

indyKIDS!

A FREE PAPER FOR KIDS, BY KIDS

Culture & Activism – Page 6

INDYKIDS EXCLUSIVE
INTERVIEW WITH
1619 PROJECT CREATOR,
NIKOLE HANNAH-JONES



Issue 78 • SPRING 2022

www.indykids.org

AS CLIMATE DISASTERS WORSEN, COMMUNITIES MOBILIZE AROUND MUTUAL AID



Original Illustration by Matt Jenkins, @matt_deforest_art

@matt_deforest_art

ZIGGY GLEASON • age 12 and INDYKIDS STAFF

Last year was one of the most catastrophic and costly years on record for climate disasters in the United States, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) said in a recent report. During 2021 alone, there were 20 climate disasters which cost the U.S. economy \$1 billion or more and killed 688 people.

Climate change is increasing the frequency of natural disasters like floods, wildfires and tornadoes. Last year marked the seventh consecutive year with at least 10 \$1 billion disasters, the NOAA report said. It was also the fourth warmest year on record, which may have contributed to the large number of disasters. After a climate disaster hits a region, whole communities are often destroyed. Cars are overturned, houses are ripped apart, sacred possessions are destroyed or charred, and many people are left with nothing.

One of the most devastating

events from 2021 was the December Colorado wildfire, the largest in the state's history. It destroyed around 600 homes and caused an evacuation order for over 30,000 people. Also in December, the most destructive tornado in Kentucky history killed at least 70 people.

"The data highlights a worsening and undeniable trend," Rachel Cleetus, policy director for the climate and energy program at the Union of Concerned Scientists, explained to the *Guardian*, "that underscores the reality of how the climate crisis is already affecting every region of the country." Following the wildfires, Garry Sanfaçon, Colorado's disaster recovery manager, explained that recovery from disasters like this takes years. The state is still trying to recover from a flood that occurred nine years ago.

A recent poll conducted by NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist reveals that two out of three people would rather stay in their community

and attempt to rebuild rather than relocate. However, rebuilding these communities is a long and often controversial process. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which is part of the Department of Homeland Security, provides help for people affected by various types of disasters. FEMA often provides trailers for people to live in and money to assist damaged homes.

While aid is provided, systemic racism can play a role in how aid is given to those most affected by these disasters. The *New York Times* reported that FEMA often helps white people more than people of color, no matter how much damage the disaster caused to them respectively. After Hurricane Laura hit Louisiana in August 2020, FEMA awarded Roy Vaussine, a white man, \$17,000, while Charlotte and Norman Biagas, a Black couple, received just \$7,000 of aid, despite equal amounts of damage to their properties.

Non-governmental organizations such as Mutual Aid Disaster Relief (MADR) help to provide aid to those hit by climate disasters. Their network is made up of social justice activists, eco-activists, Black liberation activists and those who are organizing support for disaster survivors in the spirit of mutual aid and solidarity.

"When a disaster has happened, people default back to mutual aid—regardless of whether they call it by those words or not—people spontaneously come together and care for each other in a time of crisis," Jimmy Dunson, an organizer with MADR, told *Sojourners* while working in Louisiana following Hurricane Ida in 2021. "[When] there's profound loss, devastation, and trauma, there's also a sense of communalism and coming together."



LIKE US ON FACEBOOK: facebook.com/indykids



FOLLOW US ON TWITTER: @IndyKidsNews



FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM: @IndyKidsNews



NewsBrief



"Humiliated" Haitian Asylum Seekers Hit Back

ARJUN DILUNA • age 11



Illustration by Jesse Duquette, used with permission

A group of Haitian asylum seekers is suing the U.S. government for anti-Black racism and the use of the deportation policy Title 42. In September 2021, photos of U.S. Border Patrol whipping and chasing Haitian asylum seekers near the U.S.-Mexico border went viral.

During the raid at the Del Rio encampment in Texas, Mirard Joseph, a Haitian asylum seeker named in the lawsuit, was grabbed by the collar and whipped by Border Patrol agents. "This was the most humiliating experience in my life," Joseph said to ABC News. The lawsuit claims that the administration was warned about the coming influx of Haitian asylum seekers—15,000 of whom were seeking refuge in Del Rio—but they failed to prepare.

Biden pledged to undo the aggressive policies of the Trump administration, particularly in immigration. However, Title 42, which the American Civil Liberties describes as "unlawful" and was introduced during the pandemic, has remained in place and allows the wrongful expulsion of asylum seekers from the United States.

Canada Pays Up for the Mistreatment of Indigenous Children

MAIA PASTOR • age 12



This year, the Canadian government agreed to pay a \$32 billion USD settlement, its largest ever, over the poor treatment of Indigenous children.

Lawyer David Sterns, representing harmed First Nations children and families, said that the "enormity of this settlement is due to one reason: the sheer scope of the harm inflicted on class members." That harm includes countless children being denied basic services to help with food and housing, and therapy to address multigenerational trauma. Instead of families receiving the help they needed, hundreds of thousands of First Nations children were removed from their homes and placed in the welfare system.

According to 2016 Canadian census data, Indigenous kids make up less than 8% of children under the age of 15, but they accounted for more than 50% of all kids in foster care. The landmark settlement will be split between the impacted families and ensuring the long-term reform of the First Nations Children and Family Services over the next five years.

nation & world

Is Biden Keeping His Promises After COP26?

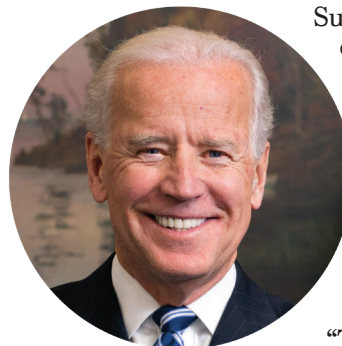
ANANYA BIEDERER • age 11

President Joe Biden pledged to address climate change at COP26, a global climate conference held in Scotland in November 2021. Days later, his administration oversaw one of the biggest gas and oil lease sales in U.S. history. The lease goes against Biden's promises to reduce global pollution and could cause even more environmental harm.

The lease saw 80 million acres of the Gulf of Mexico put up for auction for fracking. Fracking involves drilling natural gas from rocks, and it can create air and water pollution. Biden has promised to slash pollution in half by 2030, cut greenhouse gas emissions by 50 to 52% by 2030, and quadruple international climate aid. Many are now suggesting that the lease undermines these pledges.

The United States is the second-largest global pollution contributor, according to research group Carbon Brief, so undermining these pledges threatens climate progress internationally. "If the Biden administration wants to be serious about its promise to show the U.S. climate leadership," said Steven Feit, senior attorney at the Center for International Environmental Law, to the *Guardian*, "it must first clean up its own backyard."

While Biden did halt oil and gas leasing,



Wikimedia Commons

this decision was overturned by the Supreme Court last year. But some environmentalists argue that the Justice Department could have paused the recent lease sale while the decision is being appealed.

"It does not make sense to put oil profits over the future of this planet," said Christy Goldfuss, the senior vice president for energy and environment policy at the Center for American Progress, to NPR.

"The Biden administration has to take control over the leasing program with its authority to fulfill promises to the current and future communities in America. We cannot afford this risky approach to managing America's lands and ocean."



Jan-Rune Smenes Reite on Unsplash

Uncertainty Continues for Many Unaccompanied Afghan Children Evacuated to the United States

MADELEINE BLANK • age 12

The United States' withdrawal from Afghanistan is causing major problems for Afghans, including 1,450 children who were evacuated as unaccompanied minors fleeing the Taliban, a militant group that has regained control of the country.

When President Biden declared the withdrawal of troops in August 2021, the Taliban—who ruled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001—took over the country again, causing many Afghans to flee for fear of being harmed in revenge attacks. Afghans worry the Taliban will reimpose restrictive laws such as barring women from attending school, working or even walking down the street without a male family member.

During a mass evacuation of 56,000 people by U.S. troops, the Taliban bombed the Kabul International Airport. More than 40% of the evacuees were children, according to the Office of Refugee Resettlement. The majority of evacuated children are currently in foster care or with family members living in the United States. However, as of December 2021, the U.S. government still had custody of approximately 250 children, according to CNN. A ProPublica report stated that the facilities caring for these children have never experienced

this level of stress and disorganization. It is feared that many of these children will never be reunited with their families.

The procedure for reuniting these kids with their families who are still in Afghanistan or other countries remains unclear, according to advocates, like Jennifer Podkul, vice president of policy and advocacy for Kids in Need of Defense, an organization that helps unaccompanied immigrant and refugee children. "Whose job is it to reunite the parent and child?" Podkul asked on CNN. "That's a huge question that we're grappling with."

The government is still trying to locate many Afghan parents in order to reunite them with their children.



Kabul International Airport

Wikimedia Commons



E-mail: info@indykids.org

Website: www.indykids.org

Mail: IndyKids

P.O. Box 2281

New York, NY 10163

Published in print four times a year: Spring,

Summer, Fall & Winter. Website updated monthly.

Issue #78 • Printed March, 2022

ISSN: 1943-1031

SPECIAL THANKS TO...

The supporters and readers of **IndyKids** and NYC Cultural Affairs NYC Department of Education, Brooklyn Arts Council, Pulitzer Center, Claudia Hirsch and P.S. 128, New York Community Trust, The Wolf Family, The Wolf Baumer Family, DCTV, Rethinking Schools, Columbia Teachers College, Cold Spring School, New Haven, Connecticut, Nikole Hannah-Jones, Carla Wills, Margaret Middleton, Simin Farkhondeh and Democracy Now!, Britt Hamre, Clara Ibarra, Mike Kimber, Edith Pentz, Pablo Albarenga, Rozina Ali, Natalie Kessy, Lola Nogue, C., and Zawadi Morris

IndyKids Team: Isis Phillips, Emma Gaffney, Julia Thomas, Emily Lowinger, David Rojas-Leon, Neil Shibata, Soledad Aguilar-Colon, Adedayo Perkovich, Hudson McKinley-Uss, Alex Arriaga, Kristin Oliver, Todd Eaton, Malik Morangello, Cristina McCain and Diana Raimondi
Mentors: Conan Martinez, Shannon Lee, Joshua Sloat, Steven Rome, Maxx Kopelman, Larry Reibstein, Carla Baranauckas, Sneha Antony, Ross Douthat, Emily Lowinger, Malik Morangello, and Emma Gaffney
Editors: Emma Gaffney and Neil Shibata



Get the **IndyKids** newspaper in your mailbox or give it as a gift to someone special. **IndyKids** can be delivered to your home, school or business. **The paper is FREE — You only pay the mailing costs!** **The paper gets delivered four times a year.**

Learn more at **indykids.org** or email us with questions at **subscriptions@indykids.org**

Pentagon Makes Moves to Prevent Extremism Within the Military

ISHA SETH • age 11

The Pentagon is now enforcing new rules targeting far-right extremism and white supremacy within the U.S. military following the Jan. 6 insurrection. NPR analysis found that nearly one out of every five rioters charged for their participation in the riot has a connection to the U.S. military.

The rules, which were announced in December 2021, state that if a service member reposts or “likes” extremist content on social media, they could face disciplinary action.

The Department of Defense doesn’t prohibit joining extremist groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan or the Proud Boys, but aims to prevent service members from participating in far-right events. “Military members are highly prized by these groups as they bring legitimacy to their causes and enhance their ability to carry out attacks,” according to a report released by the department in March 2021.

Over 80 U.S. military service members, past and present, were charged in the Jan. 6 Capitol riot investigation. During the riot, protesters stormed the Capitol in an attempt to prevent the certification of Joe Biden’s election. Extremism within the military can be particularly problematic as service members are familiar with weapons, combat tactics, and they have access to important classified information.



United States Capitol riot.
Jan. 6, 2021

However, the Pentagon has admitted that there is no practical way to enforce the rules. The Pentagon’s chief spokesperson, John F. Kirby, said in a press conference, “There’s no ability for the Department of Defense to monitor the personal social media accounts of every member of the armed forces.” Rather, if banned behaviors are reported, commanders are to talk to their troops before deciding if disciplinary action is required. It is not clear how service members who break the rules will be penalized.

In addition to the new guidelines, Lloyd James Austin III, the first Black U.S. secretary of defense, has formed the Counter Extremism Working Group, which hopes to eliminate extremism within the military. The group will update the Pentagon’s definition of extremism, educate veterans who may be targeted by extremist organizations, and standardize entrance questionnaires to identify applicants who have participated in extremist activities in the past. “We owe the men and women of the Department of Defense an environment free of extremist activities,” Austin said in a public memo. “And we owe our country a military that reflects the founding values of our democracy.”

entrance questionnaires to identify applicants who have participated in extremist activities in the past.

“We owe the men and women of the Department of Defense an environment free of extremist activities,” Austin said in a public memo. “And we owe our country a military that reflects the founding values of our democracy.”

Build Back Better Failure Pushes Nearly 4 Million Kids Back into Poverty

NALA ANNES • age 11

The expiration of Biden’s American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) has pushed nearly 4 million children back into poverty. The act, which was introduced in March 2021, increased monthly payments low-income families received, and reportedly kept 6.3 million children out of poverty, reducing overall child poverty in the United States by 43%.

The ARPA raised the amount of monthly payments taxpaying parents received and how many people were allowed to claim it. The ARPA expired on Dec. 31, 2021, after Biden’s Build Back Better bill failed to pass the Senate.

According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP), families that earn under \$35,000 mainly spend their child tax credit on food, utilities, rent or mortgage, clothing, education costs or all of the above. This suggests that those receiving these payments are spending the money on basic needs, not unnecessary luxuries. Without this extended credit, the CBPP estimated that 10 million children will fall back into poverty in 2022.

Kids who grow up living in poverty often experience food insecurity and unstable housing, which causes a lot of stress. A 2019 National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine report on reducing child poverty found that these difficult circumstances often result in children in low-income families receiving lower levels of education, poorer health as adults and lower wages. “The evidence indicates that income poverty itself causes negative child outcomes, especially when it begins in early childhood,” the report says.

There were hopes from progressives that the

COVID-19 benefits would become a permanent fixture. “I really have to call out that with the Build Back Better bill not being passed, that we are seeing now families really losing hope,” pediatrician Dr. Megan Sandel, who runs Boston Medical Center’s Grow Clinic, said to NPR. “So time is of the essence. We need to really make sure that families don’t fall off the cliff, especially in this time with such high food inflation.”

Mikhail Nilov on Pexels



Science Briefs

Magawa, Beloved Bomb-Sniffing Rat, Passes Away

FLYNN ROSSMAN • age 12



Wikimedia Commons

Bomb-sniffing African pouched rat

In early 2022, a legend died. That legend was an African pouched rat named Magawa, who was trained to sniff out unexploded landmines in Cambodia.

Magawa, who was born in 2013, was trained for three years in Tanzania by the Belgian organization Anti-Personnel Landmines Detection Product Development. After he completed his training, he was shipped out to Siem Reap, Cambodia, where many landmines remained from the civil war with the Khmer Rouge. He sniffed away to his heart’s content while saving the lives of countless people.

During his career, he cleared almost 2.5 million square feet of land and detected over 100 mines. Magawa’s salary was one banana per landmine. After his lifesaving work was over, he received two rewards: a rat-sized gold medal and retirement. The heroic rodent spent the rest of his days relaxing and died at the merry old age of 8 years old.

Are Passive Greenhouses the Future of Farming?

THEO BLOOM • age 11



Mark Siebnicki on Pexels

Dong Jianyi, an agronomist originally from China, has introduced Alberta, Canada, to large-scale greenhouses that don’t use electricity. Passive greenhouses can allow you to produce vegetables even in freezing temperatures. Dong’s Freshpal Farms is thought to be the largest commercial passive solar greenhouse in Alberta.

Passive solar greenhouses use energy from the sun, instead of electricity, to stay warm. Producing electricity requires burning a lot of fossil fuels, which has a negative impact on the Earth and causes global warming.

As an agronomist—an expert in the science of crop production—Dong was able to understand the benefits of the passive greenhouses widely used in his home country of China to grow crops even when it is below freezing outside. Like many parts of China, Alberta gets extremely cold in the winter. But the unique design of the passive greenhouses allows temperatures inside to remain warm enough to grow vegetables. Dong said that using these greenhouses saves him around \$30,000 a year in electricity bills.

Affordable Housing Issues Still Plague U.S. States

AVA VIDAL • age 11

One of the leading causes of houselessness is the lack of affordable housing. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines an “affordable dwelling” as a household that costs 30% or less of its income. However, a recent study from Harvard University found that 38.1 million households spend more than one-third of their income on housing.

In the United States, only 37 affordable and available rental homes exist for every 100 extremely low-income renter households, and a vast majority of those struggling are from non-white communities. “This housing crisis is felt most intensely in Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities,” explains Javier Lopez, a former official at New York City’s Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, “which have experienced a well-documented history of racial discrimination in securing, stabilizing, and maintaining quality housing.”

Many cities around the United States have been arresting and fining the homeless for resting, sleeping or sitting in public spaces. In San Diego, one unhoused man was fined more than \$1,000 for spitting on a public sidewalk while brushing his teeth. In some places, public restrooms are not accessible overnight, but public urination is prohibited.

However, it doesn’t need to be this way. Resources could be shifted away from harassing, fining and jailing unhoused people and invested in real solutions, like Housing First approaches. This involves pairing people with long-term housing without barriers or conditions and is the first step in bringing many out of houselessness for good.

Biden’s Build Back Better Act allocated \$15 billion to help build or preserve more than 150,000 rental homes for lower-income families, around \$65 billion to preserve and rebuild public housing, and around \$24 billion for housing choice vouchers, which would help an estimated 300,000 low-income households. However, the plan failed to pass the Senate in December 2021. It is possible that some parts of the act could still pass. “I’m confident we can get pieces, big chunks of the Build Back Better law signed into law,” the president said at a press conference in January.



Ev on Unsplash

WHY DOES THE U.S. UNHOUSED



How Has the Pandemic Made Houselessness Worse

Houselessness in the United States has become increasingly worse since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. A report published in August 2021 by the Congressional Research Service found that the national unemployment rate had reached 14.8%, a record number. Without a steady income, millions of people have been unable to pay their rent and faced eviction from their homes.

Many of those living in shelters moved back onto the streets for fear of contracting the virus in crowded buildings. Others had no choice, as shelters were

forced to limit the number of individuals they could house. For the first time since records began, the number of people living unsheltered in the United States exceeded the number of those who were sheltered in 2020.

In September 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued an eviction moratorium which temporarily halted evictions to prevent the unhoused population from growing even further. However, this federal order ended in August 2021. The Biden administration enacted the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) in March 2021, which aimed

An Interview with Margaret Middleton

Margaret Middleton is the chief executive officer at Columbus House in Connecticut, which provides shelter for the unhoused and works to understand and overcome the factors that create houselessness.

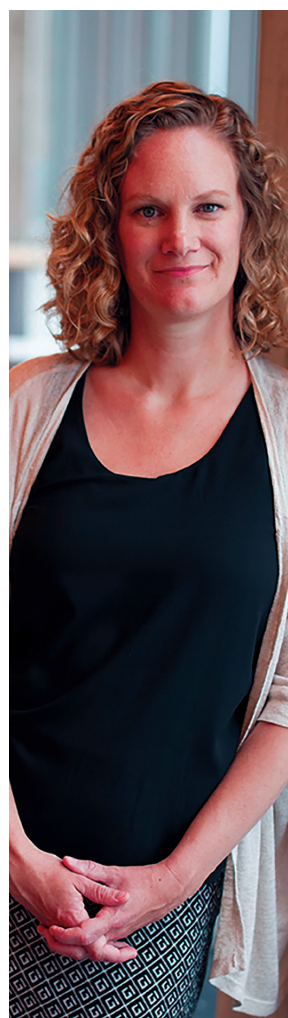


Photo by Carolyn Richardson

Zeke: Mentally and physically ill people are more likely to end up unhoused. Do you believe that universal healthcare could improve this situation?

Universal healthcare would definitely help to end homelessness. Medical care for serious medical issues often costs a huge amount of money. When people can’t afford medical care, they may end up without enough money to pay for a home.

Maia: What have people been doing to keep shelters safe during COVID? Do people have to be vaccinated to stay in shelters?

Homeless shelters like Columbus House have kept people safe from COVID in hotel rooms instead of in big rooms full of beds. People do not have to be vaccinated to be in a shelter because we always want people to be able to come inside if they want to.

Maia: Have you seen an increase in the local unhoused population due to evictions?

We have seen an increase in the number of people calling 211 asking for help with housing, and we have seen a rising number of evictions, but we don’t know yet if one causes the other.

Maia: What do you think would be a good solution to lower the amount of people who are getting evicted?

Connecticut will provide everyone facing eviction a lawyer in court starting this year. This will help many people avoid eviction. Another solution would be to provide more people with help in paying their rent.

Aya: Do you believe that climate change is causing more people to become unhoused? If so, why?

I have not seen any evidence that climate change is directly causing more people to become unhoused in our community. However, climate change is making it harder for people who are unhoused to survive outside because storms are stronger and weather patterns are more extreme.

Aya: What do you believe could improve this situation?

Our government has to prioritize providing safe, affordable housing to all citizens.

Ava: What do you think could be done to help unhoused people from being unfairly criminalized?

The city of New Haven is starting a non-police crisis response team this year. A group of social workers and mental health professionals will respond to emergency calls that don’t involve violence or threats of violence. This should help people without homes avoid some unfair criminalization.

Ava: Do you think that the problem with the lack of affordable homes could be solved by the government changing some of its regulations?

The only thing that will solve homelessness is if the government commits to providing a safe and affordable home to everyone who needs one. The only way our government will make that commitment is if we tell the people we elect that we want everyone to have a safe and affordable home.

POPULATION KEEP GROWING?



MAIA CORT • age 11

Ev on Unsplash

to assist with the health and economic crises.

According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, as of October 2021, one in five renters in the United States were behind on rental payments, and 10 million households were behind on mortgage payments. The ARPA included several provisions aimed to help those facing eviction or who were made unhoused. These included allocating over \$21.5 billion in emergency rental assistance and providing \$5 billion for unhoused assistance and supportive services.

Gene Sperling, a Biden adviser, explained that the

rental assistance program was essential as evictions can derail families for years. “Preventing deeper harms is going to pay serious benefits, not just in terms of the longer-term economy but also basic human well-being and dignity,” he said in an interview with the *Los Angeles Times*.

In December, Connecticut received federal approval to spend \$7.2 million of their COVID-19 relief fund to help schools in identifying and assisting unhoused students and ensure that they can still attend school. But as the plan’s funding rapidly depletes, the future of such programs remains unknown.

Housing IS Healthcare

ZEKE SUNDSTROM • age 12

Poor physical and mental health is both a cause and an effect of houselessness. Even before the pandemic worsened the situation, the number of chronically unhoused people—those who have been without housing for over a year—rose by 15% between 2019 and 2020.

According to the National Healthcare for the Homeless Council (NHHHC), unhoused people are three to six times more likely to become ill than housed people, and their life expectancy is on average 12 years lower than the general U.S. population. Around 30 to 35% of unhoused people are also suffering from mental illnesses, according to Homeless Hub.

An injury or illness can start out as a health condition but quickly affect employment. A worker suffering from a physical or mental condition might have problems due to missing too much time from work or being unable to perform needed tasks. Of course, if someone misses a lot of time at their job and can’t do it well, they are at risk of getting fired.

“The loss of employment due to poor health then becomes a vicious cycle,” explains the NHHHC. “Without funds to pay for healthcare—such as treatment, medications and surgery—one cannot heal to work again, and if one remains ill, it is difficult to regain employment.” According to the council, half of all personal bankruptcies in the United States are caused by health problems.

Houselessness can both intensify existing problems and create more. Even minor issues, such as cuts or common colds, easily develop into larger problems, such as infections or pneumonia.

Since healthcare and houselessness are so closely connected, helping to solve one problem could positively impact the other. Housing is ultimately a form of medicine for unhoused people. A house reduces the chances of becoming unwell and aids recovery from medical treatment.

The National Coalition for the Homeless says that providing universal health coverage (healthcare for everyone, regardless of ability to pay) is “essential in the fight to end homelessness.” There are currently no U.S. states which have a universal healthcare program.

Unhoused Climate Emergency

AYA BAJWA • age 11



Hejaar on Pexels

Climate change is creating extreme weather conditions like hurricanes, heat waves, floods, tornadoes and wildfires that disproportionately affect unhoused people and cause houselessness, too. Without shelter to protect themselves, unhoused people are at great risk of illness, injury and even death.

Rising temperatures can lead to an increased chance of illness or death for unhoused people due to heat exhaustion and dehydration. A study conducted by the University of California, San Diego on houselessness and emergency department visits found that there was an increase in the number of unhoused people visiting emergency rooms during periods of extreme temperatures. A lack of shelter and access to clean water can lead to life-threatening health issues.

“Climate change is also a housing crisis,” said Andreanecia Morris, executive director of the housing advocacy nonprofit HousingNOLA, to *Mother Jones*. Severe weather caused by climate change is one of the leading causes of houselessness around the world. Natural disasters like hurricanes can destroy entire homes and even communities. According to the Louisiana Illuminator, in 2020 thousands of people became

unhoused in Lake Charles, La., after Hurricane Laura destroyed their homes.

Property owners have been known to increase rent prices to cover the cost of repairs, which ultimately causes financially disadvantaged tenants to be evicted. These events tend to disproportionately affect non-white communities the most. “This power imbalance that exists between renters and landlords,” explained Sarah Saadian, vice president of public policy at the National Low Income Housing Coalition, to *Mother Jones*, “allows them to turn tragedies into money in their pockets.” Often these renters cannot find other housing options, forcing them to live on the streets.

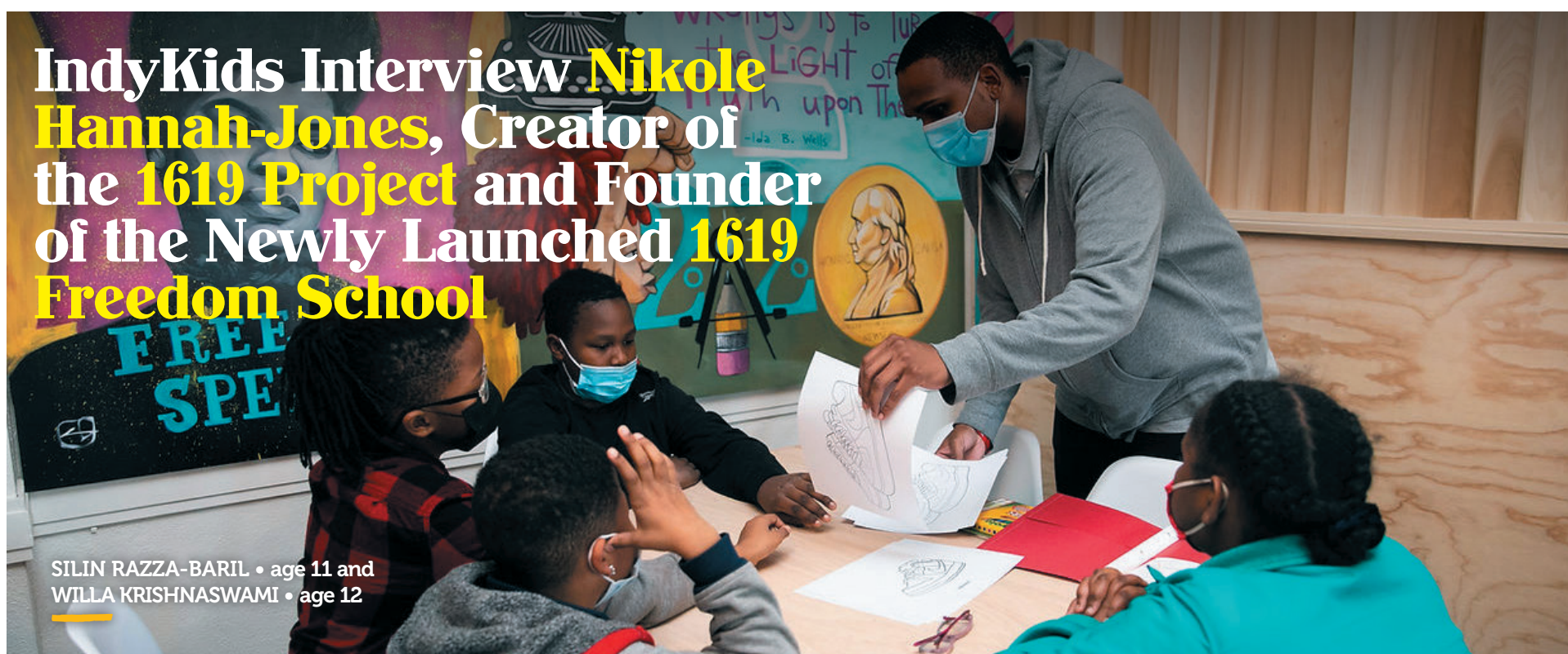
Rising sea levels are also impacting the availability of affordable housing, and the people who are most affected by this are often economically poor, non-white communities. In an interview with NPR, Priya Jayachandran, president of the National Housing Trust, explained that the impact sea levels have on housing is often overlooked because it will play out over decades. Jayachandran suggests that the solution is to build more affordable housing on higher ground.



Mart Production on Pexels

culture & activism

IndyKids Interview **Nikole Hannah-Jones**, Creator of the **1619 Project** and Founder of the Newly Launched **1619 Freedom School**



SILIN RAZZA-BARIL • age 11 and
WILLA KRISHNASWAMI • age 12

1619 Freedom School

www.1619freedomsschool.org

Nikole Hannah-Jones, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and creator of the 1619 Project, has launched the 1619 Freedom School in Waterloo, Iowa, which opened earlier this year.

The 1619 Freedom School is a free afterschool program with extensive literacy instruction for students who are struggling with their literacy skills. The school's curriculum will highlight Black excellence and resistance in America, with a library including books by Black authors and telling stories centered around Black protagonists. In Waterloo, Black kids' average grades are 2.2 grades behind their white peers, and they are 3.7 times more likely to be suspended from school, according to ProPublica.

The 1619 Freedom School was founded on the model of the Freedom Schools from the civil rights era. These Freedom Schools were created to educate Black people about systemic racism in America. In 1619, the first enslaved Africans were brought to the United States. The 1619 Freedom School's mission is to find "Liberation through literacy."

Waterloo was ranked as one of the worst cities in the United States for Black Americans in a study conducted by 24/7 Wall Street. Their data suggests that working Black Americans in Waterloo make an average of \$29,150 per year, or 47.7% of what white residents make. Low-income families need to spend their money on necessities like rent and food, as opposed to tutoring and extracurricular education. The program is completely independent and does not rely on government funding.



Nikole Hannah-Jones, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and creator of the 1619 Project

Silin: You grew up in Waterloo, Iowa, in a town that "divided white from Black, opportunity from struggle," as you described it. Why did you feel it was important to launch the 1619 Freedom School in your hometown?

I was bused from my Black neighborhood school to the better white school on the white side of town. I understood that those schools were not better because they were white, but because they had more wealth and resources. I've been very successful in my life because I was able to get a quality education. So it was important for me to give back to the community that raised me and to try to help other students who have just as much ability and ambition as me to an education that will allow them to be successful.

Willa: What challenges did you face in the early stages of launching this program?

What was really important to me was not to make our children feel punished. So often [with students who are struggling], we take away all the joy of learning because we're so focused on trying to get their grades up. Low-income children are often put into facilities that reflect their disadvantage; we don't put them in facilities that tell them we actually think that they are important and worthy, so I wanted to make the space beautiful. When they walked into the Freedom School for the first time and they saw all of these brand new books and the beautiful couches and murals, they were so excited to be there. Some of the students that have

had behavioral problems [at school] have no problems at all in the Freedom School, because they feel respected and loved. [Getting] that reaction is the most fulfilling thing I've ever done.

Silin: A bill passed in Iowa in July last year banning classroom discussion of how the U.S. and Iowa are systemically racist or that any race is inherently superior to another. How does this bill affect your approach to history and the curriculum as it centers on experiences of Black Americans?

We received no public funds. We didn't want anyone to try to use the fact that we were taking public money to try to tell us the best way to teach. Parents who don't believe in what we teach don't enroll their kids in the program. [Our program helps to tackle questions like]: Why are Black children the most likely to be living in poverty, to be disadvantaged and behind in their schooling? You either believe that there's something in our society that's causing it, or you believe that Black families don't want the same things that white families want. Our curriculum is teaching children, no matter what race [they are], about the contributions of Black Americans. The research is very clear that when Black children learn Black history, they do better in school.

Willa: Why does the 1619 Freedom School have such a big focus on reading and literacy skills?

You really stop getting help with literacy after the third grade.

So when you start having [more difficult classes in] science, social studies or math, if you haven't already mastered basic literacy skills, you're going to struggle. That's what is so critical about intervention and understanding that if you struggle with literacy, you will struggle in every subject.

Silin: You have said that education is a revolutionary act. What do you hope the Freedom School will achieve?

When I first came across the date 1619 as a 16-year-old student, it changed my life. [Until then,] I thought Black people weren't in [history books] because we didn't do anything noteworthy. That's a very demeaning experience to have. I think a lot of Black, Indigenous, Latino and queer children don't do well in school because [they] don't ever see [themselves] in the story. I [took a class that was] built around Black history and realized there's a lot to be proud of, and I could see myself in those stories. I got angry that our teachers could have given this to us and they didn't.

We've been taught that Black families don't value education, and yet Black people, even during slavery when it was illegal to get an education, were still risking their lives to learn to read and write. If we can help our kids understand this, then that's our legacy: that we've always fought for an education. For Black people, education has always been tied to our liberation, and I think we can transform the relationship that so many poor Black children have with school.

Someday You Could Be... Carla Wills

SAMIR IYDROOSE • age 12

Formerly a senior news producer at *Democracy Now!*, Carla Wills is the manager of audio production at *National Geographic* and the executive editor of the *Into the Depths* podcast. *Into the Depths* follows a team of Black researchers and divers as they discover and explore many of the thousands of shipwrecks from the transatlantic slave trade.



How did you get into the world of social justice journalism?

Once I got into journalism, and even before, I had a continuous focus on making sure the work I did was always about serving the community and making sure people's voices were amplified. You know, there's that quote, "It's not that people don't have a voice. There are no voiceless people. You just have to pass the mic." So, basically, my work has always been about sharing platforms, amplifying voices and making sure people are heard.

Do you think podcasting is an impactful form of media, and why does podcasting appeal to you over other forms of media?

Absolutely. I'm a big fan of storytelling, and leaning into the narrative of a story. With podcasting and radio, you have to paint a picture without relying on visuals. Instead the focus is on other things like music or ambient sound. Even just the sound around you, which we call room tone. I love the process of putting all of that together and making it sound beautiful. It really immerses the listener in a way that just looking at something on the screen doesn't really achieve. It allows your imagination to unfold, as well, as you're listening to the story. It's an art.

Why is the mission of *Into the Depths* important to you? And why do you think it's important to tell these kinds of stories?

That's one of the questions we posed in this series. In order to really understand America,

or understand anything about the transatlantic slave trade, we have to have an unvarnished look at history. We can't be afraid to engage with this history, and not be afraid of the truth. And only after we do that do we really get any real healing and reconciliation. That's why it matters. If we are to move forward as a country, or even as any kind of community, we have to be able to face history.



Francisco Jesús Navarro Hernández on Unsplash

OPINION PIECE

Should America's Teachers Have to Crawl on Ice for a Raise?

LEAH MATLOFF • age 12

During an intermission at a South Dakota hockey game in December last year, an event called "Dash for Cash" took place. Ten local teachers stood in the middle of the hockey rink, and \$5,000 in one-dollar bills was dropped in front of them. The teachers quickly got on their knees and scrambled to pick up the money, which was to be used for school supplies, while the audience laughed and jeered. As you can imagine, this sparked a lot of controversy.

School supplies normally come out of a teacher's own pocket. This is just one sign that teachers in the United States deserve a raise. In some states, like Mississippi, which ranks last in the nation in average teacher pay, many work multiple jobs just in order to afford a warm bed.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 has made teaching more challenging. A recent survey conducted by Teachers Pay Teachers found that one-third of

American teachers were considering leaving their jobs or retiring early due to stress and overwork. "Good teachers are competent humans," a teacher told *Mississippi Today*, "and competent humans are going to realize really quickly they can do something a lot less demanding and make more money."

Raising teacher's salaries across the country would benefit students, as well. If salaries were raised, teachers would no longer have to work two or more jobs, they could focus all of their attention on their teaching, meaning we would get a better education. A study by the National Education Association showed that student performance improved by up to 10% after teacher's salaries were increased by 10%.

Speaking as a student, I believe teachers deserve far more than what they receive. At the very least, we want a country where they aren't crawling around in the middle of an ice rink, right?



Andrea Piacquadio on Pexels

Who Am I?



FLYNN ROSSMAN • age 12

1. I was born prematurely in 1927 in Miami, Fla., while my parents were on vacation.
2. I grew up in the Bahamas on my parents' tomato farm on Cat Island until I moved to the United States when I was 15 years old.
3. In 1959, I appeared in my first Oscar-winning film. It was nominated for nine awards and won two of them.
4. Usually the characters I chose to play were intelligent and respectable, to combat the racist stereotypes African American characters were often portrayed as in most films at that time.
5. I participated in many civil rights protests, such as the March on Washington in 1963.
6. In 1964, I became the first African American to win Best Actor at the Oscars.
7. In 1967, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. called me "a man who is dedicated to human rights and freedom."
8. From 1997 to 2007, I served as an ambassador to Japan for the Bahamas.
9. In 2001, I received a very special Oscar award for Lifetime Achievement.
10. During my lifetime, I received many awards, such as the United States of America's highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, presented by Barack Obama, and I was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II.
11. I died peacefully on Jan. 6, 2022, in Los Angeles, Calif.

Answer: Sir Sidney Poitier

**Thank you
for your
continued
support!**



designed by freepik.com

Now more than ever, we need sources of media for our youth that center the stories of people of color, immigrants, women, workers and LGBTQIA+ communities. *IndyKids* is the nation's only social justice-oriented newspaper written by kids for kids. Now in its 16th year in print, *IndyKids* is distributed to classrooms and households in 35 states, helping thousands of youth think more critically about the news of the world. Plus, it's free and ad-free!

Subscription costs cover only the cost of mailing issues to subscribers. We rely on donations to cover all other costs of producing *IndyKids* and running our Kid Reporter Program, through which more than 600 youth have been trained as journalists.

Can you contribute today to help us continue printing *IndyKids* and training the journalists of tomorrow? Thank you for your continued support!

Give online today at

<http://indykids.org/main/donate/>

To donate via mail, send a check made out to "IndyKids" to P.O. Box 2281, New York, NY 10163

Getting Wild With... Tasmanian Devils

HENRY RUSSELL • age 11



Tasmanian devils are rather cute black- or brown-furred mammals that look a little like baby bears. They are the world's largest meat-eating marsupial, reaching 30 inches in length and weighing up to 26 pounds. They have very sharp teeth that can deliver one of the strongest bites of any mammal. These animals got the name "devil" after early Europeans witnessed their growling, lunging and teeth-bearing characteristics.

Tasmanian devils were once abundant throughout Australia but now live only on the island of Tasmania. They have faced near extinction multiple times due to illnesses and humans. In the late 1800s, Tasmanian devils were

considered a livestock-killing pest, and people attempted to eradicate them. These attempts were almost successful, and it wasn't until 1941 that the Australian government made the devils a protected species.

The species faced another near-extinction event in the mid-1990s when they developed an infectious illness called devil facial tumor disease, which killed 140,000 Tasmanian devils, almost the whole population. As a result, the entire species was classified as endangered.

Now conservationist organizations like Aussie Ark have been attempting to bring them back to the Australian mainland for the first time in 3,000 years. The reintroduction of the Tasmanian devil into

mainland Australia is part of an effort called rewilding. Rewilding allows nature to heal itself without too much human intervention by enabling life in our ecosystems to thrive and keep invasive species at bay.

Just one month after Aussie Ark created a sanctuary for the devils on the mainland, researchers saw that the population began growing. Tasmanian devils also protect many small mammals on the continent, such as bilbies, quolls and potoroos. According to Hayley Shute, the life sciences manager for Aussie Ark, "Australia has the worst mammal extinction rate in the entire world." But rewilding efforts can go a long way to restoring and maintaining a healthy ecosystem.

Wordsearch

S S E N S S E L E S U O H Q Q
E Y V V T S I M O N O R G A N
H W E K D R S E R U Y E F Z S
W T N F E M D S U L R L A C L
M E I S I U D U F G K B T O P
S U M U N L E O R J N A O M E
I P D O A Y P H A T A D R M N
M O N N P S O N C S B R N U T
E V A E M A R E K H I O A N A
R E L G O S T E I O L F D I G
T R Q I C H A R N F A F O T O
X T P D C S T G G I T A N Y N
E Y K N A H I C L E R C K H Z
H F V I N T O L P L E D G E W
L Z R J U G N I T S A C D O P

AFFORDABLE
AGRONOMIST
ASYLUM
COMMUNITY
DEPORTATION
EXTREMISM
FRACKING
GREENHOUSE
HOUSELESSNESS
INDIGENOUS
LANDMINE
PENTAGON
PLEDGE
PODCASTING
POVERTY
TALIBAN
TORNADO
UNACCOMPANIED