," I said in Korean, trying with heavy plastic. No one could to sound cheerful. get inside. In that plastic sheeting in place of an interior door, ing. there was a cutout portal, the size fining room was dark, the only ingoutside light coming from the kitchen. In no time, a petite Korean of the restaurant and glanced woman approached the desk, east. Less than a block away, which served as the counter on Mimi Fong's family had a wonher side of the plastic Even be derful restaurant, which is now hind the mask, I could make out her pretty oval face, the small chin Gray T-shirt, black pants,

She brightened, her eyes smil-

"How can I help you?"

I ordered two jajangmyeon.

"Ten minutes," she said, point-

Arms folded, I waited in front

Mimi and I lived in Elmhurst,

ementary and middle schools,

and our fathers had small busi-

Queens, and went to the same eleaster for me to go to 32nd Street

closed at 7, and on Saturday they neso black bean sauce noo- When I got to the restaurant, I Min Jin Lee is the author of the closed at 3. To give our mom a dies, in plenty of places. Queens kept on my mask, disposable novels Fron Food for Mill or and break, my two sisters and I took turns working on Saturdays and has a strong jajangmycon game, gloves and baseball hat. I stood and "Pachinko" school holidays. Sometimes, Mimi was helping out her father, sales. Mimi would be perched on her for pocket money, I sold ciothing

bles were wiped clean, someone dred bucks.

there, from behind the counter, I her.

when I was working and knew. We couldn't afford to lose their

I went to college at Yale, and stool by the cash register. If he at Ann Taylor on Chapel Street in wasn't busy, Mr. Fong would step New Haven. One Saturday, a out of his kitchen, the size of a beautiful woman and her daugh-New York City closes, and ask ter came in for cocksail dresses. Mimi in Cantonese if I'd like They threw heaps of clothes at something to eat. Sometimes her me, and I arranged them in the sisters would be bustling around, dressing room. That month, the and I knew from watching them sales manager was holding a that if the napkins were folded, contest - the best-selling associthe fortune cookies and sauce ate would get a cash prize on top packets were stocked away of commissions. I wanted to earn nearly, the tea was hot, and the ta-that money. Maybe it was a hun-

in the family had done all that
The mother and daughter ig Two blocks west and two visible, trying only to anticipate blocks south from where I was what needed to be done. The waiting for my Jajangmyeon or- daughter chose two velvet der was my parents' store. It was dresses that looked elegant on

Tearned that a supply chain isn't My residential college, Trum-

There's a Korean phrase that means, I see you're making an effort. I admire your labor.

supplier who had a brass jewelry business in Thailand, would stop formal?" I asked. by A kind man with a sunny smile, he'd lay out his sample looked surprised. merchandise across the display case. The landlord, Mr. Justin, would pick up his rent check each month. He and Dad got along out the dressing room. fine. The U.P.S. man would come daily to drop off and pick up pack-

If I sold a street peddler six pairs of gold-filled earrings at \$1.50 a pair, I'd ring up \$9 on the register. The manufacturer of the earrings charged my dad maybe \$1.15 for the pair, which would mean that \$2.10 was profit, and even as a kid in middle school, I understood what that money

From that profit and whatever the rest of the month, my folks had to clear enough money to pay rent for the store and our apartment, the salary of their employee Mr. Shim, who was also given breakfast and lunch; utilities, business insurance, taxes, food, clothing; and health insurance. ty sisters and I were always

ing things - coats, sneak-We didn't go on vacations. If are businesses, and in each one, my parents closed the store, then there is a counter, and that's where you and I meet.

I hope when we can take off our stations — would go elsewhere. I need you.

an abstract concept; a real per- bull, was about to host its "Trumball," so I figured she was going Sometimes Harry, my dad's to her residential college's party.

> The mother and daughter "Do you go to Yale?" the mother asked.

I nodded, then turned to clean When I rang up the sale, they at their coldness. I felt sorry for them. I could have let on earlier.

The Korean woman in the apron handed me the paper bag and stepped back. We bowed to each other, the way we might have at a Korean

"Su go ha se yo," I said, which translates to "Keep up your hard work," but that isn't it exactly. The phrase is a kindness, meaning, I recognize you're making an effort, and I encourage you to bear up, and it also means, I admire your labor

My city is five boroughs, and each borough has many neighborhoods, and each neighbor hood is made up of numerous

Why it's better to have more

neighbors.

nore the impulse to blame density for the spread of the coronavirus and instead use this opportunity to rethink the policies that impede the construction of new housing. at more price levels, in the places

where housing is most needed. from having spent my career on the front lines of this "density" battle. As a young city planner, I wrote one of the first inclusionary zoning ordinances in the exclusionary city of Santa Barbara, Calif : I almost got run out of town for proposing a "density bonus" program that would make it finanprovide a portion of their units for people with low incomes. Later, as a nonprofit housing developer nities. I spent many nights to get apartment buildings for proved. Underlying the "density" battle was almost always a battle over who has access to the opportunities of a place, cloaked in arguments about neighborhood char acter and traffic impacts.

Yet this pandemic is reminding us that we need communities where teachers, child- and eldercare workers, nurses, doctors, janitors, construction workers, baristas, tech executives and engineers all share in the prosperity and the comfort of an affordable home. Certainly, the first focus should be on emergency funding to help families pay their bills and stay affoat. But we also need to plan now for the recovery, to ensure that it is broadly shared.

An important step is simply to permit more housing in more locations. We should put an end to zoning policies that restrict building to single-family homes and stop mandating that lots meet large minimum-size requirements leading to sprawling, sparsely populated neighborhoods. Rather, we should encourage cities to permit more homes on existing single-family lots, allow apartments in retail districts and near transit and dedicate excess or underused public property like surface park ing lots in downtowns to new housing. All of this can be done without materially changing the look, feel and experience of a

The second important step is to reduce the cost and uncertainty of getting a housing project built. It often takes years to get permission to build. Local government processes often allow multiple bites at the apple" of public comment and hearings for a plan. Sometimes, even when there is a vote to approve a project, a neighpor or special interest can sue to stop the approval, resulting in fur-

ther significant delay. These delays add cost and risk, driving up the price of new homes and sometimes stopping projects in their tracks entirely

Some cities are already making positive moves. Portland, Ore., and Vancouver, British Columbia, led the way on allowing small cottages in the yards of single-family homes. California has followed suit, adding homes by letting homeowners build accessory dwelling units. Los Angeles developed a Transit Oriented Communities plan that reduced parking requirements, leading to over 20,000 new apartments, 21 percent of them affordable housing. State and local governments should continue to press forward with such practices, and the federal government should tie resources such as infrastructure funding to these types of actions. (To be clear, public subsidies will still be needed to solve homelessness and house the most vulnera-

ble among us.) These types of actions, which can be taken now, will lay the groundwork for a broad and shared prosperity. When denser housing is allowed, workers can live closer to their jobs, help save



MORE HOMES FOR MORE PEOPLE BY CAROL GALANTE

ery will start in and be gions. Further, high housing costs strongest in the same cities that impeded lower-income workers were thriving before the pan- from migrating in to take advandemic. Economies in places like tage of job opportunities. Seattle, San Francisco, New York The last time we faced a huge and Boston are driven by the inno-need for homes was in the immevation, technology and biotech diate post-World War II era. The sectors, which are proving to be federal government kept housing remarkably resilient to the im- affordable and facilitated opportupacts of Covid-19. Some of the nity by spurring the construction dominant companies in these re- of a large number of homes gions - think Amazon and Google through programs administered - are even humming along by the Veterans Administration through it all and consolidating and the Federal Housing Adminismarket share.

The question is, can this next restrategy, as Ta-Nehisi Coates and the planet by driving less and pay covery stimulate an economy that Richard Rothstein have written, is less in rent or mortgage payments creates opportunity for those with that this era of development was because a bigger housing supply the lowest incomes and enables shaped by discriminatory policies will lead to lower costs. Research wealth building for all? Or will it, including government redlining, shows that children tend to be of the Great Recession, serve only of the Great Recession, serve only of the Great Recession, serve only of the Great Recession in the Gr to concentrate gains in the hands of a few? At least part of the answer depends on whether we build enough housing to give an affordable toehold to those who want access to the opportunities these places offer. The key to do-American families from improv ing their lots in life.

Before the pandemic, these same cities and regions were already facing a crisis of crushing housing-costs brought about by decades of underbuilding. The lack of affordable and available housing even as jobs boomed meant that higher-income entrants to the market outbid everyone else for the limited options, exple to commute by car, sometimes is hit hard during recessions, and acerbating inequality. In the San two hours each way, while spew-opening up more building oppor-Francisco area, for example, only ing carbon emissions. And the tunities would be a stimulus for one new home was built for every 4.3 jobs created from 2011 to 2017. This underbuilding created unten-

Carol Galante is a professor and faculty director of the Terner Cen-University of California Berkeley.

HERE are two things we service and essential workers, know: The U.S. economy some of whom were compelled to will recover. And the recov- relocate to less productive re-

tration. The problem with that

Restrictive zoning blocks less-affluent families from the loosening restrictive zoning that opportunities that cities offer. Opportunities that cities offer.

regated communities with un- schools. In restricting building, equal access to opportunity. more-affluent Americans are cost of this prior building boom. from economic opportunity. Single-family-home subdivisions

to maintain our sprawling neigh- nities need. It would be a win for . borhoods designed to foster exclu- everyone.

Racial inequality isn't the only shutting lower-income families off Now is an especially good time are contributing to an envi- to reduce restrictions and allow ronmental disaster, requiring peofor denser housing. Construction dominance of single-family devel- the industry, and it doesn't require opment has only increased in re- any extra funding. This would get able and unjust rent burdens on homes accounted for nearly 80 safe and affordable living for percent of the housing added in those hard hit by this pandemic the largest metro areas since 1990. and get property taxes and other The further threat is that the revenue flowing back to local govpandemic becomes a rallying cry ernments for the services commi







Kinyette Henderson Middle school English, Newark

I returned to work at the middle school I went to.

I'm going into my fifth year teaching seventh-grade English and language arts at a charter school in Newark. In terms of demographics, I teach 100 percent students of color. Eighty-five percent of our students get free or reduced-price lunch. Those are pretty typical demographics for the inner

There's just a connection I have with kids teaching in a classroom where I also had seventh-grade classes. A lot of kids find it interesting that I went there. It's another level of support and

For my students, it's really hard to see people who come from neighborhoods that look like theirs doing different things, or having a career, or having gone to college or different things. The that, But with me, they're shie to

grew up in the same area as them. It makes it a lot more immediate.

Students from low-income areas don't have the same ability to see and experience the same vision of life as their richer neighbors. I could be a really, really, really smart kid, but I may still lack certain opportunities that my white counterparts may have been afforded because of their neighborhood. If I grew up where my neighbor was the C.E.O. of a company, that may give me more access to something that's not necessarily fied to my academic sbil-

A lot of people have the goal, especially if they live in the inner city, to be successful so that they can get out. A lot of people don't think about the secand part of that, which is if everybody just leaves, the place doesn't get any

The opportunities I have had absolutely went beyond the opportunities that my parents got. And what I can say is that none of that was easy. I've learned so much on my journey since leaving Newark. I have to now bring



SAN FRANCISCO'S MOMENT OF TRUTH BY FARHAD MANJOO

shops and animal shelters say they've been inundated with deand full of people, the air clean, the work. cavernous office buildings empty turned into carefree pedestrian plazas, you'd be forgiven for mis-

NE sun-drenched afternoon stretch of marsh that Google has Villa, one of the area's few remain-picture of steady leadership. last month, I took a long leased from NASA to build a moning mobile-home parks. It was solo bike ride through the umental new campus. It looks like built in the 1960s as an affordable San Francisco Bay Area I a collection of lunar bases made retirement community. In Janurode from my home to Mountain out of origami. Construction has any, its residents, who rent the Farhad Manjoo is an Opinion View, near the once-desolate been paused under lockdown, and space on which their mobile columnist.

on the fetid plains surrounding the

million-square-foot project, birds

sang and wildflowers painted the

horizon, and the trails that run be-

side the site were packed to so-

cially distant capacity with

masked families on foot and

Bicycles and pets, not sirens

and fridge-truck morgues, have

become the unlikely icons of the

pandemic in the Bay Area. Bike

nomes stand, petitioned the City. Council to include trailer parks in Mountain View's rent-control

They're worried that wealthy Googlers looking for a kitschy pled-4-terre near the new campus will push them out. The anger has been rising. Last year, the same City Council prohibited RVs and trailers - many of them used as street; a petition to overturn the RV ban will be on the ballot in No-

But as I rode past Santiago Villa, that rancor felt like a remnant of the Belore Time, Everything was quiet. Then, from one of the trailers, a jolly trumpet began blowing loudly and out of tune. It was then that I first had the

ghoulish idea: Could the corpnavirus have an upside, at least in this one place? What if the pair demic and its aftermath lead Googlers and trailer park residents to find common cause? What if, after the virus, the Bay Area's wealthy gained a new appreciation for those who live on its edges, and finally made room for them in this digital wooderland?

I have lived in the Bay Area for almost 20 years, and for most of that time I've felt this place creaking steadily into uninhabitability for all but the wealthiest few. We have one of the world's highest concentrations of billionaires, and yet we have not been able to marthal our immense wealth and ingenuity against our most blatant and glaring challenges - including the lack of affordable housing and entrenched homelessness. But in this crisis, the Bay Area's response was an unexpected success. And that has given a lot of people, including me, new hope about what's possible. Yes, it

The first big moment came on March 16, when the six counties around the San Francisco Bay ordered the first shelter-in-place rules in the United States. Google, Apple, Facebook and other large imployers ordered all of their employees to work from home. prompting many other local businesses to close up shop. And the tech giants set an important example - they made a commitment to keep paying their on-site service workers, even if they mand. With the streets free of cars could no longer come on-site to

sounds hokey, but this might be a

time for hokeyness.

San Francisco, Oakland and and their endless parking lots San Jose secured thousands of hotel rooms for homeless people, away from the streets and the risk

take all of us," Breed told the city finte in March. "This is going to Lake all of us coming together and sacrificing so that we get through

And it worked. Thanks to some combination of early action, col-Partive adherence to public health help the vulnerable and perhaps Just blind luck, mass death missed than 30 people had died of Covid-19 in San Francisco; in the greater Bay Area, deaths stand

The toll is probably an under-"count, and blacks and Latines are deproportionately represented in The Still, compared with the toll in many American metropolitan areas, this ranks as a near miracle. San Francisco's death rate of four (per 100,000 residents is one-fourth "the rate in Los Angeles, a fraction of the national average, and nowhere near New York's. In the absence of mass death,

people around here have had time and psychic space to imagine langer-term possibilities. If we seould band together so quickly to beat the virus, making so many big changes so seamlessly, what else are we capable of doing? I was not alone in my Vague sense of optimism.

In an article on his company's website that went viral among techies last month, the venture capitalist Marc Andreessen characterized the pandemic as a call to arms to rebuild American Institutions, including our cities. Like others in Silicon Valley, Andreessen has often been skeptical of government and its champions, but now here he was, cheering them on: "Demonstrate that the public sector can build better hospitals, better schools, better transportation, better cities, better housing," he wrote. "Stop trying to

the irrelevant, commit the public sector fully to the future." I heard a similar urgency for grand reform from nearly every Bay Area official, activist and resident I spoke to - even those who had clashed with the tech industry or those whose fights earlier

streets for pedestrians and moved

protect the old, the entrenched,

pandemic offer the city long-term leaves. "Ido not want, at the end of the health emergency, to turn homeless people back out onto the streets," she said.

In April, Ro Khanna, who repre
able to public officials for each exception and contracts of the street, and reality in said the federal government, or things — money, willpower, staffing and basic municipal cannot be staffing and basic municipal cannot want we allow the federal government, or things — money, willpower, staffing and basic municipal cannot want we allow the federal government, or things — money, willpower, staffing and basic municipal cannot want we allow the federal government, or things were but as the immediate danger of the pandemic recedes, it will be all too easy for many of us to do exactly that.

This fight hinges on the usual person off the street, and reality."

This fight hinges on the usual person of the street, and reality."

In April, Ro Khanna, who repre-

When I despaired about our have sents parts of Silicon Valley in the poral failures. I found myself tun- House, introduced legislation to ring in to hear the plain-spoken ex- provide greater pay, health care hortations of San Francisco's may and labor protections to workers see London Breed. "This is going to deemed "essential" during the pandemic. "When we talk about who are the 'essential workers,' very few people are saying it's lawyers or middle or senior management," he said. "They're saying, we want the person who's delivering our groceries, the person who's keeping the internet open,

"guidelines, a remorried effort to the electricity flowing, or the person who's taking care of our kids." In a similar way, the crisis illusthe Bay. By the start of May, fewer trated the importance of keeping everyone healthy - even people. who lack a place to live. During a pandemic, the presence of homeless people on the streets created a risk for everyone else in the ciry "What this has shown us all is that. everyone's health is intertwined," said Abigail Stewart-Kahn, direcfor of the San Francisco Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing

These were all officials and experts - people who might be biased toward finding "silver linings" in any crisis. But was anything really changing for homeless people around the Bay Area? I contacted several homeless peo ple who have been placed in hotels during the pandemic. They spoke rapturously about their sudden fortune in an otherwise grim time.

"Oh my God - I can really breathe and be myself." That was the reaction from a 33-year-old woman who had been living in a hotel for weeks with her 12-year son. She asked me not to use he name. Before the virus, they had spent years bouncing from couch to couch around the Bay. Under many ways, freer than before. For the first time in years, she no longer felt that crushing dependence on other people. "I can move as the adult I am, and no one dictates what I do or how I move," she told

and a private bathroom. It was move people into hotels, there are tent we have restored faith in against the more needy "I think starting to feel like a kind of home, still thousands of homeless people she told me. "I only wish we could on the Bay Area's streets, and little have a deep fryer" It is guaranteed only for three months, but she has begun to see the possibil- spiring leadership began to fall my way to my place."

dragged on, San Francisco began homeless people the city could no the city's capacity. Annoyed even harder to break my heart again. While the house. Libby Schaaf, the mayor of Oak-number of coronavirus cases and The board passed an ordinance homeless people could be taken can do? The further we move from techno-optimism. deaths remained low, the full to secure 7,000 hotel rooms for off the streets if only she had the the initial crisis, the crazier my hundreds of homeless people into gan to descend into view, and with the street, but the mayor refused pen is that despite the region's appar- its limit already. So far, San Fran- part of the cost of housing the further.

The hotel room has two beds

Even after the huge effort to spired unity may be. To the expandemic might pit the less needy prospect that many will be housed anytime soon. My hopes for in- the Board of Supervisors, told me. can't pay my rent. I can barely eat.

ephemeral our coronavirus-in- gether, she suggested that the derscored, sadly, our city's limita- minute - I lost my job where I tions," Matt Haney, a member of was making minimum wage. I

that she agreed with them — more

When I asked the mayor about Where's my help from the city?1 "

home prices remain high, and ousing slips further out of reach or everyone else. "Those who are loused are fully aware that they're one thread away from losing that housing," Rushel said.

San Francisco and other Bay Area cities have imposed temporary moratoriums on evictions aused by virus-related economic disruptions. But those will expire later in the year, at which time a wave of tenants may be kicked out of their homes unless they can pay months of back rent. At the same time, the virus has given more political ammo to those NIMBYs who have long opposed urban density and blocked the construc-

tion of more housing. All is not lost. I do feel a renewed sense of pride and possibility about the Bay Area - the way our leaders responded to the virus did strengthen my faith in our local institutions, and we certainly seem better equipped to address long-term challenges than I once

thought we were. There might still be a window for substantive action: Our local governments can use the new leverage to push for bold ideas among other policies, a plan for rent relief, rather than simply an eviction moratorium, so that more

people don't lose their housing. I'm also waiting on the city's bilionaires to open up new floodgates of generosity, at least for mitigating the immediate pain of the crisis. Jack Dorsey, the chief executive of Twitter and Square, recently pledged \$1 billion to coro-navirus relief; but of the nearly 100 billionaires reportedly living in the Bay Area, only a handful have donated to the city's coronavirus relief fund. Mary Kate Bacalao, the director of external affairs at Compass Family Services, a nonprofit group that helps with a few big checks, the Bay's

But I wouldn't be surprised if what is possible, we have also un-many people are like, 'Well, wait a our lawmakers, our billionaires ity of a new life in the uncertain apart when a fight broke out re- ber dispute with the supervisors, When I asked if the virus had will take years of difficult work. It distance: "I just know that I am on cently between San Francisco's she was cordial but clearly an- created much political room for will require sacrifices from the Board of Supervisors and the noved Annoyed that the supervi- bold action to address inequality, wealthy it will require a renewed As the weeks of lockdown mayor over how many more sors hadn't considered the limits she said, "It's going to make it federal interest in addressing the

This isn't a problem that will be gloom of the coming recession be-homeless people who are now on funds or the people to make it hap-bike-riding optimism now sounds. solved by flying cars, it will be Rather than lestering some new solved by better zoning laws, botels. She saw the crisis as an opit, the same ageless, endless politito comply. She said it was impossito comply. She said it was impossito comply. She said it was impossito comply. The federal government has parturity to make permanent im cal squabbles. The basic problem hie, the city was straining against promised to reimburse cities for just as likely to worsen inequality make it safe again, more public promised to reimburse cities for just as likely to worsen inequality. One example School required ently limities wealth, there were cosen has placed 965 homeless, but Breed says she is Margot Kushel, a physician and commit ourselves to these and other begins but become but but become but b not sure whether those funds will scholar of homelessness at the other boring but permanent civic









ALEC SOTTUMAGNUM PHOTOS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

The cruelty of education's geography.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS ARE
THE PROBLEM
BY REBECCA SIBILIA

navirus hit, and the economic fallout from the pandemic will demonstrate exactly how flawed this
system is. Sales, energy and income taxes are plummeting, and
these are the receipts that states
use to close the property tax gap
across school district borders.
Without intervention, we will
soon watch education budgets for
middle- and lower-income communities unravel.

But if we envision a new map of property taxation for schools — one in which district borders no longer define "local" for the purposes of education dollars, we can tap into funding that is already in the system and offset this chal-

County pooling around Fayetteville, Ark., would deliver more money to 84 percent of low-income students. In the Kansas City suburbs, more than threequarters of all students would benefit. In Johnstown, Pa., 86 percent of nonwhite students could gain access to the money that is already in their neighborhood. And back in Camden, 69 percent of low-income students would benefit from this change.

Reimagining school-funding geography would bring two distinct benefits. In the short term, we could find the money to buffer the impact of impending state cuts. On a longer-term basis, we could start to truly balance cross-border funding inequities and take on the racial and socioeconomic segregation that these border states and protect.

By expanding the definition of "local" just a bit, without finding any new state revenue or increasing any local tax rates, we can immediately get more money to a significant majority of all children. Under this kind of new nationwide map, 69 percent of all of the country's children — and 73 percent of minority and 76 percent of low-income students — would get access to about \$1,000 more in local property tax funding

This money is not insignificant.
It would enable distance learning by covering the cost of a Chrome-book and home internet access for every student who stands to gain funding. Alternately, the average district could use this new money to hire five mental health counselors and five remedial edu-



Amir Tehari High school economics, Sacramento

My students do not normally advance beyond where they were born. The story of ZIP codes is a story of dreams stolen away from children.

I've been teaching for about seven years. I grew up in Sacramento County, down the street from where I currently teach.

I work at a low-income school, It's a really diverse school. That's something I really enjoy. I think there is a huge benefit to having great diversity. For the students, that helps them understand the world better from first-person experience. They meet so many students from other countries.

A lot of students who come into our high school are very behind. We spend years trying to catch them up. The dropout rate at the four-year-college level is astounding. Some for family reasons, others because they just couldn't see the light at the end of the tunnel. Students who are the first in the family to go to college have no academic support.

I think it's important to look into the fundamentals of the students' environment from an environmental science perspective. Are there heavy levels of lead exposure from lead paint? What is the pollution exposure in the area? Because there is a lot of scientific evidence that high rates of pollution and things like lead paint can be detrimental to students and their ability to learn.



Julie Roneson Middle school English, Bridgeport, Conn.