



Letters to the Editor, Sept. 5



Focus on fighting poverty to beat achievement gap

Poverty and resulting lower socioeconomic status — not racism in Montclair or its schools — remain the primary cause behind our local racial education achievement gap. Instead, we've spent way too much time of late finger pointing to "racism" here as the main cause and needed fix.

That was particularly true by the most recent prior, Board of Education members and just departing school Superintendent. Not only did they mistakenly make "racism" the central administrative direction that seemed to redirect all educational energies, they ignored possible real supervision inequities among staff under their watch, which have now blown up into litigation. Fortunately, those with this point of view are now off the school Board.

While U.S. societal racism is a major underlying cause of today's on-going income and SES disparities (and in some parts of the country racism remains the major factor) — focusing solely on racism HERE in Montclair today — was not and is not the core solution.

Instead, early Pre-K for all remains the best dollar fix we have available today to most quickly begin to level

the playing field. And THIS should be a key directive to figure out how to pay for it for today's BOE members, and for the combined majority vote of the Town Council Board of School Estimate. Those who oppose this effort, because they believe it will take monies away from tutoring and counseling that help children in later grades, would do well to remember the old adage: That "the enemy of the good is the perfect."

To date, we've made very little progress here over the years statistically to help solve this problem.

That's because by age three, studies have shown that children in lower income African American homes may hear as many as 30 million fewer words than children in white, wealthier families. By the third grade, there are already significant differences in literacy and math testing scores.

Montclair's "racism" did not cause these early developmental disparities.

(apa.org/pi/ses/resources/publications/education)

While there is of course still some racism within our schools, therefore efforts should continue to educate teachers and administrators to help stop negative stereotyping and other needed equity and attitudinal shifts — a "racism" solely focused approach is not going to turn things around.

Reinstituting Pre-k for all here is an important step if we are actually serious about doing something to reduce our achievement gap locally, rather than just keep talking about it, or debating who, or what is really to blame.

MARTIN SCHWARTZ

Montclair

Why can't Montclair find a long-term superintendent?

The Montclair school district recently hired a new "interim" superintendent for an annual salary of \$191,984. He is expected to work four days a week. Seriously?

I have been a Montclair resident for 40 years, my children used the public schools, I pay a substantial amount of taxes. I also work in town and I am proud of being an active part of this amazing community.

I have a question for the school district: What is the reason why we are not able to find a stable and long lasting superintendent?

I am sure there are plenty of well qualified candidates. Does one have to be "politically correct?"

It cannot be the salary and all the benefits, is it?

And I was just wondering if our schools are open five days a week, why is the superintendent required to work only four days a week?

I might apply for the job. I am willing to work more hours and earn less.

AURORA DEJULIIS CARLUCCIO

Montclair

Republican Club's mural reaction is off track

In the Aug. 29 issue of the Montclair Local, a letter from the president of the Montclair Republican Club (MRC) stated that the MRC's reaction to the "Never Again" mural located at the underpass near Montclair High School was to have their attorneys draft a "request to be granted NJ Transit-owned space of equal prominence for their Second Amendment-themed mural." Although it is wrapped in thinly-veiled praise of NJ Transit for "allow[ing] political speech" that "tackle[s] important issues in the public square." The actual premise of the MRC's position is both obvious and false.

As is standard practice for gun rights organizations like the MRC, they imply that the counterargument to opposing gun violence is to support the Second Amendment. Once held up to daylight, it becomes clear just how false and disingenuous this premise is.

The counterargument to an anti-violence message is a pro-violence message, and the counterargument to opposing gun violence is to support gun violence.

There is nothing contrary to the Second Amendment about promoting sensible gun-safety measures. Gun-rights organizations like the MRC know that, so they couch their argument in insincere platitudes about "encouraging debate and discussion."

Please do not take the bait. Debating Second Amendment rights versus sensible gun-safety measures is a false equivalency. One is either pro or anti-gun violence. Full stop.

GLENN METSCH-AMPEL

Montclair

Applauding students who painted train trestle mural

The newly painted south wall under the Chestnut Street railroad trestle has a unique history in Montclair. On March 21, 1995, four people were killed and one seriously injured with a gun in the Watchung Plaza Post Office. That for me was the saddest moment of my many years here. Then in 1996, there were two or three domestic incidents involving deaths by gunshot.

The original murals under the trestle were first designed and painted by students from Glenfield school in response to these killings and for 20 plus years reminded us of the several deaths by handguns during a short

period of time in Montclair.

I applaud the Montclair High School seniors for cleaning and then designing and painting the south wall. I have never thought that the anti-gun violence message was disturbing, and parents can speak with their children about this issue. I hope the north wall can be likewise restored.

My heartfelt thanks to all the students involved in this worthy project.

PETER M. GIUFFRA

Montclair

Speak up at Freeholders meeting here Sept. 11

If you've never made it to Newark for a Freeholders meeting, you're in luck because they're coming to you. Wednesday evening, Sept. 11 at 7 p.m., Montclair Town Hall, 205 Claremont Ave.

This is your chance to ask the freeholders why they're collaborating with Trump and ICE, locking up 800 people for the crime of not being American citizens.

The freeholders are all Democrats in the bluest of counties. They have the power to end the contract so why are they taking millions of dollars a year cooperating with Trump in his 'Keep America White' project. Please come.

JIM PRICE

Montclair



Letters to the editor, June 20



Contact your legislators in support of curbing plastics

Two bills pending in the New Jersey legislature deserve our support. They would address the serious problem of plastic pollution by banning the use of plastic straws, plastic shopping bags, and Styrofoam food containers. I can remember the time before there were any plastic shopping bags, and shopping was no harder.

Montclair residents who care about the environment should be in touch with Senator Nia Gill (973-609-0388) urging her to support S 2776 and with Assemblyman Thomas Giblin (973-779-3125) and Assemblywoman Britnee Timberlake (973-395-1166) urging them to support A 4330.

PAT KENSCHAFT

Montclair

Get ready for another wonderful MHS Project Graduation

The signs on the lawns in town, ribbons of blue and white on porches aplenty, our town prepares for the 152nd graduation at Montclair High School on the evening of June 26.

Shortly after the ceremony, Project Graduation will begin with a triumphant ride through town for the graduates.

Be sure to cheer on the bus parade through our town and give our graduates a send-off for their celebration.

Project Graduation is a proper way of saying thank you to the Class of 2019 for all that it has accomplished.

Good luck to our graduates as their future path awaits.

PETER M. GIUFFRA



Letters to the editor, May 9



Ode to Vincent Tango

Montclair's soul feels hurt with the passing of my friend, Vinny Tango! His love and dedication to Montclair High School and the town were legendary. From his paintings of so many Montclair scenes to his many Letters to the Editor, first to the Montclair Times, and currently to the Montclair Local, he did much for the community he loved so dearly.

As his painting ended a few years back, in a most nostalgic mode, he wrote about many touching memories of his early years in Montclair.

I told him personally that his talent now was with his pen as he brought back most interesting moments of his past. When he attended a MHS football game, which was until recently every game home or away, he made a point to reach out to the player who seemed approachable and began a conversation.

With the start of a friendship, he talked less about sports and more about academics and the player's future

path. With these relationships, he influenced many student athletes at MHS and some long-term relationships developed.

His was a life which was always anchored by the high school and our Montclair. Knowing Vinny for about 30 years, my wife and I treasured our time with him, and we are the better for having had him in our lives. We have quite a bit of his artwork in our home, and he will always be with us. Montclair is enriched because of Vinny Tango.

PETER GIUFFRA

Montclair

Thank you Montclair

Over the last six months Montclairians have donated more than \$262,000 to the Montclair Public Library through its foundation's annual appeal in the winter, and in the spring, which just concluded.

These funds will be used to provide:

Our summer reading program and free summer lunch program for Montclair's children (starting June 28);

Museum Passes (free to check out so you can visit one of 18 area attractions);

28 Launchpads for children (self-contained tablets with educational apps to promote literacy);

The soon-to-come eTuk Bookmobile;

Support for programs like the Adult School;

Staff training on equity, diversity, and inclusion;

And many other great and exciting programs and services.

We deeply appreciate the generosity of our community members and library users. Your support enables us to continue to provide world-class library services to all in our community. We thank you for your generous support.

WIL ADKINS, president

JONATHAN SIMON, president

PETER COYL, director

Board of trustees

Montclair Public Library Foundation

Waste

The BigBelly compactors have been touted as a success story but this falls short in my opinion. There are no recycling receptacles to be found in any high-foot-traffic areas of Montclair. Without provisions for recycling, all recyclable materials are being thrown away in the trash, street, and more specifically, the BigBellies.

I would like to see more provisions for sidewalk recycling.

I believe the people of Montclair are willing and able to do their part, but it's time for the town to recognize this major shortcoming and to accommodate.

PETER ARAGON

Montclair

Can you be trusted

The Catholic Church and the powers that be at the Archdiocese of Newark along with St. Teresa of Calcutta (Immaculate Conception/Our Lady of Mount Carmel) have done very little over the past two years to give me faith that Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church will not be closed. Our archbishop has chosen not to visit our church since he replaced Archbishop Myers. However, he has visited Immaculate.

Immaculate has an abundance of weekend Masses while Mount Carmel has two, Saturday at 4 p.m. and Sunday at 11:30 a.m. Last week, on Friday and Sunday, two of the holiest days of the year for the Roman Catholic Church (Good Friday and Easter Sunday), Mount Carmel was lucky that we had one Mass, including Good Friday. I'd say that is a good definition of a second-class citizen.

It's no secret of the Catholic Church's priest scandal, and the numerous lawsuits that are arising all over the world, because the church has turned a blind eye to the child predators. Lawsuits equate money. Where is the church going to get this money?

Today I read a very disturbing article indicating the Catholic Church will not use any money set aside for church activities, or to help the needy. It will not dip into funds for charities, seminarians, donor gifts, or donations to parishes or schools. Instead, the church will pay off these lawsuits from the sale of properties and insurance.

I'm ashamed to say as a practicing Catholic, besides having no faith in the church intentions, locally I also have no faith in Rome/Pope doing the right thing. They have proven they cannot be trusted.

The recent horrific fire at the Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris, France, should be a wake-up call for Rome/Archdioceses worldwide. Magnificent cathedrals erected all over the world are witness to the sacrifice of many people. The tragedy of all this beauty, were known to be built on the backs of the oppressed.

You cannot find God in a building, no matter how magnificent the design may be. God's presence is spiritual and cannot be confined to a structure. Once we lose our beautiful churches and cathedrals for the sake of the almighty dollar to pay for lawsuits to right the wrongs committed by priests who did not live up to their sacred vows, they will be gone forever.

Back to the fire at Notre Dame Cathedral, think about what I'm about to say. A fire of such magnitude with the heat and steam generated by the flames and the water used over a 12-hour period to control and extinguish it, failed to crack or damage any of the fabulous stained glass windows along with other valuable one-of-a-kind artifacts. To the powers that be in the Roman Catholic Church, was this God's way of sending you a message saying don't sell our cathedrals/churches as the price of betrayal by disciples of Jesus (pope, cardinals, archbishops, priests and other clergy)? On April 27, an announcement was made after Mass, making an appeal to parishioners to make a pledge starting at \$250 and progressing up to \$500, as we were told the Archdiocese of Newark will not contribute to the recent replacement of a boiler at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church. In addition we were told that the boiler at Immaculate Conception Church also needs replacement at a cost of \$35,000-plus.

It is estimated we need approximately \$70,000 for the work. The Archdiocese of Newark should hang their heads in shame, placing the burden of these replacements on the shoulders of the parishioners. The Archdiocese has to be held accountable rather than all their empty promises that have been made since it was learned of their intentions to close Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church. The Archdiocese constantly has their hand out to all the parishes to make payments as required by the Roman Catholic Church. Could their refusal to help out in paying for the replacement boilers have anything to do with decades of clergy abuse and having to provide for the countless survivors whose lives were ruined?

The Catholic Church and the Archdiocese of Newark have to do the right thing, which is to deal with the spiritual issues involving the spiritual life and welfare of its members, and end the culture of covering up the sins of abusive priests by penalizing parishioners' contributions to pay for capital expenses incurred by their churches.

THOMAS J. RUSSO

Montclair

The writer is the former chief of the Montclair Police Department.



Letters to the editor, April 18



Thank you, Dottie

In response to Dorothea Benton Frank's "Town Square" from April 11 ("Mega-mansions: the other side of the story," page 12): I too am a long time Montclair resident of a "historic" home and not sure why it's historic other than it being old.

We've maintained our home because it's what we want not because Montclair wants it. We are certainly not the richest man on the block but what we do contribute in taxes isn't worth what we get in return for living here.

I want to thank the mega mansion owner for his courage in tearing down the buildings on his property so that he could put up his dream house. Nothing wrong with that.

I feel if it really is important to this town to maintain homes like ours, they should come up with incentives for owners and the first place to start would be much lower property taxes not restrictions on what we can/can't do with what we own. It would certainly make it more affordable and easier to stay in town and maintain the property. I wish I liked Florida.

GENNY RANDALL

Montclair

In response to play review

This letter addresses Gwen Orel's April 11 review of "Heartland", the play currently running at Luna Stage. This response is co-written by Heartland's playwright Gabriel Jason Dean and dramaturg/cultural consultant, Humaira Ghilzai.

While we were both disappointed to read Orel's mixed review of the play and a number of problematic statements she makes therein, our quarrel ultimately isn't with her subjective estimation of the production. However, Orel and her editors went beyond subjective criticism when they grossly mischaracterized "Heartland" by labeling it, "cultural appropriation of the first order."

We assert that Orel's offensive and damaging phrase is false and bad journalism. We ask, at a minimum, that the language be retracted from the review immediately.

From early drafts of "Heartland," the playwright has been closely collaborating with Humaira Ghilzai, an Afghan-born dramaturg and professional cultural consultant who has worked with theatres, films, and writers on cultural authenticity relating to Afghanistan and the Islamic world for the past eight years. Ghilzai's work is consistently praised by the Afghan and Muslim community. In 2018, she received recognition from the Afghan Coalition for her work on the adaptation of Khaled Hosseini's "A Thousand Splendid Suns." Together with Dean, Ghilzai has continued her acclaimed work with "Heartland," striving to accurately reflect her beloved Afghanistan and Sunni Muslims. So when Orel accuses "Heartland" of cultural appropriation, she accuses Ghilzai of appropriating her own culture. What is actually happening in "Heartland" is authentic cultural exchange.

This collaboration between Dean and Ghilzai is widely documented. A simple Google search confirms it: The Austin Chronicle, Vortex Interview and Geva Journal Interview.

Additionally, Ghilzai is also credited in the Luna Stage program and cited in their easily-viewable lobby display. We are not sure how Orel missed Ghilzai's involvement, but in a climate when facts matter more than ever, we highly encourage you to do your utmost to get them right. We certainly did.

As a former journalist and practicing academic, Dean endeavors to get beyond his own blinders by doing his research. Beyond collaborating with Ghilzai, Dean interviewed numerous Afghans, Muslims, scholars of Islam and Imams while writing "Heartland." Additionally, Luna Stage invited local Imam Kevin Dawud Amin and Maplewood resident Nahela Hadi, an Afghan, to rehearsals to advise on their production.

Earlier this year, HowlRound livestreamed The Vortex production of the play in Austin, Texas. Ghilzai's non-profit, the Afghan Friends Network, an organization dedicated to improving education for girls and women in Afghanistan, organized several watch parties in San Francisco. The play was met with great enthusiasm by the Afghan community there. During the 2018 Geva Theatre production in Rochester, N.Y., speaking about the character of Nazrullah, a Muslim-American high school student responded that he was so happy to see "a true

Muslim” rather than a terrorist onstage for the first time in his life. And recently in an audience talkback during InterAct Theatre’s production in Philadelphia, an Afghan doctor from New Jersey recounted his own personal story of walking hundreds of miles to escape the invading Soviets and coming to the U.S. as a refugee. He said, “I wish more plays like this about Afghanistan existed.” Of the many Afghans and Muslims who have encountered “Heartland” during its five productions across the country, not one has raised concern about cultural appropriation.

Furthermore, Orel’s review suggests a deeper, more problematic xenophobic point of view. Orel writes, “Getee is not a Muslim...and Naz doesn’t mind?” This flippant phrase suggests it would be inconceivable for an Afghan Muslim to be romantically interested in a non-Muslim, which simply shows Orel’s limited scope of imagination and scant knowledge of Afghan culture. Believe it or not, in spite of a sometimes restrictive society, Afghans, like the rest of the world, love who they love. The current Afghan President Ashraf Ghani is married to a Christian woman.

GABRIEL JASON DEAN

Brooklyn, N.Y.

HUMAIRA GHILZAI

San Francisco, Calif.

Shout-out to all at MHS

As the school year is fast approaching its conclusion, I would like to give a robust shout-out to Montclair High School students, teachers and administrators.

Each time I see and talk to teachers, I thank them for managing their classroom under challenging circumstances and each one says with a smile, they have adjusted and all is going well.

Likewise, when I have seen students and also thanked them for adjusting to a different MHS and they agreed with a smile that it wasn’t a big deal.

The Class of 2019 has set the right tone at MHS and I thank them for their leadership and a most successful year. Thanks to all at MHS.

PETER GIUFFRA

Montclair



Letters to the editor, April 4



The sound of leaf blowers

As long as the soundtrack of outdoor Montclair continues to be the drone of the leaf blower, why not build an Indy-styled motor raceway?

We could have the thrill of watching a car race, as well as enjoying the nonstop sounds and smells of the internal combustion engine.

Location? I suggest razing Brookdale Park. You can't hear the birds anyway.

ROB HENKE

Montclair

Lackawanna not over

The planning process to redevelop Lackawanna Plaza has now moved from the farcical to the dangerous as the planning board considers input from their traffic expert. Don't adopt the City Council's "no left turn from

Grove” ordinance, testified Mike Dannemiller of NV5; instead take a wait and see approach. “If there is a crash history or an observation queuing or gridlock, at that time, reconsider.” Can we please agree now on how many accidents must transpire before we can reexamine this policy? Is one child fatality enough? What about an elderly shopper trying to navigate the 40-foot wide driveway without any sort of crossing signal?

The planning board has greenlit every preposterous request from this developer: a 50 percent reduction from required parking? Sure! Making a public walkway private without verifying the “missing” easement? Absolutely! Tear down a federal, state and locally-designated landmark without even attempting to creatively reuse it? OK! So why not take the advice of a paid traffic expert “and wait and see” if there are accidents from left turns on Grove Street?

Anyone sketching a development plan on the back of an envelope would first ask themselves how shoppers could legally and safely enter and exit the parking lot, without imperiling the throngs of pedestrians in the area. Not this developer. Pinnacle Construction has shown enormous hubris, and utter disregard for the public’s safety, in creating a plan — which again, sailed through the planning board with only two “no” votes — which didn’t consider ingress or egress from the overcrowded parking lot. The developer should go back to the drawing board now using this as the primary design consideration — not the final detail to be hammered through the hapless planning board. There is certain to be a ferocious appeal with a complete redesign as a goal, and based on the dozens upon dozens of irregularities documented throughout this arduous process, this is sure to be a protracted fight. The developer can save time, money and community goodwill by returning to the drawing board now.

The biggest question is why the township council is promoting this ordinance at this late hour, four years into the planning process. Fourth Ward Councilwoman Renée Baskerville said she was clear from the start that Grove would not be turned into four lanes to support left turns into this shopping center. And the law was already in place that there were not to be left turns from Bloomfield as there is a painted island in place. So why was the developer so cavalier about getting both left entrances? What kind of stupor does this developer hold over our local government?

The mayor and all six council members ran unopposed and were re-elected in 2016, with fewer than 5,000 votes each in a town of 45,000. This is not good for democracy, and it’s not good for Montclair. We need an informed electorate choosing candidates in May 2020 who best represent the community’s interests, not developers’. And we most urgently need a new town planner who will make pedestrian safety and livability the top priority — not rubber stamping developers’ every wish. Contact Mayor Robert Jackson’s office now and demand a new plan for Lackawanna Plaza that will attract a supermarket and not imperil the public: 973-509-4928; rjackson@montclairnjusa.org.

PRISCILLA ESHELMAN

Montclair

For human rights

It has been painful for people of conscience who care about human rights, to see the disdain of the current administration in the White House regarding human rights, whether on the U.S.-Mexican border, in the cruel "Muslim ban" that has abandoned Syrian refugees in massive camps, or in Saudi Arabia, Yemen, North Korea, Guatemala, or numerous other places.

As we commemorate March 30, the one-year anniversary of the Great March of Return, a non-violent mass protest by Palestinian people in Gaza, the human rights violations suffered by the two million people of Gaza after years of being blockaded within their narrow borders, with devastating bombings by Israel of their homes, water treatment plants, food growing and processing, medical facilities, schools, many of us who are Jewish have felt that we must speak out against such violations being done specifically in our name. After 200 deaths, and over 25,000 wounded in the course of these weekly protests in Gaza, the urgency is even greater.

In 2015, several of us who are Montclair residents, along with people from other towns, formed the first New Jersey chapter of Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP). There are more than 70 chapters across the US. In the years since, our chapter has grown and has held a series of well-attended educational events, as well as protests and lobbying, in coalition with other groups. Since that time, a second JVP chapter has been started in central New Jersey. Jewish Voice for Peace opposes anti-Jewish, anti-Muslim and all forms of bigotry. We seek an end to Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, with security, democratic rights and self-determination for Israelis and Palestinians. We are for peace and justice for all peoples in the Middle East.

We in Northern New Jersey Jewish Voice for Peace are honored to report that, in recognition of this work for peace and justice, New Jersey Peace Action has chosen to award our chapter the Sylvia And Oscar Ackelsberg Peace Award at its 62nd annual dinner on April 28. We invite interested people to check out the Northern New Jersey JVP Facebook page, with more information on our activities.

BELLA AUGUST

Montclair

Thanks for the peaceful demonstration

My wife and I were walking from our home to the YMCA via Chestnut and Park streets on Friday, March 15. I inquired of a Montclair High School student about all the activity going on at MHS. He informed me that it was a student walkout to protest the lack of initiative by the federal government to address the threat of climate change seriously.

Immediately I thanked him and the MHS students for their stand. Little did we know that it was part of a worldwide movement to address what is needed to obviate climate change.

I want to thank students around the world for showing courage to save our planet. I especially want to thank our MHS student body for its peaceful and orderly demonstration.

Their future is at stake and hopefully some of the students send notes to their representatives in Washington.

PETER GIUFFRA

Montclair

ICE must go

During the '70s and '80s, U.S.-backed dictatorships in Latin America used to have paramilitary forces to kidnap political dissidents from the streets, their homes, their workplace, everywhere. They took people to clandestine detention center where they were held for days, months or years, where they tortured them and finally and, in most cases, killed them and got rid of the bodies. The dead bodies were rarely given back to their families. They were called "disappeared" or desaparecido as we say in Spanish.

During the Trump administration, ICE is working in a scary similar way to the paramilitary forces described above. They "take" people from the streets, workplaces, homes, with force and dubious "warrants," taking advantage of people ignorance of the law and their rights. ICE tactics looks more of a "hunting" for undocumented immigrants than anything else. In the Trump era we seem to be in open season. They have been breaking all international law standards on refugees' rights. They can take you, forcibly separated from your child indefinitely without any explanation nor to you neither your child, and even they can send you back to your country without your child.

There are plenty of cases of children being abused in the detention centers, given psychotropics without parental consent to "calm them down." Teenagers that were raped on the way to the U.S., are purposely not offered abortions or psychological support of any sort. There is not oversight at all from the Congress, the hearings seem a joke, and there are plenty of judicial processes that do very little to deter ICE from behaving in a reckless way.

ICE is terrorizing immigrants and now, because of the chaotic way they act, they are arresting green card holders and even U.S. citizens in some cases.

Once Trump is gone, who is going to be held responsible of all these families that have been damaged forever? There is no space for an ICE reform. ICE must go.

Please call your congressman/woman to let him/her know your opinion and ask to stop increasing ICE budget. Mikie Sherril: 973-526-5668. Donald Payne: 202-225-3436

MARIA EVA DORIGO

Montclair



Letters to the editor, June 7



If not Edgemont Park, where else is Montclair's senior center?

Mayor Jackson's remarks that Edgemont Park House is "not a senior center" and so does not need adequate safe parking contradicts the numerous promos on TV34 titled "Edgemont Park House Senior Center." He and the council appear clueless as to the amount of activity there.

True, if it were a real senior center there might be hot water in the bathrooms, instead of frail seniors washing their hands in freezing cold water all winter. Light fixtures might not be dangling dangerously by threads of duct tape over their heads. And floor tiles would not be lifted by the strength of masking tape.

Drivers parking "in the mud" was an indication that more, not less, parking is needed there. Having a "grand" and "beautiful" entry to the park need not preclude convenience and safety for those who use it.

Years ago when a senior facility was available this town didn't want it. A council member then (and still) suggested seniors should "find some church basement" for their activities. Maybe when the giant new hotel goes bankrupt, it could be used as a senior center. Until then, Edgemont Park House is functioning as the only one in town, so its patrons deserve sensible parking rather than more shrubbery and Belgian blocks.

Jeff Dimmerman

Montclair

On the lack of parking at Edgemont Park

The Memorial Day services in Edgemont Park provided the first view of the Valley Road entrance without construction equipment.

After many months, we could walk around and observe that the narrow, very curvy driveway, which looks like a series of accidents waiting to happen. The entrance is an unusable disaster. The only place for visitors to park within Edgemont is this Valley Road entrance area.

Where are the parking spaces? Where will the handicapped spaces be situated?

The Senior Center is used for many classes and events and the park did not have enough parking before the renovation and it looks like there is none now.

If town management thinks that parallel parking on a very narrow curvy driveway is really feasible, they are dead wrong.

Who designed this mess? Who ignored the needs of the community? Who did not look at functionality and what actually works in the real world? Who authorized and approved this very expensive and unacceptable plan? Who is responsible? And most importantly, what can be done about it?

We need to hear what solutions town management is proposing. All the pretty improvements such as new benches and new walkways, will be for nothing, if people cannot easily access the park.

Belinda Plutz

Montclair

Lower-income residents aren't just left behind

I had a good laugh at the May 31 article about the NJTV panel ("Lower-income residents being left behind in Montclair," page A-1)..

Left behind doesn't exactly describe how we have been mistreated. If NJTV actually interviewed some of the town's lower and middle income residents, they'd get a different story. The fact is, there has been a deliberate, concerted effort on the part of successive local governments, lasting for decades, to harass, bully, lie to, overdevelop, and destroy the neighborhoods of working and middle class people.

Our taxes have been raised way out of proportion to the declining values of our homes. I keep telling them, rich white people have no interest in living in my home or my neighborhood, and working people can't afford the taxes. I didn't need President Donald Trump to teach me who my enemies are, since they are right here in Montclair: rich people, white people, developers, politicians, churches, New Yorkers — or are you forgetting where Trump came from?

Stephanie Wood

Montclair

Recognize Montclair's many music legends

On May 5, local legend John Finnegan was honored at the Cinco de Mayo festival produced by Montclair BID. Great idea, he deserves it.

However there are some Montclair music legends that need to be recognized because of their stature and outstanding contributions to Montclair's musical community and beyond.

The majority of these legendary musicians have a long history of community involvement. Some have gone on to national and international recognition and made their mark in history of American music and others have garnered local and regional fame.

Most, if not all, have been profiled in both the national and local media, as well as numerous magazines.

During Montclair's 150th anniversary would be the perfect time to honor this group of outstanding individuals. Here are just some of the people that have made and continue to leave their mark on this great artistic community. Al Anderson (Bob Marley), Chuck Burgi (Brand X and Billy Joel), Armel Anderson (Twisted Sister and The Dictators), Ken Neill (Twisted Sister, Ike Brown's Jazz Profits, Tayata and B.D, EYEZ), Richard Pierson (drummer, composer and producer), Denise Hamilton (jazz vocalist), Christian McBride (six time Grammy award winning bassist, co-founder and artistic director of Jazz House Kids), Melissa Walker (co-founder of Jazz House Kids, jazz vocalist), Fatal Hussain (rap artist), Ike Brown (trumpet and Ike Brown's Jazz Prophets).

There are many others that span the musical spectrum from pop to classical music, that are too numerous to name, but hopefully they can be recognized by the township on its 150th anniversary. What a great thing that would be. Oh... and lets not forget the Fabulous Flemtones, a band that has performed at Tierney's for more than three decades.

Bruce Tyler

Montclair

The writer is a drummer, producer and arts activist, a co-producer of Montclair's first Blues & Jazz festival and a member of the Montclair Arts Advisory Committee.

It's MHS graduation time

The ribbons are on the porches and trees, the congratulatory signs are on the lawns. Joy abounds in Montclair, the 151 graduating class awaits for June 21.

Following it will be the 29th Project Graduation which is a way our town gives a safe and proper farewell to our seniors.

Our best to our senior class and the Montclair community that makes it possible.

Peter Giuffra

Montclair

How many more?

I wonder how many more of my friends will die by suicide. After Noah died, I cried and withdrew and lamented. I had already been depressed and in the hellfire of OCD (although I didn't know it yet), and Noah had taken his life. So it became real, something that people actually decide to do.

Then Danielle. How it could it be Danielle? How could she be so good at hiding her struggles? My mother called me after Danielle died. She remarked, "you loved her," and told me she was sorry. A neighbor said that my friends and I had gotten more than our due. "It's disturbing," someone else told me.

I wonder how many more of my friends will die by suicide. I don't want to wonder. I want to use my rage and sorrow. Kids like me should be taught that our mental health matters. It shouldn't have taken the death of my friend to get me to ask for help.

New Jersey lawmakers and voters—here's what you can do. Support bills 1828 and 3408. 1828 expands suicide prevention training for school district employees and 3408 creates a mental health hotline for students in higher education. Don't wait until someone you love dies.

Ari Westreich

Montclair

The writer is a senior at Montclair High School.



Letters to the editor, March 22



Why does Montclair Township ignore us?

Since 2017, the residents of Nassau Road and Patton Place have been asking that the township replace our derelict curbs. Many of our homes have large pieces of the cement curbs broken off and lying nearby in jagged chunks.

Last year we appeared at a township council meeting, sent multiple emails and made phone calls. It took weeks before anyone replied.

This year we have sent two emails to township manager Timothy Stafford, deputy manager Brian Scantlebury, parks and facilities superintendent Rob Bianco and community services director Steve Wood.

After more than two weeks, none of them has replied. Given that Montclair pays among the highest property taxes not only in New Jersey, but in the country, it's ridiculous that they not only can't fix the curbs, but can't be bothered to reply to simple, polite emails from residents. Throw the bums out.

Dan Hurley

Montclair

Don't start over on superintendent search

I was very impressed with all three candidates for superintendent at the recent open hearing.

I commend the Board of Education for recruiting such fine people willing to undergo a public display of their talents and caring.

Therefore, I was saddened to read in last week's papers about a proposal that the board restart its search. Our taxes are high enough. The schools are struggling with their current budget and to cut it just to have another search seemed appalling. It is time to unite behind our board and our children and get Montclair a permanent school superintendent.

Pat Kenschaft

Montclair

Keep up the protests

I read in the Montclair Local of the success of the Montclair High School students to join the rest of the country in a demonstration to keep their schools safe.

Yes , we know the perpetrators of those heinous deeds are mentally unstable, but the laws in some states are so lenient that such a troubled person can legally purchase a firearm and ammunition.

I feel this is the time for Congress and our president to pass a law that a purchase of guns must be subject to a three to seven day waiting period, so the background of the purchaser can be checked and vetted.

Also I feel automatic guns should be banned for the general public, as they were in the 1990s.

Keep up the demonstrations high schoolers, so our nation's capital will wake-up. The young are teaching us all.

Peter Giuffra

Montclair

More on the marijuana legalization debate

Some routines are comforting: morning coffee, Sunday dinner, the President tweeting something stupid and firing a Cabinet member. But lately I've fallen into one routine I find exhausting: Opening Montclair Local every couple of weeks and reading another anti-cannabis screed from Thomas Russo.

As a former police chief during the height of the failed War on Drugs, you almost have no choice but to vainly press on against one of the only legislative reforms that the vast majority of Americans, regardless of political affiliation, support.

It's bad enough you ignore the mountains of evidence supporting legal cannabis as a treatment for all sorts of

illnesses, from back pain to public school budget shortfalls. Or that you cynically deploy concern for the Black community as an argument against legislation that could keep petty drug arrests from ruining so many promising futures for children of color. No, the sensible citizens of Montclair simply must be treated to the same tired, thoroughly debunked talking points every week. You'd have to be high for them to make sense, but it's currently illegal to achieve that state. It's a real catch-22.

No, marijuana is not harmless—habitual stoners are among the most insufferable people alive. And no responsible cannabis user thinks it's alright for kids to partake. Honestly, I don't even like it all that much. But here's the thing, chief: cannabis legalization is coming. Ask same-sex marriage opponents how fast the tide of public opinion turned against them.

So instead of dragging the loyal readers of this fine publication along as you chase your great green whale, why not take a deep breath, relax, and go smoke a proverbial joint. Or a literal one. "Great Green Whale" is actually a really nice strain. Very mellow high. So I've heard.

Steve Coy

Montclair



Letters to the editor, Feb. 22



Keeping our schools safe

Editor's note: This was originally written as a letter to parents from Barbara Pinsak, interim superintendent of the Montclair Public Schools:

[On Feb. 14] we went to sleep thinking about yet another community that met with the tragedy of a school shooting.

Watching young people running in terror from a place that should be a safe haven was disturbing for all of us.

It takes all of us to protect our children. In addition to our security measures, we follow the “see something, say something” approach for student and staff safety.

Please know that if you have concerns or want to alert us to any security situation, you may contact us at contactus@montclair.k12.nj.us or call your school principal.

The safety and security of our students and staff is of utmost importance to us, and we remain vigilant in our emergency preparedness work.

We are focused and working on keeping our schools safe as we send our heartfelt thoughts and condolences to those in Florida dealing with this horrific tragedy.

Hoping for good will

With all the unhealthy divisions within our nation and most prominently in our Congress, I sincerely hope that at the grass roots of our country we can respect one another’s views and keep a lid on acrimony, bitterness and shouting.

I have read of some efforts in Congress in which senators from each major party are working together in a bipartisan effort. We the people can effect this on a local level with that in mind and listen to one another.

It bodes well for our nation’s future if all of us display mutual good will.

Peter Giuffra

Montclair

Let’s ban assault weapons

Now is the time to make assault weapons illegal for ordinary citizens. They are appropriate only for law enforcement and the military. AR-15 assault rifles quickly killed many people not only this week, but also at a church in Sutherland Springs, Texas, a concert in Las Vegas, Pulse nightclub in Orlando, and Sandy Hook Elementary School. Let’s stop this senseless empowerment of terribly misguided people.

The only two defensible uses of guns for ordinary citizens seem to be hunting and self-protection. As a vegetarian, I have misgivings about hunting. As the granddaughter of someone who used his bedside gun to kill himself when he was in pain, I am keenly aware of the statistics that say that guns in a home are more likely to be used to kill someone who lives there than an intruder. Thus I would oppose all gun ownership for

the general public, but I know this is not going to happen.

However, banning assault weapons seems sensible even for those who disagree with me in the paragraph just above. Also, requiring background surveys for those who buy at gun shows seems compatible with their concerns.

The second amendment was written at a time when firearms were muskets. They would not be used for school shootings.

Also, I'm glad we live in a part of the country where people entering schools must introduce themselves to someone at the protected door who cares about the students. The idea that last week's shooter could simply walk in a back door with his weapons is shocking to a New Jersey reader.

Let's do more than just give sympathy for the survivors of gun disasters. Let's make them much less likely to happen again by eliminating assault weapons in the general public.

Pat Kenschaft

Montclair



Letters to the editor, Nov. 9



License home improvement contractors

Home improvement contractors registered with the state of New Jersey should first be subjected to background checks, as nurses and teachers already are. I was shocked to read the article in the Sunday Record of Oct. 29 that reports on the cheating of such contractors, especially following Hurricane Sandy.

One of them has been accused of cheating a dozen homeowners of more than \$1.5 million by taking money from them and then not following through. He had done this in other states before being registered in New Jersey, having moved from one state to another after natural disasters, cheating victims in many states. He had faced dozens of suits and had been convicted of fraud three times. Nevertheless, he was granted a home improvement contractor's license in New Jersey with no background check.

The article says his situation is far from unique. In 2016, 136 home improvement contractors had violations resulting in fines and restitution totaling about \$1.9 million. The article reports that there are over 48,000 home improvement contracting businesses registered in New Jersey with Consumer Affairs, so homeowners would have plenty of options if only those with clean records were registered.

I have emailed state Sen. Nia Gill at sengill@njleg.org and assemblypeople Thomas P. Giblin at awmgiblin@njleg.org and Sheila Oliver at aswoliver@njleg.org, urging them to pass legislation requiring home contractors to pass criminal background checks before licensing them. Please do so too.

Pat Kenschaft

Montclair

Some step up, some step away

I believe that most people living with a chronic health condition will probably relate to what I'm about to write.

I'm 73, and up until six years ago I felt relatively healthy. Always able to function independently. Though I'm not bedridden, there are a lot of things that I won't attempt to do anymore without "a little help from my friends," to quote the Beatles.

Throughout my healthier years I always believed that I could tell the difference between someone who is a true friend and someone who is simply friendly with a smile and a warm hello.

Well I've found out what I'm sure so many others have, that some people who I always believed were real friends, stepped up, but it hurts to know that few others have chosen to step away.

Fortunately one person that I always felt would be there for me was, big time. Unfortunately he's uncomfortable with praise so I'll just give you his initials. Ready? ... Peter Giuffra, oops!

I'm really happy to say that there are some friendly people that have helped when they can. A very pleasant surprise. One lady in particular, her first name is Artie-Lee, is well known to others living here in the First Montclair House for her kindness. I now know that she is not only friendly, she's a friend.

Thankfully there are a some others, my pal Anthony for one, who will always ask if there is anything I need from the store and I can't forget Bruno's grandma Barbara who is sure to gently rub my back when she

notices me having a breathing problem.

Yep! Some folks do step up. I'm a lucky guy.

Vincent Tango

Montclair



Letters to the editor, Sept. 14



More time to see Tango

Vinny Tango is a dear friend of mine. His artwork of Montclair over several years says it all about where his heart lies.

Montclair is most fortunate to have his artistic skill feature so much of the beauty and joy that is our town. The Montclair History Center, 110 Orange Road, has been featuring his art and this exhibition will be there through September. I urge anyone, young and elderly, to visit and enjoy all that Vinny has produced.

Peter Giuffra

Montclair

Hurricane Harvey and Climate Change

The southeast Texas coast has taken a beating that, until now, no one thought possible. Hurricane Harvey ,

the most destructive storm in memory, dropped as much as 60 inches of rain over the five days that it tortured the citizens of Texas. To climate scientists the storm was no surprise. Computer models have predicted that as the earth warms, correspondingly the oceans will warm, and warmer oceans mean more powerful hurricanes and increased precipitation from those hurricanes.

The water temperature in the Gulf of Mexico was 3 degrees warmer than normal before Harvey got going, and the additional warmth added to the storm's ability to carry moisture and also to its ability to regenerate strength as it moved painfully slowly up the Texas and Louisiana coasts.

Climate change deniers will say that this storm was a bad coincidence. Those who have paid attention to the increase in greenhouse gases in our atmosphere, the resulting warming of the oceans, and the slow but undeniable rise in sea levels know better. We recognize that this is the beginning of what will be an increase in what might be called "crazy weather." The amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, worldwide, is more than 400 parts per million. The last time, many millions of years ago, that earth experienced that level of CO₂ in the atmosphere, sea levels were more than 100 feet higher than they are today. The poles were roaming grounds for dinosaurs.

What we watched in Texas is going to be the future for many more places. The human suffering we watch with a mix of pity and horror is being felt in other places on the globe. We all want to do what we can to help the victims of this disaster in Texas and well we should. The question I want to ask is will we ever summon the will to address the causes that made what might have been a normal hurricane into a deluge of biblical proportions?

The rest of the world has recognized that climate change is largely caused by the burning of fossil fuels. The United States is pretty much the only country where that fact is up for debate. We have 5 percent of the world's population and consume more than 20 percent of the world's fossil fuels. And yet we possess the technologies to transition to renewable energy sources that would add nothing to greenhouse gas emissions.

The problem is political, not technological. There are presently more jobs in renewable energy than there are in fossil fuel extraction in the United States. When we decide to jump into renewable energy with both feet, the boost to our economy will be huge. Imagine locally sourced jobs rebuilding our electrical grid for a more decentralized and local production of energy, local jobs for providing solar and wind power projects, American manufacturers building solar panels and wind turbines. The economic possibilities are enormous. And our children will thank us for doing it. Or we can continue to ignore and deny the train coming down the tunnel towards us, and our children may curse our memory for being fools.

We have a choice. If you feel strongly about fighting climate change, let your state and national representatives know. Find out what the politicians you support think about fighting climate change. If you think we should have a national energy policy different from "drill baby drill," urge them to put a price on carbon. Time is running out, and we have the power to change the future. But Washington and Trenton need to hear from us all.

Dean Squires

Montclair

Organic vegetable garden tour

On Saturday, Sept. 23, the Cornucopia Network of NJ will sponsor an organic vegetable garden tour including four gardens.

The Montclair Community Pre-K Garden Project at 49 Orange Road offers a self-guided tour. The MCPK gardens include raised bed learning and herb gardens, a rain barrel, a six-bed edible garden started entirely from seed by Pre-K students, a butterfly garden, three composting bins, a four-season garden, and the berry patch which features two varieties of raspberries and a grapevine. It will be available all day on Sept. 23 and parking is permitted along the driveway to the right of the Board of Education Building at 22 Valley Road.

The Pulaski Park Community Garden at the corner of Mt. Vernon and Howard (east of Broughton, north of Bay) in Bloomfield will be open from 9:30 to 11 a.m. Our 21 4' by 8' plots have been fully rented for our third season, and we started a waitlist for the next six plots which will soon be added. Regular get-togethers and workshops bring together the community in the garden; visit on Facebook [openspacetrustfund](#).

Outside the Inness Annex on North Fullerton and Chestnut Street, Montclair High School has over 15 raised beds with a variety of vegetables, greens and experimental plant projects. The beds are used by biology and STEM students and are in full use year round with the summer help of Montclair Community Farms. Twelve of the beds were recently created as an Eagle Scout Project by a local troop. Vegetables and greens are used by the ninth-grade cafeteria and are also donated to Toni's Kitchen and Human Needs Food Pantry. The beds and ongoing maintenance are funded and supported by DIGS (District Initiative for Gardening in Schools) and MFEE.

It is in a public place and therefore available all the time. While visiting the vegetable beds, notice the bird/butterfly habitat and various native habitat gardens the students have created all over Rand Park.

I raise most of my family's vegetables year round in my back yard at 56 Gordonhurst Ave., with no poisons or power machinery. I will open my garden from 9 to 11 a.m. I've had several disappointments this year resulting in unprecedented empty space, but it still appears I will have home-grown vegetables for every dinner at home in the next year.

Pat Kenschaft

Montclair