Shall we return to the way things were?

BY JERRY ROTHSTEIN

This is the first installment of Voices of the West End, a new series in which neighbors discuss essential questions of policy, development, culture, community values and justice that deeply affect our lives. The format includes a kickoff essay followed by responses, with a diversity of perspectives reported. Topics can be revisited when their importance generates new ideas and action.

Our first discussion responds to the commonly voiced idea that when the COVID-19 pandemic is over, “normal” will be back, and we’ll—well—return to the ways things were.

The Jewish teaching on “Tikkun Olam”—our responsibility as individuals to contribute to the necessary “repair of the world”—is vitally important today. There is growing awareness that our physical, political, economic, social, cultural and spiritual worlds have been damaged, disrupted and threatened from many different directions.

The pandemic intertwines with all dimensions of society. As it approaches the point of no return, the assault on our ability to talk with each other through shared facts seems endless. Millions of people experienced startling revelations of the injustices and inequities common in the lives of those who are Black, Indigenous and people of color, and the insecurity and burden they face in every aspect of “normal” life.

President Biden spoke of our need now to “Repair, restore, heal and build,” and Youth Poet Laureate Amaaria Gorman emphasized rebuilding, reconciliation and recovery.

I interpret these ideas and experiences not as a call to return to the way things were, not to believe we should be “getting back to normal as soon as possible.” This so-called “normal” refers to a time when the pandemic showed us how needed it is and what an excellent job many became capable of understanding people experienced startling revelations of the injustices and inequities common in the lives of those who are Black, Indigenous and people of color, and the insecurity and burden they face in every aspect of “normal” life.

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\[\text{REPARATIONS, PG 3} \]

\[\text{Building Community} \]

\[\text{Thermostats and norms} \]

\[\text{By David Lamb} \]

“‘This is where I used to live,’ Linda Garrett sometimes tells her grandchildren as they zip down I-94 through St. Paul. But instead of gesturing at one of the fenced-in homes along Concordia Avenue or toward any number of other streets that overlook the highway, she points down at the roadway itself. In the late 1950s and the ‘60s, the City of St. Paul gradually acquired the Rondo neighborhood via eminent domain, eventually bulldozing the place where more than 80 percent of Black St. Paulites once lived to make way for the interstate. After growing up in a home on Rondo Avenue, purchased by her great-grandmother in 1907, Garrett was one of the children forced to move.

Critics of the decision to dismantle the city’s Black cultural, business and religious hub have only grown in strength in the decades since. Marvin Anderson, a former Rondo resident who collaborated on a time capsule to run the annual Rondo Days festival, told the Star Tribune last year that he believed city planners selected the area for the I-94 project because they could buy the land inexpensively and without political pushback. Others have condemned the effects the decision had on displaced families. After being forced from their homes in the neighborhood, many struggled to purchase houses elsewhere in the region because creditors often prevented Black people from buying properties.

The destruction of Rondo, those covenants keeping many Black residents out of the neighborhoods left intact and other forms of structural racism in St. Paul are all topics of the resolution that the city’s councilmembers passed unanimously on January 13. It calls for the formation of a new commission to study reparations for the descendants of African American slavery now living in St. Paul.

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FEDERATION UPDATE
892 West 7th, Suite 6
fortroadfederation.org

Board Update
At the January meeting, they heard a request for support of a portion of the downtown footprint of the Alvera apartments being built at 337 West 7th Street from metal panels to EIFS. The change of building materials is to allow for hand painting a mural representative of the building. The Board also saw initial concepts for the mural.

Get to Know Your Neighborhood Organization - West 7th
Curious about what the West 7th/Fort Road Corridor is doing and what is more involved with your neighborhood? Two virtual sessions of the same event will answer these questions and also recruit volunteers for committees and Board candidates. 12 pm and 6:30 pm February 13th; 1-2 pm, West Feb. 17th 6:30-7:30 pm

Upcoming Meetings, via Zoom: Info@fortroadfederation.org; Transportation & Land Use Committee - Thu, Feb 4, 6 pm; Riverview Task Force - Thu, Feb 4, 6 pm; Board - Mon, Feb 8, 7 pm; Community Engagement and Outlier Board - Thu, Feb 18, 6:30 pm

Stay in touch “Like” us on Facebook. Subscribe to its e-newsletter fortroadfederation.org.

Contact Emily, executive director; 651-298-5599; emily@fortroadfederation.org; 882 West 7th St, Suite 6, Rathskeller Building.

COUNCIL PERSPECTIVES
Help for those that struggling
The ongoing pandemic and the economic recession that it has caused has put a huge burden and strain on many people, families and communities throughout our country. Through no fault of their own, many people have lost hours, lost business, or lost their jobs, because of the crisis. This is in addition to the serious health issues and the trauma that Covid-19 has caused. The City of St. Paul in close partnership with Ramsey County and the State of Minnesota has tried to step in to help people who need help during this unprecedented time. The Federal Government has also responded with help through CARES Act funding, but we still need more help from the federal and state levels. As our local leaders, your ideas and suggestions are needed now more than ever.

WEST END HEALTHLINE
Modern Medicine’s Promising COVID Vaccine

BY JONATHAN COLIN ROZIC, MD, POY
In December 2020, The BioNTech-Pfizer BNT162b2 and Moderna mRNA 1273 vaccines were granted emergency use authorization for the prevention of COVID-19. The rapid development of these vaccines in part because of previous gains made in the research for vaccines used to prevent SARS and SARS-CoV-2, both of which are forms of coronaviruses. How it Works
Recognizing that a “spike protein” common among all these coronaviruses’ strains plays a role in the virus’ ability to enter human hosts and facilitating infection, scientists developed vaccines to target that protein. The recipe for these effects has been the same as code in mRNA, our natural protein-building language. In this code, the mRNA virus builds the spike protein and releases samples into the body. Your body then recognizes the gene and mounts an immune response to neutralize it. The vaccines essentially allow your body’s immune system to practice and learn how to neutralize the virus by using harmless versions of some of its components so that your body can mount a quick and efficient immune response to the actual virus if it is encountered in earnest. While some conspiracists have shared wild stories about phantom dangers involving the virus “reprogramming” one’s DNA, the truth is that the mRNA never enters the nucleus of the cell, where human DNA is stored, or makes any changes to it anymore. mRNA is only used to produce a protein and then recycled into basic building blocks.
The Evidence
The largest human clinical trials for the BioNTech-Pfizer vaccine began as early as March 2020 and have consistently shown excellent efficacy. In a study involving over 21,000 vaccinated participants, it was found to be 95% effective in preventing COVID-19 seven days after the second dose. Only 1% of the vaccinated individuals in this study developed a severe case of Covid-19, which was non-fatal. Similar efficacy between 90-95% was observed across a diverse range of ages, sex, race, ethnicity, BMI, and presence of co-existing conditions. These studies demonstrated that the vaccine was not misinterpreted in popular media. Side effects are occasionally a clear sign that the body is mounting an appropriate immune response against the foreign vaccine. Among participants younger than the age of 16: 1% had a fever, 4% had severe fatigue, 3% had a headache, and 2% had chills after the second dose. These side effects are even less common in older adults and can often be treated by over-the-counter analgesics. People who have experienced allergic reactions with other vaccines or injections might be at a higher risk of an allergic reaction and are routinely monitored for 30 minutes after receiving the vaccine. Serious reactions known as anaphylaxis are rare and reported to be occurring at a rate of 1 per 1 million doses. Some highly “adverse reactions” reported in the media have not been confirmed. For example, as noted in the phase 3 trial a rate of 4 of 23 thousand participants, were highly monitored for anaphylaxis covering, unconsciousness; fear, when, as was case with the Bell’s Palsy, it rate the observation center daily matched that of the general population.
My Experience
After a long year taking care of clinic and hospital patients at Allina Health United Hospital, I was delighted and relieved to receive my first dose of the vaccine. The only side effects I experienced were a sore arm and a light headache. I then posted this story on my Facebook and Instagram vaccine selfie. I hope that enough people in this community can do the same so we can move past the pandemic to an end. Vaccines have completely eradicated Polio, and nearly eliminated others, like Measles, Mumps. In 2019 vaccine hesitancy was cited by the WHO as a top global health threat. Misperceptions of corners being cut and misinformation about the severity of the disease, vaccine safety, and utility are threatening this world’s public health progress. I encourage everyone to read up on the facts and advocate for our community health. More information is available at the CDC website.

Dr. Colin Rozic works at Allina Health United Family Physicians. You can scheduled an appointment with him at 651-240-5210.

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TRANSIT, PG 6

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You can also contribute story ideas: We aim to cover a wide range of interesting areas in the neighborhood. Your ideas and stories are always welcome! Drop your possibilities with the editor at editor@communityreporter.org.

— David Lamb, Editor, Community Reporter
Rebecca Noecker, who represents Ward 7, said the resolution is far from getting anywhere.

"Until white America can start understanding the humiliation, the hurt, the roadblocks that were placed that explain many of the issues that we have today, we won't get anywhere."

In the public comments on the resolution, some residents disapproved. "Apparently the council is unaware that this great nation fought a civil war to end the immoral subjugation of slave[ry]," wrote Betty Newbrough, who lives in St. Paul. "Our First Minnesota is still regarded with awe," she noted later in the letter. "Because of our suicidal charge at Confederate troops at Gettysburg that allowed precious minutes for the Union to regroup."

Several other residents registered support for the reparations commission.

Rev. Curtis DeYoung, CEO of the Minnesota Council of Churches and convener of Racial Reconciliation: Beyond Political Pietism and Christian Quietism, is one of several religious leaders to endorse the initiative. He pointed out that the Twin Cities have "some of the most extreme gambling disparities." He told this newspaper—"a reality that led his organization to launch the Truth and Reparations project last October, a 10-year-long racial justice initiative. "I hope we can work in partnership with the City," DeYoung said, adding that the two initiatives can "learn from each other."

Rev. Grant Abbott, the former executive director of the organization now called Interfaith Action of Greater St. Paul, who worked for years to bring together diverse religious groups to fight for progressive causes, described the resolution as vital. "There's a logic behind why we need to take action now," he said. "We believe that the inequity in income and generational wealth is growing, largely because of the structure of the economy, with those who are able to invest getting richer and richer for Abbott, understanding the need for reparations begins with accepting how, aware of it or not, regardless of whether their participation in the American system evolved, white people have in his words "being ridden on the wave of inequity for more than 150 years."

Great Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel said, "We're not all guilty, but we're all responsible."

"POWER IN APOLOGY: TAKING ON INEQUALITY"

St. Paul's city councilmembers hope the reparations commission will provide an important step to understanding those experiences and changing the conditions that facilitated them. "Part of this is about accountability," said Councilmember Rebecca Noecker, who represents Ward 7.

2. "Local governments like ours are not innocent in perpetuating Jim Crow and systems of exclusion. We need to apologize, and there is a power in apology." Yet Noecker said the resolution is far from empty words. "With the commission, we are looking backward to take responsibility but also looking at the present to see how our racial divisions are hampering us and looking to the future to determine what we can do to address these inequities."

The resolution puts St. Paul at the forefront of a national movement. Last year, Asheville, North Carolina and Evanston, Illinois became the first American cities to approve programs seeking to make reparations for slavery.

The two local activists who brought the initiative to the City Council, Georgia Fort and Tashem Crews, were not lured by the fact that no U.S. municipality of St. Paul's size had attempted such a program. For months, they coordinated meetings with individual councilmembers to rally their support.

The idea of enacting reparations on the local level came to Crews in 2018 after he had spent three years studying the racial wealth gap. He realized that the hurdles that stopped other attempts at reparations could be overcome in the right contexts and began developing the concept for the new resolution, which is officially called the St. Paul Recovery Act. "When we first started the process," Crews wrote in an email, "I didn't know it was going to be unanimous."

Even though a city budget may not allow for the largest-scale solutions, Noecker felt that she and her peers needed to pursue reparations because, unlike in Congress where scant legislation has passed in recent years, cities and counties are closer to the problems Americans face and more able to take action. "In city government," she said, "we're on the ground level. So we can see these big systemic challenges that are hurting people in a way that others might not. We can see how the fraying of the social safety net has affected our residents during the pandemic, how racial divisions factor in."

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FEBRUARY 2021 COMMUNITY REPORTER 3
Welcome to the Keg-O-Verse

BY DAVID LAMB

Throughout the 1980s and ‘90s, Phil Gagne rose through the ranks of the breweries occupying the Schmidt site, working dozens of jobs. By the time brewing halted in 2002, he was head brewmaster, and he figured there wasn’t a machine in the brewery he hadn’t stuck his hand in or a part he hadn’t MacGyvered.

In 2012, the interior of the brewery was gutted to make way for the Schmidt Artist Lofts. Gagne visited the site occasionally, at times troubled to find mechanical treasures strewn across the floors that had once been the center of his work—CO2 tanks, bottle fillers, kegs. Fearing the history would be lost, Gagne collected what he could, unsure how he would put the parts to use.

Earlier this year, with the help of Craig Cohen and several other investors, he opened Phil’s Well House and Brewery Park (882 W. 7th St.), offering public access to the pristine aquifer water that had supplied the brewery since 1952. As he visited with customers filling their water jugs, Gagne got the idea to offer them a routine corner corner conveyor that represents earth is linked by the celestial chains of a German brew kettle to another saucer-like object that calls to mind a satellite. Above the scene hangs a silver bottle-filler with ray-like notches emanating from its center, the sun in Gagne’s conception. A patterned silver vent cover once in the Rathskeller Station. During the holiday season, the installation twinkled with ornaments.

“Those are bottle-house pieces,” Gagne pointed out, “front-office pieces, and abstract character designs, to the impres...
The **BOLD North**

In the darkest and coldest months of the year, West Enders and other St. Paulites find a multitude of ways to enjoy the nature our neighborhood has to offer. Staff photographer Elisha May Jacobsen captured the winter hubbub.

A pickup hockey game at the Palace Park brings out healthy competition.

Megan Trees and Taylor Lykes of Eden Prairie make their way through the snowy woods of Crosby Farm. The couple finds new parks to visit each weekend to get out and walk, outings they are using to count down to their wedding in October.

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BEAUTRICE

mostly unspoken but reinforced in ways that

authorization to let Black people, Indigenous

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with Race in America

newest book,

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It is invariably better when norms

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are named and spoken, for if they are

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and form our common life, it is always

gives privilege to one or two voices, while

gives privilege to one or two individuals to

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This month’s activity is blowing bubbles.

shavasana. We all need to continue to play.

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BEATRICE

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So, what’s the answer? Acknowledge the

resistance, but don’t believe it.

Mohamed Al Joudeh, who moved from Syria

to a refugee camp in Jordan, who tells us about

how to use a camera from a photo journalist.

Mohamed taught the other children in the

community and a thriving nation.

basal cell carcinoma—

unspoken rules. Black people, Indigenous

and form our common life, it is always

things can be a warning sign that your mental

All of these

make it easier when a lot of the things that used to get

weird and the concrete and steel urban

We can completely eliminate all impacts

We can even eliminate the
distortion to downtown St. Paul with a

short tunnel under the neighborhood.

And, using the CP-Spur, we can build a

bike and pedestrian trail from Minneapo

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Vaccines roll out for some with dose of confusion

BY DAVID LAMB

The robo-calls from the United Family Medicine (UFM) clinic came in the late afternoon on January 19, saying there were vaccinations available at the facility for patients 65 and over. One patient of the clinic, Robin Fate, 71, called back immediately, as did her family members, but neither of them could get through. “We got the tri-tone,” Fate said, and a message from Verizon that the number had been disconnected.

So Fate drove the clinic herself, where she found two people already waiting in line. “It was a husband and wife. I happened to know, trying to get a shot,” Fate said. The administrator behind the desk told her that her husband could receive one because he had a preexisting condition but that she didn’t qualify because she had no such condition and was not yet 75 years old.

Citing the call Fate and other patients had received, welcoming those over 65 to get vaccinated, without other qualifications, she was confused. Soon, other arriving patients arriving in the wake of the automated call raised the issue, and the administrator spoke with a manager and set appointments for those in line.

Another patient, who wished to remain anonymous, called the clinic the following morning. “The line wouldn’t go through,” she said, trying again several times until she heard a response and was put on hold for 30 minutes. Eventually, an administrator fielded the call, asking who the patient’s doctor was. When she answered, she was informed that her doctor had left the organization—one of the thirteen physicians who moved with the residency program to the Allina United Family Physicians clinic in January—and was told she needed to have a doctor at the clinic if she wanted a shot. “I don’t want to leave my doctor,” the patient countered.

“After that,” she told the Community Reporter, “they hung up.”

The patient sought out the advice of a trusted medical professional and then called the clinic back. This time, when she asked who her doctor was, she said she didn’t have one. She was assigned one at the clinic and scheduled for her first vaccine shot. “I had some moral question about it,” she said, “because it felt like you could get in if you’re willing to sit on hold for half an hour while an older person who might need the vaccine more but may not have the time or patience wouldn’t.” She pondered if she could correctly give the appointment to a friend suffering from cancer. But a family member who works in medicine convinced her to get the shot herself.

As the first eligible populations receive vaccines across the U.S. and the nation, health-care professionals and patients have encountered hiccups and confusion, sometimes waiting outside for hours only to be told supplies had run out. Because of a range of challenges, only 2.1 million doses were administered to people in nursing homes and long-term-care centers in the U.S. last year, according to the CDC, nearly 10 million below the institute’s target.

Reached for comment about the reports of patients struggling to schedule vaccines or being turned away for not choosing the clinic for primary care, a representative for UFM directed the newspaper to a statement from clinic CEO Ann Nyakundi, which acknowledged challenges but commended the nurses, community health workers and schedulers on staff who “safely and efficiently arranged [d] to vaccinate as many as 200 patients a day last week, the most of any community clinic in the state.” Nyakundi invited patients who meet the state’s vaccination criteria to call 651-241-1000 to be placed on a vaccine waitlist.

As patients jump at the opportunity—some left the January 19 scene at the UFM clinic spoke to the failures of the national vaccination program and postponed and uncertain future for a community clinic recently rocked by controversy. “It’s easy to see how the changes are affecting the kind of care that people in the West End are going to get,” Fate said, referring to the parting ways from clinic CEO Ann Nyakundi, which previously reported in this paper. “People are being hoodwinked by that clinic’s leaders.”

Editor’s note: Jonathan Dickman, chair of the Community Reporter’s board of directors, is a faculty physician at the United Family Medicine Residency Program, which had been invited patients who meet the state’s vaccination criteria to call 651-241-1000 to be placed on a vaccine waitlist.

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