

JUNE 27/28 2020

FT Weekend Magazine

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CHINA'S RACE TO BEAT POVERTY

Yuan Yang and Nian Liu on the country's plan to wipe out rural deprivation by the end of 2020



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TYLER MITCHELL, UNTITLED (PARK FRIVOLITY), 2019.

‘The position of the camera is often low and intimate, as though he too is embedded in the scene’

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The UK’s appetite for fried chicken is voracious, with shops that sell it thriving to the tune of £2.3bn last year. *Alice Hancock* reports on how they have emerged as one of the high street’s few success stories during lockdown – and what their future holds

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The first black photographer to shoot the cover of US Vogue talks to *Griselda Murray Brown* about the protests sparked by the killing of George Floyd and why depicting leisure time for black people is a political act

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How coronavirus reminded me that life is a risky business

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Cover: *Jike Shibu* and his mother *Ami Fuji* at their house in *Atule’er* village in south-west China. Photograph by *Yufan Lu*



‘I am happy to peel my beans... because the rest of this recipe is a doddle’

Rowley Leigh, p38



‘We’re finding people on the street who were primed to be picked up and haven’t been’

Homelessness after London’s lockdown, p32

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SIMON KUPER

OPENING SHOT

Which cities and towns will be post-pandemic winners?



Richard Florida and his wife and children spent most of lockdown in their apartment on Miami Beach. When they returned home to Toronto, the city had changed. “When we left, you couldn’t get stuff readily delivered here,” he reports over Zoom. “I literally pressed the Instacart button five minutes before I connected to you... and [my order] will be here in half an hour.”

Florida is the urban theorist who coined the term “the creative class” and spotted its takeover of the world’s city centres. He’d barely thought about pandemics before, despite being born during the great flu outbreak of 1957 - his parents never mentioned it. During lockdown, he read up on how pandemics change cities, and concluded that the effects were modest but real. New York, for instance, boomed after the 1918-19 flu. Florida rejects both the dystopian and utopian urban forecasts now being bandied around. He thinks cities will thrive post-coronavirus, but with younger populations than before, more housing and fewer offices and shops.

He says: “It looks like about 40 per cent of the workforce is working remotely now. Maybe half of that - like 20 per cent, which is a big increase - will continue to work remotely. I think we will see carnage in the office sector.”

Florida identifies the former office workers most likely to leave cities as middle-aged people with children who have already acquired their networks, spouses and friends. Now they crave space. He’s plainly describing upscale workers - but wherever they go, the service class of baristas, hairdressers and plumbers will have to follow.

Wealthy migrants from cities may buy urban pied-à-terre near their old offices, such as in Tribeca near Wall Street, says Florida. They will install a home office or even two in their new homes. (Their employers will be delighted to let them finance their own workspaces.)

Where will these people move to? “Really nice places with a good airport and a great university, great restaurants, food shops, variety of products, ability to get good coffee, to enjoy an outdoor concert,” replies Florida. “They’re not going to go to what we thought of as barren suburban wastelands.” He adds: “I do think part of the creative class is more rural.”

Amenities in second-tier US cities have transformed since about 2000. Many such places now have better independent restaurants and music venues than top-tier cities, because they have more space and fewer chains and luxury stores. But he warns that upscale workers leaving somewhere like New York will consider only a few select locations. He cites Hudson (in upstate New York), the Hamptons and Miami.

Less-blessed places will struggle in this recession: “quaint” small towns whose local universities might fold and long-term struggling cities such as Detroit that have never really gained

momentum. “I looked at the Zillow survey that compared people searching for homes in April 2020 to April 2019. Which found, on aggregate, not much change. Detroit had the greatest number of people searching for houses outside the region: a 15 per cent change. That worries me. I’m worried about Cleveland, Buffalo and the Akrons and Toledos. They’re lovely cities, but urban revitalisation never really took place, or was only just occurring. In America, we have this idea that many small places will rise, when in fact it’s a very small number.”

‘Zoom may even make congested cities like Los Angeles more attractive by letting residents cut down on driving’

Florida considers US cities, with their relatively poor schools and long commutes, more vulnerable to exodus than, say, Toronto. Still, he doesn’t expect many departures anywhere. Zoom may even make congested cities like Los Angeles more attractive by letting some residents cut down on driving.

Florida says that if he were 23, he’d head straight for New York. He thinks the young will keep flocking to cities to have fun and make the personal connections that drive careers. He recounts asking the film director Peter Jackson how he managed to base himself in Wellington, New Zealand. Jackson replied: “I couldn’t go there to start. I had to be in LA, because that’s where the network was.” Young people will also need to spend time in offices to absorb their companies’ corporate cultures.

But some big-city office and retail space will fall empty and be converted into homes, possibly reducing urban house prices, says Florida. “London and New York won’t fall apart, but they’re going to have a price and a fiscal adjustment, so they’re going to be put under stress. The wave of urban protests about racial injustice, class injustice and the organisation of frontline-service workers creates a moment where it’s possible to think about a more inclusive city. But we could miss this opportunity.” That happened after the 2008 financial crisis, he notes, when gentrification only accelerated.

If Florida ran a real-estate fund, where would he buy now? “My father - a guy with seventh-grade education - told me that people got rich on property in places like New York. If there’s a huge sale in New York or London and Paris, that’s where I buy.” But he doesn’t expect many buying opportunities. Great cities have overcome bigger things than coronavirus. **FT**

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INVENTORY BRIAN GREENE
 PHYSICIST, MATHEMATICIAN
 AND STRING THEORIST

‘The health of democracy requires that every citizen has some familiarity with scientific ideas’

Brian Greene, 57, a professor of physics and mathematics, is the director of Columbia University’s Center for Theoretical Physics. He is renowned for his discoveries in superstring theory. His books include *The Elegant Universe*, *The Fabric of the Cosmos* and *The Hidden Reality*.

What was your childhood or earliest ambition?

To be a professional ten-pin bowler. Then an astronaut.

Private school or state school?

University or straight into work?

Public [state] schools in Manhattan, then Harvard.

Who was or still is your mentor?

Maths explorations with Neil Bellinson, a graduate student at Columbia University, allowed me to soar into areas I would not have encountered otherwise.

How physically fit are you?

I hope that I’m OK. I do recreational biking, running - my daughter does point to the ever-increasing girth of my waist.

Ambition or talent: which matters more to success?

Passion makes the chances of success greater.

How politically committed are you?

In the past few years, it’s become apparent that if you’re not paying close attention and acting upon things that matter to you, the world can go in directions that are tragic, awful and devastating. I feel far more committed to the importance of human rights, of a free press, of funding for fundamental research, of alerting the world to the difference between truth and opinion.

What would you like to own that you don’t currently possess?

A more powerful memory.

What’s your biggest extravagance?

We have a non-working farm in upstate New York. It’s a refuge.

What ambitions do you still have?

The biggest is to understand the nature of time.

What drives you on?

Trying to feel a deeper connection to the cosmos.

What is the greatest achievement of your life so far?

The happiest days of my life were my wedding day and the days my two children were born. Professionally, work I did some years ago that established that the fabric of space can rip apart.

I think Einstein himself would have found that interesting.

In what place are you happiest?

A place of ideas. I revel in the world of perspective that thoughtful individuals across the ages have put forward.

What do you find most irritating in other people?

Failure to adhere to the basic rules of logic and reasoning when involved in contentious conversations.

If your 20-year-old self could see you now, what would he think?

“Man, you should have stayed with the exercise programme.”

I think he’d feel a certain degree of fulfilment.

Which object that you’ve lost do you wish you still had?

When I was five, my parents bought me a watch with a red wristband.

My room had a red carpet and the watch slipped from my wrist and I was never able to find it. A friend [recently] suggested it had slipped through a tear in the fabric of the universe - and that the universe was winking at me over my future work.

What is the greatest challenge of our time?

Many would focus on the most immediate: saving the planet from the devastation wrought by human activity. I’d like to add changing the mindset of the public to recognise that the tools of rational investigation, of science, are available to everyone - and have the capacity not only to radically transform the challenges we face, but also to realise enormous opportunities.

The health of democracy requires that every citizen has some familiarity with scientific ideas.

Do you believe in an afterlife?

I believe in a symbolic afterlife: the things that we touch, the works we leave behind, the families we raise.

If you had to rate your satisfaction with your life so far, out of 10, what would you score?

Six or seven. Many scientists dream of being the next Einstein. That’s a pretty hard goal to achieve. It shifts your perspective to being part of the collective insight the scientific community can create, and passing it on to the next generation. **TV**

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Interview by Hester Lacey.

“Until the End of Time: Mind, Matter and Our Search for Meaning in an Evolving Universe” by Brian Greene is published by Allen Lane

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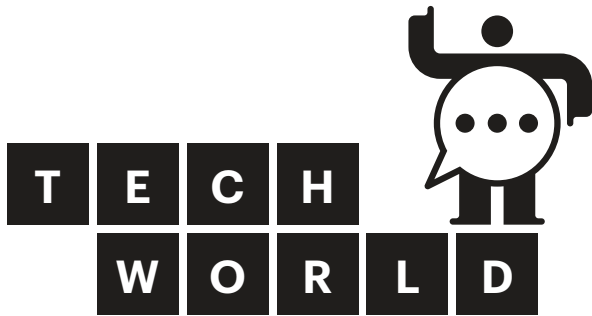
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BY ELAINE MOORE

Despite the city's flaws, my heart is in San Francisco

People have been writing San Francisco's obituary for years. Too expensive, too myopic, too many tech bros. Inequality makes it "kind of a train wreck", said Marc Benioff, chief executive of Salesforce, who was born there. Plus the city sits on top of multiple faults that threaten to tip it into the sea at any moment. Yet the Bay Area keeps growing - squeezing in more aspiring start-up founders and tech workers with every passing year.

The city's latest existential threat is working from home, which doesn't sound too bad by comparison. Don't be fooled - this one is serious. Tech may have built tools that enable remote working but the industry itself is very fond of offices that keep employees tethered to the city. In the south, there are huge Silicon Valley campus buildings. In San Francisco, companies such as Uber and Twitter have built headquarters alongside satellite offices for businesses like Google.

Now that Facebook, Twitter, Square and Shopify are encouraging long-term remote working, their employees have a good reason to ditch ultra-expensive flats and move elsewhere. News that SF's notoriously unaffordable property prices appear to be falling suggests some already have. Rents are down 9 per cent on last year, according to housing platform Zumper.

I'm not so sure this marks the beginning of an exodus. Prices could be down because the pandemic has frozen activity. Previous forecasts of city-wide retreat have been wrong. Besides, complaining



ILLUSTRATION BY PÂTÉ

about San Francisco is something of a local hobby. High prices and frayed services grind residents down. Every year, a new survey's results suggest vast numbers plan to move away (one in three, according to a survey conducted by San Francisco's Office of the Controller). Yet numbers keep rising. In the year to January, the population increased by more than 6,700, according to the California Department of Finance.

Tech workers and start-up founders can already escape if they want to. Companies such as Apple, Google, Facebook and Oracle all have offices outside California. Tech hubs including Silicon Peach (Atlanta) and Silicon Beach (Los Angeles) are trying to attract start-ups. I once had a 9am meeting with a venture capitalist who had returned that morning from Utah

'Complaining about San Francisco is something of a local hobby. High prices and frayed services grind us down. Yet the number of residents keeps rising'


and planned to fly to New York the next day. Utah start-ups just had their biggest year - banking more than \$1bn in funding. According to Crunchbase data, California-based start-ups account for less than 20 per cent of those acquired, down from 30 per cent a decade ago.

It is worth noting too that some of the most successful recent tech initial public offerings have come from companies outside California, including New York-based Datadog and ZoomInfo.

"If you have a tech company, you may feel like Silicon Valley is the only option, but that's just not true," wrote Stuart McLeod, founder of work management platform Karbon, in a blog published last year. "You don't have to accept that bullshit." Where else to go? McLeod chose Lake Tahoe. Vancouver is in the same time zone as the Bay Area. So is LA, which has the added glamour of the film industry and is only an hour's flight away. Texas, Utah, New York and Colorado have big universities to hire from. Chapel Hill in North Carolina is a relatively cheap small town with a "Research Triangle Park" of agencies and companies located between three universities.

Even so, California-based start-ups continue to raise about a third of the venture capital in the US - a share unchanged for more than a decade. Virtual meetings may work for established names but for early-stage companies, San Francisco and the wider Bay Area is still an appealing one-stop shop.

Few locations can match it for the concentration of workers, investors and mentors. The proximity to Stanford University and UC Berkeley is hard to beat. The weather and countryside are addictive. Lockdown means I have been in the UK for the past few months and I already miss California. Yes, the buildings and freeways are not especially inspiring. But it is still unusual to be surrounded by so many new companies that have succeeded and to know an entire industry is at work trying to make it happen again.

When I moved there in 2018, my predecessor gave me a hair-raising rundown of San Francisco's problems. He was right on all counts. I stayed anyway. Like all those survey participants before me, I found plenty of reasons to complain about the city but not quite enough to leave. 

Elaine Moore is the FT's deputy Lex editor

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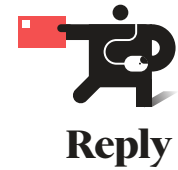


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ROBERT SHRIMSLEY THE NATIONAL CONVERSATION



The face mask that's too big an ask

It turns out that you can buy a Dominic Cummings face mask. It seems like a good bet. After all, the prime minister's chief strategist seems to enjoy levels of immunity not available to ordinary mortals. Admittedly, it is immunity from the consequences of his actions rather than from the virus itself but I think an image of Dom over my face has got to be some sort of deterrent.

The search for face coverings has taken a disproportionate time in our household but, then again, it's not as if there is somewhere we have to be. A quick browse online will show that you can pretty much buy any kind of wacky mask: Disney characters, works of art and all the Kennedys except for Ludovic. It may seem fun now but, trust me, this is not a joke that is going to last. These are the equivalent of novelty socks except that they are on - and in - your face.

Nonetheless, I sense a pretty wide social divide on the face-mask issue. The smart, sanitary approach is paper masks but what does that really say about you other than you live near a Boots? Then there are the home-made ones for those who want to master the "I'm wearing a sock on my face" look. Cyclists will already possess a useful anti-pollution mask with just a hint of Darth Vader, though even these come second to the N95 "we're taking this seriously" masks. Even so, this year's must-have mask is a lightly patterned number, elegant but understated, with enough style to show you care but not enough to suggest you care too much.

But as we ready ourselves for more normality outside, it is life inside that is getting more difficult. The easing of lockdown was meant to make things, well, easier. If anything however, it is intensifying the turmoil.

Like many of those fortunate enough for lockdown to be a nuisance rather than a trauma, we have been content to follow official



ILLUSTRATION BY LUCAS VARELA

advice and even lag a little behind it. This however has created a fierce domestic divide which pits tremulous boomers against Gen Z and it is running hot. The spawn have internalised the Black Lives Matter movement and all I'm saying is that if there were statues of the adults in our home they would have been boarded up for their own protection by now.

For 12 weeks we co-existed manageably. The spawn were both at home but the lockdown rules were sufficiently strict that the scope for conflict was minimised. They have known ever since we first yelled "stay away from the dog" during a visit to a country with rabies that their parents took a risk-averse approach to killer viruses. What is different is that normally we are worrying about them rather than us. But as lockdown restrictions eased, they became more aware of their oppression.

It has been hardest for the boy. Returning from the freedom of university, he has borne with fortitude the burden of being unable to blast out music in the bathroom during his 2am shower. But now the bonds are chafing and forbidden meetings are the field of conflict. His first gambit was to declare that we had already had Covid-19. It is true that my wife lost her sense of

smell for some weeks, but if you are stuck in the same house for three months that's surely nothing more than Darwinism. Anyway, without reliable antibody tests we were reluctant to go with the medical opinion of a history student.

His next push was to declare that lockdown was "basically over". No one was observing it any more and we should just chill. This of course was not reassuring. It is not so much that we worry about them going out, more that we worry about them coming back. The girl followed suit soon after. She knew the virus was deadly, but then again, BrewDog.

They haven't exactly chosen orphanhood over a ruined summer so much as it suits them not to accept the premise. They are trying to accommodate our risk aversion. They carry hand sanitiser, try to social distance and never leave home without a Dom Cummings face mask. But the odd tactical flare-up keeps us honest.

It is obviously miserable for them, though not as miserable as the broader economic fate awaiting their generation. No wonder they want to party while they can. Then again, it is their fault for having us. **FT**

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Great article ("Opioids, bribery and Wall Street", June 20/21). It's another nail in the coffin of American capitalism. Companies are financially incentivised to put profit above all else, and when they fail, there is little to no consequence. Meanwhile, they are facilitated by investors who have blood on their hands. **Lessismore** via FT.com



@SuB8u Jun 20

An unsettling, brilliant read from the @ft of how a rogue pharma company bribed doctors into needlessly prescribing their opioid, and Wall Street analysts ignored all warning signs in their greed

"Too white wine: Jancis Robinson on the industry's diversity problem" (June 20/21) was spot on. How shocking that some of the best, award-winning sommeliers in the world are constantly dealing with a default assumption that they are the waiter/coat-check lady because they are not white.

NW via FT.com

An excellent reminder that a risk-free life is an illusion ("The long road to a Covid-19 vaccine", June 20/21). We must find ways to live with this disease that do not entail mass "hibernation" of the economy yet recognise that a return to "normality" remains, in all likelihood, 12 to 18 months away.

RandomScot via FT.com

Re Simon Kuper's column "How to make society less racist" (June 20/21). I'm glad he doesn't skirt over the fact that there will be losers from eliminating statement racism (and sexism, I might add) - overwhelmingly male, white, mediocre individuals who have risen to positions well beyond their competence. But when these individuals are literally running the country, it doesn't give one much optimism that they'll let go of their privilege any time soon.

Dualcareer via FT.com

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President Xi Jinping has committed to eradicating extreme poverty in China by the end of 2020. But as many in rural areas continue to struggle – and the pandemic hurts the economy – will he be able to meet his target? *Yuan Yang* and *Nian Liu* head to a remote mountain village to find out. Photography by *Yufan Lu*

CHINA'S RACE TO BEAT POVERTY

Facing page: inside the house of Jike Shibu and his mother Ami Fuji in Atule'er village. Photos of family members and a poverty relief policy poster are hung on the plastic sheet above the bed

Two A3-sized cards hanging outside the door of Jike Shibu's house in Atule'er, a village perched on a cliff in the mountains of south-west China, were enough to determine his family's fate. One was white and divided into four sections: "Having a good house; living a good life; cultivating good habits; creating a good atmosphere." Each section was scored out of 100, with Jike's family gaining just 65 points on the issue of housing.

Next to the white card was a red one, granting them the title of "poverty-stricken household with a card and record". On it, an official's handwritten recommendations for how the family could improve their lot. Their "main cause of poverty" was diagnosed as "bad transport infrastructure and lack of money". Recommended measures included growing higher-profit crops, such as Sichuanese peppercorn, and "changing their customs".

By themselves, the cards are not much use to the villagers: very few of those born before the 2000s read Chinese characters fluently. But the writing on them has changed their futures – in Jike's case, resettling his family in a purpose-built, bustling compound in the nearby market town of Zhaojue.

Zhaojue is a place in a hurry. The government has set a deadline of the end of this month to end extreme poverty in the surrounding county of Liangshan, one of the most deprived in China. "Win the tough battle to end poverty," proclaims the central hotel on a red electronic marquee

– along with the number of days to the deadline. On the narrow streets outside, farmers rush around with wicker baskets full of produce, and vendors sell shoes and clothes piled high on plastic sheets.

The roots of this frantic activity go back to 2013, when leader Xi Jinping set a deadline for all of China's rural counties to eradicate extreme poverty by the end of 2020. In the four decades since market reform began, China has already made huge advances in this area, winning praise from the UN, World Bank and figures from Bill Gates to Bernie Sanders, for raising 850 million people out of extreme poverty.

For both Xi and the Chinese Communist party, poverty-alleviation goals are more than a policy target. They are also a major source of legitimacy, both inside China and globally. "In my opinion, western politicians act for the next election. [By contrast] China has a ruling party that wants to achieve big goals," says Hu Angang, a government adviser and head of China Studies at Tsinghua university. "In the history of human development, China achieving this is, if not unique, then at least something worthy of admiration."

In the five years of Xi's first term, an average of 13 million people were lifted out of poverty each year, according to the government. Some 775,000 officials were sent to villages to lead poverty alleviation and the government fund for this purpose increased by more than 20 per cent annually since 2013. State media said in March that central coffers had already handed out Rmb139.6bn (£15.8bn) of an estimated Rmb146bn this year. But the Covid-19 epidemic has led to an economic downturn, with the ►



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This page: The lower part of Atule'er village as seen from above.

Facing page, from left: a shop at the bottom of the mountain; one of the housing complexes to which villagers are being relocated; Jike live-streams the climb to his village on the new 800m steel ladder

◀ country's GDP for the first quarter shrinking for the first time in four decades. Areas that were already deprived have been some of the hardest hit.

By the end of 2019, there were still 5.5 million individuals in extreme rural poverty around China. Xi's goal is to bring this figure to zero in time for the centenary of the Communist party in July 2021. Coinciding with this would allow him to declare that China is prosperous and deserves to be a world leader, says Gao Qin, an expert on China's social welfare at Columbia university. "The government is determined to achieve this goal," says Gao. "Since March, official publications have reaffirmed that it must happen by the end of the year."

In a bid to do this, the fronts for Xi's "tough battle" on poverty are shifting. "Some villages are in extreme poverty that is difficult to alleviate, because of natural conditions and of the lack of transport infrastructure. In these places, very few villagers can become migrant workers and they rely on subsistence agriculture," says Wang Xiangyang, assistant professor of public affairs at Southwest Jiaotong University. These include remote mountain communities such as the one in which Jike lives.

Atule'er - or Cliff Village as it is now widely known in China - sits atop a 1,400m mountain. Like many of the Yi ethnic minority areas of Liangshan, it is infrequently visited by tourists and difficult to reach, and may well have stayed that way had it not come to national prominence in 2016. That year, a local media feature showed children clinging to an old, crumbling vine ladder on their two-hour descent to the nearest school. Soon, more journalists arrived, and the local government pledged a new 800m steel ladder.

"Liangshan became the forefront of poverty alleviation - a lab within the country," says Jan Karlach, research fellow at the Czech Academy of Sciences, whose research has focused on Liangshan and the Nuosu-Yi for the past 10 years. In 2017, at the annual meeting of China's parliament, Xi dropped by the Sichuan province delegation to ask about progress alleviating poverty among the Yi people. "When I saw a report about the Liangshan cliff village on television... I felt anxious," he said.

Over the past few months, the local government has resettled 84 households, or half the village, in Zhaojue, giving them apartments at the heavily subsidised price of Rmb10,000 (£1,130) per apartment.

The "resettlement homes" are located a two-hour drive away from the base of Atule'er's mountain, with a red banner across the entrance welcoming new residents.

The villagers allocated these flats are happy to have them. On the mountaintop, their earthen houses are exposed to the rain, as well as fatal rock slides. There, the only industry is subsistence farming. There is no medical care or formal education.

While some Yi academics question the changing of local (non-Han Chinese) customs for those moved from Cliff Village, the Communist party's efforts have been largely welcomed. "Even my traditionalist friend - who said he couldn't live in a house without a Yi fireplace - ditched the idea within a year," says Karlach. His friend now lives in a town apartment with a picture of Xi on the wall: a poster handed out by local officials to remind poor households who to thank.

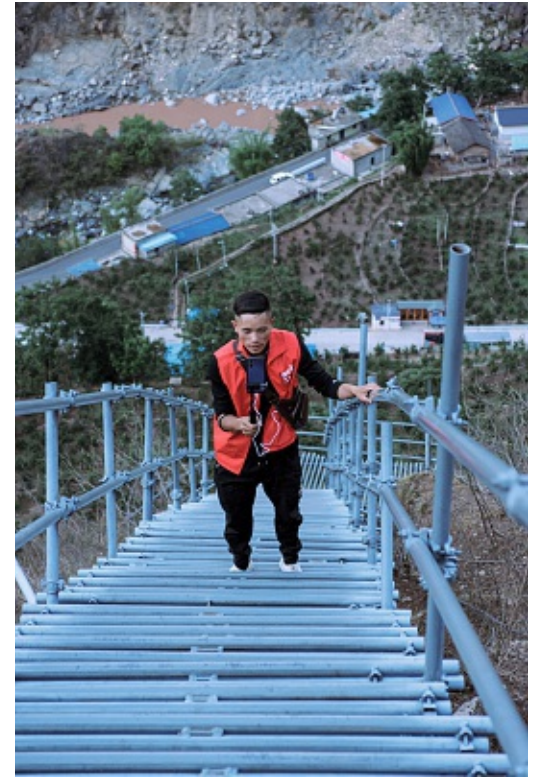
But others are not yet sure how to adapt to life in the town, where they will have to transform their mountain-dwelling culture to fit the 100 sq m apartments. "My mother isn't keen to come down from the mountaintop," says the 24-year-old Jike. "Elderly people don't like the town, they say there's no land and nothing to eat there. I say, 'What

others eat, you'll eat.' The elderly can't stay up there on their own."

Recently, Jike has been carrying heavy loads of bedding and clothes on his trips down the mountain, getting ready for his move. He has also acquired a following on social media. Hopping between slippery footholds, his giant plastic pack on his back, he holds his smartphone out on a selfie stick and chats cheerfully to fans on Douyin, China's domestic version of TikTok. Jike can earn Rmb3,000 per month from live-streaming: a fortune compared with the Rmb700 average for rural locals.

He has agreed to take us up to his village in part because he believes the residents who remain there need a better platform to air their views. In some regions, China's strategy of development through urbanisation has led to forced demolitions, and farmers stripped of the land their families had tended for generations. But Cliff Village faces the opposite problem: there are many more people who want to move than the government has relocated.

Over the two days that we spend there, more people approach us, wanting to show us the insides of their houses and tell us how the local government has overlooked them. In Zhaojue, the threshold for being extremely poor is living on less than



Rmb4,200 per year (£475) and, in Cliff Village, such officially “poverty-stricken” households receive a basic income guarantee, the right to buy cut-price new apartments - and even 30 chickens.

But there are also those unlucky enough to be officially logged as poor, either through neglect, miscalculation or mere bureaucracy. They do not receive the same benefits, although they are entitled to some payments, such as the minimum livelihood guarantee. They also do not count towards the government’s poverty-eradication target. In some cases, the government has solved meeting its poverty targets the administratively: certain areas have stopped logging residents as “impoverished” since the start of the year. “It’s all been counted, the system no longer takes new impoverished households,” says Azi Aniu, a local county-level party secretary. (He later vacillated on this point, telling us that they were able to log new impoverished households but chose not to.)

While the rapid rate of alleviation is real, the true level of poverty may be impossible to gauge in a system not designed to admit mistakes. According to official policy, if the minimum-livelihood guarantee was being implemented properly, such

‘Some villages are in extreme poverty that is difficult to alleviate, because of natural conditions and of the lack of infrastructure’

Wang Xiangyang, assistant professor at Southwest Jiaotong University

impoverished households would not exist. The current database will be overhauled for the next step of China’s development plan, which will move on to “precarious” or “borderline” households.

According to Li Shi, professor of economics at Beijing Normal University, surveys from 2014 suggested some 60 per cent of those who should qualify for “poverty-stricken” status based on their low incomes did not get the designation. In the years that followed, “some adjustments were made, and there should be some improvement,” Li wrote.

But many of those still in Atule’er feel left behind. “You’re not going to write one of those ‘Goodbye to Cliff Village’ articles, are you?” asks Jike Quri, a man who had waited all day at the top of the steel ladder for us to arrive. “There is no goodbye: half of us are still here.”


Within an hour of us checking in, local authorities arrived at our hotel door, indicating the sensitivities around this story. State media had come the week before to report on one of the most high-profile battlegrounds in China’s anti-poverty push, and had

written stories about happy villagers moving into their flats.

In one local media spread, the family of Mou’s Xiongti, a 25-year-old man, were photographed in their new flat, the bed decked with blankets. When we visited Mou’s flat, it was empty except for the government-provided furniture: a set of cabinets, sofa, chairs, tables and bed. Many items were stamped with “People’s Government of Sichuan Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China”.

The nervousness of local politicians is largely due to the fact that Cliff Village is now renowned for its role as part of a high-level target: Xi has personally embraced poverty alleviation, boosting his populist image as a “peasant emperor” with sympathies for ordinary Chinese people - a persona not dissimilar to that cultivated by Mao Zedong. State propaganda often depicts Xi chatting with farmers about the harvest, sitting cross-legged in village homes or laughing with pensioners. In his first five-year presidential term from 2012, he visited 180 poor regions across 20 provinces. He visited Liangshan in 2018.

The red and white cards that ultimately gave Jike Shibu’s family a flat are part of a policy which required creating a database of households ▶



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'The relocation apartments are beautiful, they are better than other properties in town, so some villagers get a bit jealous'

Azi Aniu, local official



From right: inside La'er Yixia's house in Zhaojue; Jizu Wuluo, a 37-year-old widowed mother of four, is still seeking 'impoverished' status

◀ and checking their progress. This campaign came with a boost in government funding for rural social welfare projects, a powerful committee to guide policy and the establishment of a national database of poor households. By the end of this year, that system must be cleared of households like Jike's.

But the villagers still left in Atule'er say they have not received such targeted attention from the local officials, who, they allege, don't bother to visit their mountaintop homes that often. (The local official Azi counters that he has trekked up the mountain so many times he has damaged his legs.) As a result, they complain there is no meaningful distinction between "poverty-stricken" households and others, and those in need of help are not getting it.

Some households face the problem of getting lumped together into one record. This happens when adults with their own children are still marked on the record of their parents, meaning they are only assigned one house. Often, officials reject their requests to register new households.

Others suffer Kafkaesque bureaucratic processes. Jizu Wuluo, a 37-year-old widow and mother to four children, two of whom she had

to give up for adoption, is determined to give her youngest a good education and rents a flat near the school at the bottom of the cliff. Jizu ticks many of the boxes of an "impoverished" household: she lives in one of fragile houses on Cliff Village, heads a single-earner family and also "suffers hardship for education".

However, although she has tried to get "impoverished" status on several occasions, each time officials told her to wait. In October last year she and her two sons were finally each given a minimum livelihood guarantee of Rmb2,940 per year, part of the government's package of anti-poverty measures that it uses when all else fails. About 43 million people receive it nationwide. In Zhaojue county, the maximum paid per rural recipient per year is Rmb4,200.

"I know Xi Jinping said to help those poor and suffering ordinary folk, but when it comes to grassroots officials like you, you only help those people who already have standing in society," she says in a meeting with Azi, who listened patiently to a string of complaints.

After we left, Azi quickly followed up on Jizu's case. The explanation for why she had not been prioritised for an apartment raised more

questions than it answered. Jizu had been missed out of the first survey of impoverished households in 2013. Later, she was recorded as "an impoverished household without an official record". Azi says they could not create an official "impoverished household" record for her after her husband died in 2018. Instead, they added more labels to her case. Azi couldn't say when the list of impoverished households stopped being amended but, he says, Jizu will be moved into town by the end of the year.

"The relocation apartments are beautiful, they are better than other properties in town, so some villagers get a bit jealous," says Azi. "I'm being very straightforward with you."

Moving into town may be one step towards ensuring a secure livelihood, but the most important is finding work. Local officials encourage the younger generation to seek jobs in cities, particularly those along the industrialised south-east coast. For decades, rural-urban migration has been the standard way of improving livelihoods: some 236 million people in China are migrant workers, according to government statistics.

Of the locals we spoke to in their late teens and twenties, many had gone out to work for a few months at a time. Most did unskilled labour in construction and went in groups arranged by friends or relatives. Like migrants from around China, Liangshan's workers live as second-class citizens when they arrive in major cities, where it is almost impossible to access healthcare or education for their children. During the coronavirus epidemic, these workers - who often had to continue delivering groceries and cleaning hospitals - were highly vulnerable.

The work that Liangshan locals can do is also limited by their education. Most of our interviewees were semi-literate at best, and some did not speak Mandarin. The internet is changing that. Social media, e-commerce and live-streaming have created greater opportunity for reading and writing outside of the world of formal education. Jike, who received just two years of schooling, says he learnt a lot about reading, writing and speaking Chinese from live-streaming. Every now and then, as viewers' comments flash in real-time across his screen, he addresses the commenter by saying, "Sister, I can't read that."

Education is another way of leaving the village. While some ▶



'It's fine for Han culture to come here, so long as Han culture and Yi exist side by side. We can't leave parts of our traditional culture, like our legends and our language'

Mou'se Lazuo, student

From left: outside the New Youth Volunteer Centre in Zhaojue; a girl plays on a public exercise facility at the relocation housing complex

◀ families prefer to let their children work, others are keen to send them to school. Mou'se Lazuo, the 17-year-old sister of Xiongti, hopes to break the trend in her village by going to university. She is the oldest girl in Cliff Village still at school; the older ones have gone to work or got married. She is one of 72 students in her class.

While she speaks Yi at home, Mou'se studies in Mandarin, with the exception of an hour and a half of Yi language classes per week. "I think it's fine for Han culture to come here, so long as Han culture and Yi exist side by side," she says. "We can't leave parts of our traditional culture, like our legends and our language."

The Yi didn't come to China: China came to the Yi. Yi people have lived in the mountains of Liangshan for centuries, not far from Sichuan's borders with Tibet and Myanmar. After teetering on the edge of the Chinese empire for over a millennium, Liangshan was brought under Communist rule in 1957 with the help of the People's Liberation Army. The Yi were categorised as such by anthropologists sent by the Beijing-based national government in the 1950s, who determined the roster of 55 officially recognised ethnic minorities.

"It's a civilising project," says Karlach, the researcher who has lived in Liangshan, describing the government's attitude towards poverty alleviation with ethnic minorities. "In Liangshan, in many places, they're not offered to indigenise or develop their own modernity: they are given the modernity from the outside. They want to be Chinese and are proud to be Chinese, but also want to be Yi."

For the government, teaching the Mandarin language and Han customs not only makes ethnic minorities easier to govern, but also helps them fit into a Han-dominated economy. Also, rapid urbanisation has changed all traditional cultures in China, subsuming them into the monoculture of the city and of earning money.

In Zhaojue, most shops employ at least some locals, although the newer ones are largely run by Han Chinese migrants from richer parts of China. "Generally, local workers don't stay for long," says Mao Dongtian, an entrepreneur from the coastal city of Wenzhou. He has opened a local chain of cafés and karaoke bars. His staff earn between Rmb1,000 and Rmb3,000 - a decent amount for the area - but don't like the discipline and loss of freedom that come with a full-time job, he says.

"Their ways are more backwards than the Han people, and we are trying to teach them our ways," continues Mao, describing how he encouraged his staff to seek medical help for ailments rather than rely on folk treatments. Such beliefs are typical of the majority ethnic group's attitudes towards China's minorities. Though some of these attitudes are rooted in stereotypes, others reflect a way of life shaped by subsistence agriculture.

When I ask Jike what he will most miss about Cliff Village, he says "the view". He plans to make the trip up now and again to enjoy it. After sunset, there are innumerable stars and the night is black and quiet. Zhaojue, on the other hand, is lit with streetlamps and has the bustle of people and cars.

After June 30, the government will move on to the next stage of China's development plan: "the strategy to revitalise villages". Although China's development plans have focused on the rural poor, the urban poor are of increasing concern. They are more likely to slip between the bureaucratic cracks, as they are often not registered in the places where they live and work. Cities

are loath to accept such migrants: two years ago, Beijing "cleaned out" residents referred to by politicians as the "low-end population". Some economists estimate that about 50 million migrant workers became unemployed at the start of the epidemic.

Earlier this month, Premier Li Keqiang sparked an outcry over Xi's claims of success on poverty alleviation, after announcing that the bottom two-fifths of the population made on average an income of less than Rmb1,000 a month. Those 600 million people constitute a significant proportion of city-dwellers as well as the rural poor.

"Somehow or other, this [poverty] target will be declared to have been achieved and will form a part of the big celebrations next year. And then the goalposts will shift, I suspect towards issues of equality and equity," said Kerry Brown, a scholar of Chinese politics at King's College London. "That's really where the key battleground will be, because inequality in China is a serious problem and it's not getting better." **FT**

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Yuan Yang is the FT's deputy Beijing bureau chief.
Additional reporting from Christian Shepherd in Beijing



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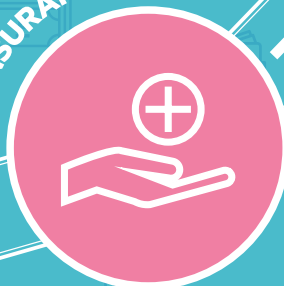
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The UK's appetite for fried chicken is voracious, with shops that sell it thriving to the tune of £2.3bn in 2019. *Alice Hancock* reports on how they have emerged as one of the high street's few lockdown success stories and what their future holds. Photographs by *Alexander Coggin*

n a small outlet of Morley's, the London fried-chicken chain, a crowd of delivery drivers and evening punters are waiting to pick up bulging white plastic bags. Inside are cardboard boxes filled with "hot 'n' spicy" chicken joints.

As customers enter the Wandsworth shop two at a time, following new coronavirus safety guidance, chicken choices are displayed everywhere. An old Dell monitor on the countertop flickers between a "Welcome To Morley's" screen and deals for the chain's signature spicy wings and chips. Laminated signs advertise a multitude of other battered and fried options: strips, fillets, nuggets or mouthful-sized "popcorn" bites.

Morley's was founded in 1985 by Indran Selvendran, a Sri Lankan school caretaker from south London whose son Shan describes him as something of a "Del Boy", the fast-talking Cockney market trader in the BBC sitcom *Only Fools and Horses*, when we meet Shan before lockdown in Morley's New Eltham branch. A shinier space than Wandsworth, where everything from the chicken boxes to the window frames is bright scarlet, it is one of 3,651 chicken shops in the UK, according to the Local Data Company, just under a third of which have opened since 2012.

These shops have been one of the few high-street success stories during the pandemic. As supermarket queues grew and consumers cleared shelves of everything from ready meals to toilet roll, quick, locally accessible food became a valuable commodity. Many chicken shops stayed open to offer takeaway even as sit-in restaurants were forced to close. At Morley's, Selvendran tells me over the phone later, sales have been "pretty bloody high".

A 2017 report by the research firm Mintel estimated that UK customers would spend £2.6bn in chicken outlets by 2022. In comparison, the country spent just £1.6bn on chicken in supermarkets last year. But even without accounting for coronavirus, the researchers' forecast may have been conservative. Last year, Mintel found that sales in chicken restaurants had already increased to £2.3bn.

There are now only three UK postcode districts without a chicken shop, all of which are remote Scottish islands. Most high streets boast at least one Dixy Chicken, Chicken Cottage or (Insert US State) Fried Chicken. In a survey last year, analysts at PwC noted that smaller chains were more prepared "to take the risk" of setting up shop in an economic climate already battered by Brexit concerns and a lack of consumer confidence. "This year the trend is favouring takeaways, and chicken shops in particular," they said.

Such success runs counter to the long-term decline of the British high street. The number of empty lots stood at around 12 per cent before the pandemic - and is now likely to rise even more. "Chicken shops could easily be busier than usual because there is so much less available, but also because they were there when others weren't," says Clare Bailey, an independent retail analyst.

For schoolchildren, families on low incomes and late-night revellers, they are also well within budget, averaging somewhere between £1.90 and

£2.50 for a piece of chicken, chips and a drink. Nilima Lupa, 22, used to frequent the shops around Mile End, an area of London known as "Chicken Shop Mile", once or twice a week while she was at school. "It's so cheap. When you're in school, you [might] have just £10 to spend in the week. £1 for chicken and chips - that's why I went," she says.

Now she prefers grilled chicken to fried. A wave of new shops selling better welfare poultry at more expensive prices has entered the market: Thunderbird Fried Chicken, Slim Chickens, Chick'n Sours. Under pressure from greater competition, increasing overhead costs and campaigns for healthier food, the chicken-shop market is beginning to fragment. Selvendran says he has recently introduced more vegetarian options and salads. But, he adds, the pricier chains cannot compete with the still-dominant high-street outlets: "People connect with chicken shops because of the value element of it. We're not saying we are the community, but we are part of a service to the community."

The arrival of fried chicken in the UK was, in some senses, a homecoming. Its origins are "hotly contested", says Emelyn Rude, a food historian at the University of Cambridge and the author of *Tastes Like Chicken*. But although the version we now know emerged on the plantations in America's south during the 1700s, its ancestry can likely be traced back to the culinary traditions of Scotland, where chicken was battered and deep-fried in pig's fat.

The 145,000-odd Scottish settlers who made their way to the southern states demanded the



Above and right: Gold Fried Chicken on Coventry Road, Birmingham. Below: a plate of chicken at Pepe's Piri Piri on the same street



'People connect with chicken shops because of the value element. We are part of a service to the community'

Morley's managing director Shan Selvendran

recipe from enslaved African workers, who mixed it with their own blends of chillies, herbs and spices. It is in this crunchy form that chicken is churned out in vast quantities by the world's largest chicken chain: Kentucky Fried Chicken. Its founder, Harland Sanders, was "basically a charlatan", says Rude, with a long line of jobs that included selling tyres, starting a ferry company and delivering babies before he alighted on chicken.

From the back of a fuel station in Corbin, Kentucky, he served it battered in a secret blend of 11 herbs and spices, now considered so "finger-lickin' good" and valuable that KFC says only two of its employees are allowed to know the formula. The set-up earned Sanders the title "Kentucky Colonel" from the state governor for his contribution to the state's cuisine and, in 1952, he licensed his recipe to a store in Utah, the first KFC franchise. Less than 10 years later, with more than 600 KFCs across the US and Canada, he sold his company stake for \$2m. There are now more than 23,000 KFC restaurants in 135 countries. The chain made more than \$1bn in operating profits in 2018 and has become such an icon of the US that during the Arab Spring shouts of "death to America" were interspersed with calls of "No Kentucky! No Kentucky!".

KFC opened its first overseas outpost in 1965 in the small industrial city of Preston, in the north of England, before even McDonald's had reached the UK. It was set up by Harry Latham, a personal friend of the Colonel's, who later founded the Miss Millie's chicken-shop chain.

Today, Paula MacKenzie, KFC's UK managing director, says that Britain is one of the countries in which the chain has the highest penetration. It makes up 6 per cent of total sales; 700 million pieces of chicken were served to British customers last year. When KFC UK was forced to shut two-thirds of its stores due to a distribution problem in 2018, there was widespread outcry.

There have been similar levels of upset more recently when the chain had to close because of coronavirus. "I am not a good cook, so now I miss KFC even more," says Steve Hou, a customer in York. The chain also had to pause its "finger-lickin' good" adverts after complaints that it undermined the message that people should keep washing their hands. Now, about 750 of KFC's 964 UK restaurants have reopened for delivery with a limited menu, and it has launched a marketing campaign featuring customers' attempts to make their own KFC at home.

"People love the simple unapologetic tastiness of [chicken]," says MacKenzie. But she says that she can't comment on the "ubiquitous mass" of independent British chicken shops that have been spawned by the American chain, except to echo adverts KFC launched last year. On billboards around the country, the company posted an A to Z of photographs of wannabe "Fried Chickens". Underneath it read: "Guys We're Flattered".

The popularity of fried chicken - the Colonel's or someone else's - was on full display at Gold Fried Chicken in Birmingham on a rainy Wednesday this February. Shortly after three o'clock, four employees milled about the cramped space behind the counter while a pair of teenagers shot wisecracks at each other over chicken burgers. One of the staff came out to spray ▶

◀ down small red Formica tables. Minutes later, there was mayhem. Schoolchildren and parents piled in; the queue quickly spilled out of the door. The staff sprang into action: emptying 2.5-kilo sacks of frozen chips into the fryers, shovelling chicken wings out of the heater cabinet and shouting orders over the crowd.

These copycat chains and second-generation independents were largely set up by ex-KFC franchisees or those looking to emulate the chain's success. Shan Selvendran took over Morley's in 2009, seven years after his father died, when, he says, the chain was "a bit all over the place". He has since doubled the number of stores to 70, including the New Eltham branch, which is itself run by a former KFC franchise owner. Now Selvendran has a coterie of copycat chicken shops of his own to contend with and has had to file multiple injunctions against those using Morley's name without permission.

Part of the appeal of chicken is that the business is simple and the profit margins are attractive, even if not what they once were. The chicken arrives in 18-piece bags consisting of two birds' worth of joints; once it has been washed, drained and rolled in flour, Selvendran says, you "just click a button" to fry it. Typical gross margin is about 70 per cent with a bag of chicken pieces costing £3 to £4. Each fryer can take 36 pieces at a time, at around five minutes per batch.

Selvendran's theory is that the spread of chicken shops is down to the mindset of the UK's Asian communities: "In Asian culture when one person does one thing and they can see you doing well in it, they want to do it. It's just a model and a system they know works." Since coronavirus, the business has received "a lot" more requests from prospective franchisees.

Certainly, backroom operations can be easily copied from shop to shop - and so can the instantly recognisable frontages, many of which look the same wherever they are.

In London, which boasts the highest density of chicken shops in the UK, this is allegedly down to one signmaker, Morris Casanova. More than 90 per cent of the chicken-shop frontages in the capital, and probably most that featured in KFC's recent ad, were produced by him. Or so Casanova told the graphic designer Siaron Hughes, shortly before he died.

In 2008, Hughes made her way around 150 London chicken shops to document their designs and menus for her book *Chicken: High Calorie, Low Art*. She met Casanova after hearing about the mysterious "Mr Chicken" from shop owners. "He was an unbelievable character," she says. "He said that a lot of the logos weren't licensed, which is why you see so many that look so similar."

Today, chicken shops have a special place in popular culture. The rappers Tinie Tempah and Stormzy have tipped them in their songs, while Nike has used fried chicken to promote its trainers and Channel 4 has aired a documentary on the subject. There have been arthouse films and a viral YouTube series called *Chicken Shop Date*. This year's Wingfest, an annual festival at London's Olympic Park where 120,000 chicken wings are served, sold out before coronavirus forced its cancellation.

Sadiq Khan has vowed to ban takeaways from setting up 400m or closer to schools and to require chicken shops to bake or grill instead of fry



Above, tucking in at Gold Fried Chicken. Below: the fare at Birmingham's Faraz Fried Chicken (also seen left)



There has been less welcome publicity too. In November 2018, there was a stabbing outside a Morley's in south-east London. The following year, the UK government tried to address knife crime by putting targeted messages on chicken-shop boxes, provoking widespread outcry. David Lammy, Labour MP for Tottenham, deemed the effort "either explicitly racist or... unfathomably stupid".

"I guess I'm glad to be part of giving chicken shops the respect they deserve," says Elijah Quashie, better known to the 750,000 people subscribed to his YouTube channel as "The Chicken Connoisseur". His tagline reads: "A food critic for mandem who care to know what the finest chicken restaurants in London are."

Quashie first came up with the idea of reviewing chicken shops in 2015 when he noticed that few appeared on ratings websites. His video series "The Pengest Munch" showed him dressed in school uniform and buying chicken wings, a burger, chips and a drink from different shops. The order is always the same and the uniform is an irreverent nod to a large part of chicken-shop clientele. (Quashie is in his late 20s.)

Some videos receive more than six million views and they have been known to make or break a business. Dixy Chicken in Tufnell Park, north London, to which Quashie gave a particularly scathing critique, later closed. "Disappointment in a wing... black veins... the batter was dead," he deadpans to camera. The shop has since reopened with positive customer reviews.

Quashie talks of the chicken shop "bossman" - the guy who knows your order before you walk in the door. Few bossmen divulge their batter recipes and many make their own chilli sauce.

At Gold Fried Chicken in Birmingham, they have their own word, "sheesko". Qosy Akhali, one of two teenagers I met there back in February, said that "sheesko" is a greeting to the owner: "A sign of respect."

But chicken shops are not universally loved.

They are often criticised for questionable animal-welfare standards and contributing to child obesity. In Tower Hamlets, a borough with one of the highest childhood-obesity rates in London, there are 42 fast-food joints for every school and a survey showed that 54 per cent of children bought fast food more than twice a week. In response, London mayor Sadiq Khan has vowed to ban takeaways from setting up 400m or closer to schools and to require chicken shops to bake or grill rather than batter and fry.

The pandemic has brought other changes. Countertops are now wiped every 15 to 20 minutes and frying oil is changed more frequently than before: every three days rather than five. "Back of house, fried food is good from a hygiene perspective. Front of house, the use of plastic and tiles makes it easier to clean down regularly," says Graeme Smith, a managing director of the advisory firm AlixPartners. He thinks chicken shops will benefit from a customer base that includes a higher proportion of young people, "who seem most keen to return to normality".

During the pandemic, several Morley's franchise owners picked up staff in their own cars so they could avoid public transport. "Staff with families had a fear of bringing something back. It was a real issue," says Selvendran. Most are now back at work and social-distancing measures have been put in place where possible. In some kitchens, the space is so small that even a spare metre is hard to find.

Danesh Nath, who works at Sizzle N'Shake, a tiny chicken shop squeezed onto the corner of a south-west London street, says that the customers are more of a problem. "It's sometimes quite hard to tell them to stay apart," he says, pointing to three rough patches of masking tape two metres apart on the floor intended to show where they should stand.

Nath says that sales at Sizzle N'Shake have been good during the lockdown, although they were better when KFC was shut. But he is worried about the loss of night-time trade while bars and clubs remain closed. "That could be a trouble for business," he says. But Tariq Mahmood, who has worked at Faraz Fried Chicken in Birmingham for 24 years, says that there could be an upside to the loss of rowdy crowds: "Sometimes it gets violent - we've had a few fights in here, with the authorities getting involved. We get a lot of abuse, [people] saying 'Hurry up', but it has to be cooked properly, so we can't go quicker."

Retail analyst Clare Bailey thinks chicken shops will gain more local daytime trade - and that those who might have ordered a more upmarket takeaway will opt for a bucket of fried chicken as the coming recession starts to bite. "People are more concerned about their financial position," she says. "Maybe [they] will think, 'I'd have gone for something more expensive in the past but now I'll get some chicken.'" **FT**

Alice Hancock is the FT's leisure industries reporter

'I'M READY TO THROW OUT EVERYTHING THAT I'VE KNOWN'

At 23, Tyler Mitchell became the first black photographer to shoot the cover of US Vogue. In the two years since, his meteoric rise has only continued. The artist speaks to *Griselda Murray Brown* about the protests sparked by the killing of George Floyd, why depicting leisure time for black people is a political act and why we can never truly return to 'normal'

Beautiful, young black people lounge on a red gingham picnic rug strewn with fruit. It is summer; they are dressed in crisp cream linens. It's an ordinary scene and, at the same time, a "fantasy". At least that's how Tyler Mitchell, the man behind the camera, puts it.

We spoke via video call early last month - me in London and Mitchell at home in New York in front of a bookshelf stuffed with art books, the sounds of the rickety train line outside his window punctuating our conversation. The signs of summer were everywhere, but gathering in groups of friends in parks was still forbidden, at least under London's lockdown rules. That wasn't the only reason the image felt poignant, of course. "This idea of my community and my friends, young black men and women, being able to enjoy pleasure, or leisure time - that's revolutionary," Mitchell says. "I think about the pleasures and the freedoms we've been denied historically - or the way that free time and leisure time, for us, have been framed as something potentially violent." He cites the

example of Tamir Rice, the 12-year-old black boy who was playing with a toy gun in a park in Cleveland, Ohio when he was shot dead by police in 2014.

Just weeks after our conversation, a white police officer in Minneapolis killed George Floyd, a black man, sparking protests across the US and around the world. "I can't breathe," Floyd said, as the officer knelt on his neck. When I call Mitchell back this month, he tells me that the weeks since Floyd's death have been difficult. At first, he says, "I was pretty dejected, sad and lost." But he began to feel hopeful, too, when he saw how quickly the anti-racism protest movement had spread. "It feels like the world has flipped upside down once again - in hopefully a really good way."

With their pastel colours and natural light, Mitchell's pictures do not look, at least at first glance, political. The 25-year-old American artist is perhaps best known for photographing Beyoncé for the cover of the September issue of US Vogue in 2018. He was one of the youngest photographers to shoot a cover for the magazine,

and the first-ever black photographer to do so. He has worked for fashion brands such as Givenchy, Marc Jacobs and Loewe, and has almost 300,000 followers on Instagram. Yet Mitchell's work is more political than his CV might suggest.

The picnic scene is a still from the video "Chasing Pink, Found Red" (2019), which he included in his solo show, *I Can Make You Feel Good*, at the International Center of Photography in New York earlier this year; a photo book of the same name will be published next month. The bucolic scene is overlaid with audio clips in which young black people describe everyday instances of racism (Mitchell put out an open call on Instagram and his followers responded with voice notes detailing their experiences). The red gingham rug, like everything in the video, is intentional - "it's a fabric I grew up with at picnics in Georgia," he explains. The resulting work subverts what he calls "conventional ideas of American fun, suburban fun".

Born in 1995, Mitchell had a comfortable, middle-class upbringing in Marietta, a suburb ▶



Tyler Mitchell
'Self Portrait', 2019



'Untitled (Slawn and Leo Embrace)', 2019

'I'M NOT INTERESTED IN MAKING IMAGES WHERE BLACK FOLKS LOOK MONSTROUS'



Still from 'Chasing Pink, Found Red', 2019



'Untitled (Sosa with Orange Hula Hoop)', 2019

◀ of Atlanta. He saved up to buy a DSLR camera when he was 13, posting videos of his fellow skateboarders on the microblogging site Tumblr, where he quickly gained a following. The themes of freedom, youth, pleasure and play that run through his work today were evident from the start. As a skateboarder, he says, "you start to turn the world around you into this weird skate park: stairs become obstacles to jump over, rails become places for tricks. You start to see things - spatially - very differently."

"I was super-inspired by people like Ryan McGinley, Larry Clark, even Petra Collins," he continues. "This idea of young, sensuous people in photographs, you know, being free." All three of those photographers are white, I say. Yes, he agrees, but they're "special nonetheless... I've pulled out of [their work] what it means to me. They look cool, and they're being free." He pauses. "That level of freedom is what I wanted because maybe, psychically, I was denied it. I was told by my mother: 'If you wear that hoodie out the house, be careful how you're perceived.'"

After high school, Mitchell moved to New York to study film at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, where he found a mentor in the acclaimed black photographer Deborah Willis. He was active on social media and befriended the rapper Kevin Abstract of the hip-hop group Brockhampton on Twitter. In his second year, he photographed Abstract for *The Fader* magazine, one of his first print assignments. Other portrait commissions soon followed, including the rapper Lil Uzi Vert, film-maker Spike Lee and Emma Gonzalez and other survivors of the Parkland shooting. In 2015, two years before he graduated, he self-published his first photo book, *El Paquete*, which documented skateboard culture in Havana, Cuba.

In our calls, Mitchell is warm and unguarded - not quite an extrovert, yet someone who clearly enjoys conversation. He has a tendency to long, looping sentences, as though he's thinking out loud. "If you ask any of my friends, I'm kind of a heady person," he says. He often meditates on an idea for several weeks before picking up his

camera, treating it more like a film shoot with all the preparation that requires. Until the killing of George Floyd and the anguish that has followed, Mitchell was enjoying the quiet of quarantine, a time "just to incubate on ideas", he says, adding, "I felt like I was living on a plane the last two years, travelling a lot, shooting a lot and being asked to produce a lot of images."

In his work, there's a palpable affinity between the artist and the people he depicts, who are sometimes friends or collaborators. The position of the camera is often low and intimate, his compositions closely cropped as though he too is embedded in the scene. "The generation before me understood the photographer-to-subject relationship as being very hierarchical," he says. "You know, I love Annie Leibovitz, but I saw in an interview that somebody asked her, what do you do to make your subjects feel comfortable? - she said, why would I want to make my subjects feel comfortable? I found that deeply disturbing."

The dynamics of control are written into the very language of photography: "take", "capture",

"shoot". Mitchell's face lights up when I ask him about the age-old problem of power in portraiture. "I've always had a tension with this, but I've never actually talked about it in an interview. I love this question because I even find myself hesitating when I talk about my work and then I use [the phrase] 'the subject'." For an African-American photographer, these are particularly freighted words. "We were *subjugated* to slavery," he says. "We are still subjugated to criminalisation and incarceration. But we were also considered *objects*, right? We were also considered, legally, three-fifths of a person [when it came to vote]."

In Mitchell's philosophy, a photographer is always going to have a certain creative control over the way someone is depicted, but it doesn't have to be wielded in a way that plays into outdated power structures. "I'm not interested in making images where black folks look gargantuan or monstrous," he says.

For someone so young, Mitchell has a clear sense of his own historical moment. Being a

black photographer or film-maker carries a different weight, he says, pointing out that just one or two generations ago cameras were prohibitively expensive for many black people. Before he arrived at NYU, he suffered from "impostor syndrome", he says, worrying that he would be "the worst in the school. I thought I was gonna get there and have no idea what I was doing and these kids were going to have, you know, Steven Spielberg as their dad." But, he adds, smiling almost shyly, "I got there, and turns out I wasn't too bad."

Even having had so much success so quickly, it can still be an "uphill battle" to be taken seriously, Mitchell says. Yet he has a quiet self-assurance that comes across even on a grainy video call. When he got the commission from *Vogue* to photograph Beyoncé, his first reaction was not disbelief or even surprise. "I remember feeling strangely ready for something like that," he recalls, "I was definitely really young, but [my work] was really concerned with a lot of things at once, so it felt like the right

moment to do a commission like that, which synthesised history, politics, culture, fashion, art and music, of course."

Mitchell straddles the worlds of fashion, fine art and what might be called street photography - but he doesn't necessarily see them as separate disciplines. "I love multiple plate-spinning," he grins. "And everything is everything, you know? Especially in today's world, it's like there's nothing that's separate."

Unlike most established photographers, Mitchell is a digital native. He grew up looking at images on social media feeds determined more by algorithm than art history. In this sense, everything *is* everything: on platforms like Tumblr and Instagram, history is collapsed so that, as Mitchell puts it, a Rococo painting and a SpongeBob SquarePants meme are offered up side by side.

The idea that "everyone has an audience" is second nature to an artist who grew up online. Mitchell is more interested in reaching a diverse audience of his peers via Instagram ▶



'Untitled (Toni)', 2019

'I LOVE MULTIPLE
PLATE-SPINNING.
EVERYTHING
IS EVERYTHING,
YOU KNOW?'



Untitled (from the JW Anderson Spring/Summer campaign 2020 #1), 2019



Still from 'Idyllic Space', 2019

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'Boys of Walthamstow', 2018

◀ than in appealing to the gatekeepers of the art-photography scene. "Fine art felt a little far away for me, because I didn't have access to that world," he says. But being popular online doesn't mean diluting the political content of his work. In fact, looking at his images of African-Americans having picnics, spinning hoops and flying kites only underscores, by contrast, the long history of pictures of white people's leisure time, going back to the Impressionists. "I was interested in coming up with strategies to make my images known and be seen, but also still have a political or social commentary," he explains.

Mitchell didn't consider himself a fashion photographer until a tutor saw some of the pictures he'd taken of his friends - often wearing clothes he'd lent them - and told him: "These are fashion photographs." He found he liked the genre, not because of the glamour or even the clothes, but because of the creative freedom it offered. Doing commissions for music magazines often meant working with big egos, which was "very not freeing", he admits. "So I saw fashion as

like, 'Oh, the photographer has ultimate control here.' And that's kind of freeing."

Talking to his family about the Black Lives Matter protests in recent weeks, his father tells him he's lived through uprisings in the past "and afterwards things return to pseudo-normal". But, Mitchell says, "this doesn't feel that way, this feels different". And one of the differences is a new focus on whiteness: on the role of white institutions - and people - in racism, past and present. He pinpoints 2016 as a moment where the importance of representation, and particularly the representation of black people, came to the fore in pop culture with the release of Barry Jenkins' film *Moonlight* and Solange's album *A Seat at the Table* within weeks of each other. This was just weeks before Donald Trump was elected president. Those works represented a "revolution", he says, "and it's happening again in a whole different way".

Up until now, Mitchell's focus has been on providing a counterpoint to the pernicious

stereotypes that have long dominated visual culture by showing, for instance, a multiplicity of ways a black man might look, dress and act. But the current protest movement - and the sense that profound shifts are taking place from policing to hiring practices to art and culture - has made him reconsider his own work. "I've been reflecting a lot on being open to throwing all of that out the window," he says in our second conversation. "I'm ready to throw out everything that I've known, to change my process and change how I approach images."

There are people watching the Black Lives Matter protests from home "and just waiting for it to be over, so they can return to normal life", he continues. But "there truly will be no return to normal - there wasn't a normal in the first place. That is what this moment is really about. So many people weren't feeling normal." **FT**

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"I Can Make You Feel Good" is published by Prestel on July 28. Listen to a recording of this interview on the FT's Culture Call podcast, ft.com/culture-call

When the UK government started to shut down vast swathes of the country's economy and public institutions in late March, it was hard for Alan Waitley to escape the indignities of being without a permanent place to live.

Waitley, who has lacked a secure home since 2017, lost access to showers after the community centre that he visited daily was forced to shut. His ability to use email and the internet disappeared after the closure of libraries in the south-west London suburb where he had been sleeping in church-run night shelters. The barring of the doors of the McDonald's burger chain took away the place where Waitley (not his real name) had stayed warm between the night shelter's closure at 7am and the day centre opening at 8.30am.

These kinds of privations were shared by the thousands of others who, like Waitley, lacked a home long before coronavirus struck or who have, despite a formal ban on evictions, found themselves newly forced to sleep on streets, in parks or in doorways during the weeks of lockdown. "When everything started closing, everyone had a problem because it was difficult to find anywhere to go," says Waitley, a 50-year-old with an RP accent.

Yet as he was dealing with this sudden change to his circumstances, Waitley also became part of an effort to stamp out homelessness that would have been unthinkable just weeks before. The charity Glass Door, which organised the shelters where he had been sleeping, found him a space in a hotel under a hastily devised emergency plan funded by central government and the Greater London Authority. Spurred by concerns that homeless people would be vulnerable to the virus and might spread it, the Everyone In scheme aims to reverse in just three months a decade of steady rises in the numbers of people lacking a proper home.

On a single night last autumn, counts and estimates of those in England facing the most extreme form of homelessness - sleeping rough on the streets - found 4,266 people. While that was a reduction on the figures for 2017 and 2018, it was more than double the 1,768 estimated in 2010. A wider count that included those sleeping on friends' sofas, in their cars and in other forms of unsuitable accommodation found numbers in England rose from 120,000 to 153,000 between 2010 and 2017, the last year for which figures are available. London, where more than one in four of the rough sleepers counted last autumn were found, has the most acute problem.

After years when the situation mostly worsened, veterans of the battle to get decent housing for more people have greeted the emergency measures with enthusiasm. As well as the moves into hotels and a ban on evictions, the government has increased the generosity of some benefit payments and boosted the amount of a homeless person's rent that can be underwritten by state benefits. "Some of these things are what we've been arguing for for years," says Suzanne Fitzpatrick, professor of housing and social policy at Edinburgh's Heriot-Watt University. The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government says it has found accommodation for nearly 15,000 people across England under Everyone In. "These were really big wins which happened really quickly and decisively," Fitzpatrick says.

The emergency measures - under which people suspected of having coronavirus have been housed in separate hotels from those clear of the disease - have so far been effective at avoiding the kind of ▶

ALEXANDRU CARAGEA
HAS HAD TO SPEND
MORE TIME ON THE
STREETS SINCE
LOSING HIS JOB

Home truths

Emergency measures to combat the spread of coronavirus have helped get thousands of homeless people off the streets. But can they be translated into a long-term fix for a growing and deep-rooted problem? *Robert Wright* reports. Portraits by *Anthony Luvera*



◀ large-scale outbreak that has swept homeless populations in other places, such as San Francisco. They also relieved Waitley of lugging his belongings through a dreary routine of day centres and coffee shops. He says he “thoroughly enjoyed” his stay in the modest hotel in Hammersmith where he was first placed, before moving on in mid-May to a new facility nearer his old home. “I was able to do some study and practice [playing the guitar],” Waitley says. “I found the days just flew by.” He hopes to look for office work but also develop his skills as a music producer and composer.

Yet some hotels like the one where Waitley first stayed are already being emptied of their homeless residents and the rest are likely to return to housing paying guests within weeks. And every evening areas such as Trafalgar Square are still filled with hundreds of people missed by Everyone In or who are newly on the streets. The question is whether the emergency changes to housing and benefits rules, all of which are currently temporary, can be translated into finding long-term ways of putting a roof over people’s heads. “The important thing is what’s going to happen next,” Fitzpatrick says.

The roots of England’s homelessness crisis are evident in the east London area around Bonny Downs Community Association, a charity based in East Ham. Seven years ago, Angie Allgood, a smiling, energetic social worker, first organised a network of churches, including her own Bonny Downs Baptist Church, to provide winter night shelters under the name NEWway Project. Each of the seven churches hosts one night a week.

Allgood, who is the fourth generation of her family to live on the same street in Bonny Downs, acted after seeing growing numbers of rough sleepers in East Ham. Speaking in a back office littered with supplies, she blames changes to the welfare system for putting secure housing out of many people’s reach. Her area’s homelessness problem emerged in 2013 when the then coalition government froze or cut many claimants’ entitlements. Rents kept rising but the amount of support that benefit recipients could claim for housing costs was frozen. “For me, there were big connections between welfare reforms, homelessness and people really struggling,” Allgood says.

The charity’s face-masked volunteers are preparing emergency parcels for delivery. Many are destined for local immigrants with “no recourse to public funds” – members of a one-million-strong group, mostly from outside Europe, who are barred from receiving any financial or other support from central or local government. While there are no official figures, groups working with the homeless estimate about one in five of London’s homeless and one in 10 of those across England are barred from receiving public money. About 100,000 people in this group are at risk of losing their jobs, and their incomes, in the current economic crisis.

The experience of Ike Iwuchukwu illustrates how restrictions on benefits can pitch people on to the streets. Iwuchukwu, 48, returned to London in March 2019 after three years in Nigeria looking after his dying mother. Even though he is a British citizen born in Glasgow, his local council said his time abroad meant he failed the habitual residence test, a vague provision often used to bar people recently arrived in the UK from receiving benefits. He was unable to find a job. “I didn’t have enough finance,”



Pre-lockdown life on the streets was ‘great’ in comparison with his present situation

PAULO GOUVEIA, ALSO KNOWN AS MIG



‘I’m disgusted with the way that some of the workers want to treat people when you go up to the housing offices’

JENNIFER

Iwuchukwu says by phone from the Kensington hotel where Crisis, the homeless charity, placed him in March. “I had no option but to be on the streets.”

In Bonny Downs, people at risk of losing their homes might once have been accommodated in the area’s utilitarian council low-rises, says Allgood. As in much of the UK, these now belong to private landlords. “The opportunity for social housing to catch people just completely went because there was no social housing.” She says local councils now place tenants in private rented properties that are “completely beyond their means”. The tenants are then quickly back with the council when they fall behind on rent and face eviction. “The way that they discharge their duties of support is to get people into the private rented sector and hence the whole cycle starts again.”

The stark reality of what happens to those who fall through the cracks in the system is on display in the space behind an office block in central London that Paulo Gouveia, known as Mig, has called home for the past seven months. A bag of belongings is wedged into a corner by a silver, hard-shell suitcase. His mattress is a sheet of cardboard that does little to soften the discomfort of spending long hours on the street’s concrete paving slabs.

Gouveia, who is 55 and sports a neat, greying beard, is vague about his country of origin but very clear that he has lived in the UK since October 1987. Like many facing housing problems, he focuses his immediate frustrations on his local council. He says he first contacted it in November last year after his landlord unexpectedly barred him from entering his flat. After numerous visits to council offices, Gouveia says he has not received a promised appointment at a centre meant to assess his needs.

Being outside the system means Gouveia was not offered a place in a hotel when lockdown came into force. To charge his mobile phone, he has to trudge nearly two miles every day from his sleeping place in Victoria to Elephant and Castle, south London. He went several weeks without a shower before charity workers told him of a place where he could make an appointment to wash - by walking two miles in the other direction. Pre-lockdown life on the streets was, he says, “great” by comparison.

Waitley also blames his fall into homelessness largely on his council’s failure to help. His problems began when his father, an accountant with whom he lived and for whom he worked, developed a brain tumour and died. The landlord allowed him to stay on in their rented flat but later demanded an extra £250 a month, which Waitley could not afford. He slept on friends’ sofas, then in his car. But, as his problems mounted, a housing officer at his local council told him middle-aged single men were not a serious concern. “I was considered low priority because, I was told, ‘You’re not an alcoholic or drug addict or mentally ill,’” Waitley recalls.

One woman, who asks to be identified only as Jennifer, says that when she returned to the UK after some time living in the US, her local council told her she failed the habitual residence test, before legal action by a homelessness charity overturned its ruling. “I’m disgusted with the way that some of the workers want to treat people when you go up to the housing offices,” she says.

The housing professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick says councils have suffered from a fundamental mismatch of powers and responsibilities. In 2010, the government devolved most responsibility for ►

◀ tackling homelessness to local councils. Spending cuts, however, have slashed council budgets by 40 per cent and central government still holds the levers that control the housing market and benefits system. As a result, councils have struggled to justify devoting significant resources to helping the homeless. “It’s really unfair and inappropriate to expect local government to reverse the impact of the structural factors that fundamentally drive homelessness trends,” says Fitzpatrick.

The urgency of the challenge is clear on revisiting one of the hotels that has been serving as emergency accommodation. The tourist hotel near Victoria Station – one of scores in the area’s elegant 19th-century terraces – is already quiet and dark, with notices in the window telling would-be guests it is not currently accepting business. The last of the homeless people being accommodated in the facility left on June 12, along with the workers from Thames Reach, a charity working to ensure they were not forced to return to the streets.

The current picture contrasts sharply with the scene in May, when Katherine Cowling, a manager for Thames Reach, was working frantically to find places for 27 people rushed into the hotel when lockdown began. As Cowling perched with her laptop on a double bed one morning in late May, a beaming young woman came in with a thank-you note for Cowling’s role in finding her a studio flat. Simply having the clients in one place had been a big advantage, Cowling said. It highlighted how marginalised many without homes are that much of the work had involved providing them with basics such as proper personal identification and telephones. The staff had also helped residents to apply for government benefits. “We have support staff here from 7.30 in the morning until 10 at night and then night staff,” Cowling said.

She was hoping that, as a result, even the most vulnerable would stand a better chance of avoiding the crushing disappointment of returning to the streets shortly after receiving the keys to a home of their own. Of the 25 left in the hotel before it closed, Cowling and her colleagues found places in housing association properties for 11, while another nine either moved straight into private rented property or were waiting to move into such properties. One went into hospital and another into supported specialist housing for young people. Just three had to be moved to another hotel. “Settling them in, making sure they’re not just going to abandon it because it’s overwhelming, is easier said than done but not impossible,” Cowling said. “We do it all the time.”

Hotels such as those in Victoria have prevented the cataclysmic levels of disease transmission that were feared among homeless people during the coronavirus outbreak. Death rates from Covid-19 have been highest in areas with the worst homelessness problems – Newham, the borough that includes Bonny Downs, had the third-highest age-adjusted mortality rate of any local authority in England and Wales to the end of May. There have, however, been no reports in the UK of big disease outbreaks among homeless people.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, which helped to fund Everyone In through an extra £3.2bn handed to English local authorities to cover the various extra costs they face because of the outbreak, trumpets the success of the scheme. “Partners in councils, charities and

CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT: SOCIAL WORKER ANGIE ALLGOOD; CATHERINE PARSONS, DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS AT CHARITY THAMES REACH; KATHERINE COWLING, A THAMES REACH MANAGER; BRIAN WHITING, A VOLUNTEER WITH UNDER ONE SKY; QUEUES FOR FOOD FROM CHARITIES IN TRAFALGAR SQUARE

the hotel industry have made huge efforts to help provide emergency accommodation... during the pandemic,” says the department.

Yet, after a decade when the UK’s social safety net has developed ever larger holes, Catherine Parsons, Thames Reach’s director of operations, is concerned that charities like hers devote so much time to people who lose their homes mainly because they are poor. About a third of the people in the Victoria hotel were leaving every day for work that paid too little to keep them housed. “They’re all people that want to be feeling like adults, rather than in the situation where they feel like they’re living off handouts,” she says.

Alexandru Caragea’s story illustrates the calculations facing the worst paid. Originally from Romania, he worked until March as a caretaker at a PizzaExpress branch in central London and never felt in a position to rent accommodation because of the unpredictability of his pay, which varied between £1,000 and £1,200 but was sometimes lower. Instead, he slept in a makeshift tent of cardboard boxes near Trafalgar Square. “I was basically able to buy my own food and get a gym membership to be able to shower,” Caragea says.

A deep tan testifies to how, since losing his job, he has had to spend even more of his time outside. Caragea says the manager dismissed him following a dispute over his uniform, while PizzaExpress says Caragea resigned. He now relies for food on organisations such as Under One Sky, a group started eight years ago to befriend London’s homeless people. He does not want to apply for benefits and is unsure he would be eligible, but says: “It’s becoming increasingly difficult without any kind of income.”

Parsons says a “financial solution” to the problems of economically marginalised people such as Caragea would leave homeless charities free to help the mentally distressed, traumatised or addicted people who conform to most people’s mental image of the homeless. “That’s what we’re good at.”

Yet there are more immediate problems to solve first. The housing department insists it wants “as many people as possible” who have been brought off the streets to be able to stay under shelter. In late May, it promised £433m to provide 6,000 new supported housing units meant to help previously homeless people. However, lead times for building new housing mean that only 3,300 will be available within the next year.

Facing growing concern from homelessness organisations that hotel closures might force some people back on to the streets, the department this week announced £105m of funding for councils to ensure none of those housed under Everyone In will be returned to the streets. The money will go either to maintain hotels as accommodation for the homeless or to move those now in hotels to other places such as university halls of residence. The department will also bring forward £16m of



ANTHONY LUVERA, AN AUSTRALIAN-BORN PHOTOGRAPHER AND ARTIST BASED IN LONDON, HAS BEEN WORKING WITH PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS FOR 18 YEARS. HE HAS COLLABORATED WITH INDIVIDUALS ACROSS THE UK TO CREATE A PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE OF THEIR EXPERIENCES AND ASSISTED SELF-PORTRAITS; LUVERA.COM

previously pledged spending on drug and alcohol support services for homeless people.

The move allows further breathing room for groups struggling to find permanent homes for those brought in off the streets. Neil Parkinson, a Glass Door case worker, says it currently has only 50 firm offers for new housing for the 200 people it helped to move into hotels. “Many are facing huge barriers and there is no clear path for them,” he says.

Waitley is one of the 50 who does have a place to go. The hotel in his borough will provide longer-term temporary accommodation, thanks to the work of staff from homelessness charity St Mungo’s who persuaded his council it had to take responsibility for him. “It’s progress because they weren’t accepting me or helping me at all with any temporary accommodation,” he says. “So they’ve effectively been given a bit of a push by the government.”

The housing department insists nobody should end up on the streets. “We’ve been clear councils must continue to provide safe accommodation to vulnerable rough sleepers and support those moving on from emergency accommodation,” it says. Yet a visit to Trafalgar Square makes it clear that a wave of new problems could hit those clearing up after the current crisis. As the evening air begins to cool, long queues of people wrapped in blankets wait for the nightly arrival of charities’ food trucks.

Parsons says Thames Reach encountered 421 new rough sleepers this April, against about 200 in a typical April. An official tally of London’s homeless had to be abandoned due to lockdown pressures, but the charity’s findings match the experience of multiple other groups working with the homeless.

In Trafalgar Square, Brian Whiting, an outreach worker from Under One Sky, expresses the deep concern that many involved in working with England’s homeless feel about those who make contact with workers, only to find the system overwhelmed. “We’re finding people on the street who were primed to be picked up and haven’t been,” he says.

Among those Whiting has tried to help is Miguel Hernandez, a 23-year-old chef from Spain. Hernandez, not his real name, explains how he was living in a cheap backpackers’ hostel when the restaurant he was working in closed due to the lockdown. His job and income disappeared instantly.

So far, support from Under One Sky has saved him from homelessness. But his eyes are wide with shock at the sudden downturn in his fortunes. In his broken English, he expresses disbelief at seeing rows of huddled people each night waiting for food amid the classical grandeur of London’s most famous square. “I’ve never seen that – a massive queue of people waiting for something to eat. It’s not just homeless people. It’s normal people who had jobs before who are on the street.” **FT**

Robert Wright is the FT’s social policy correspondent

‘For me, there were big connections between welfare reforms, homelessness and people really struggling’

SOCIAL WORKER ANGIE ALLGOOD



Rowley Leigh Recipes



Baked beans

Photographs by Andy Sewell

This is another recipe in which I tell you to peel broad beans. It took me the best part of an hour to pod and peel one and a half kilos of them when testing this recipe - I know, I'm slowing down. There was a time I could have done it in half the time. But, more recently,

time is something I have had plenty of. I sat outside and, as my fingers and thumbs nicked the peel off the beans, I surveyed the garden and listened to a Messiaen symphony's worth of birdsong. It was no hardship and the result was a large pile of fat, mature broad beans, past the moment of maximum sweetness but with an added mealy earthiness.

So you bet I am happy to peel my beans. Shame if you aren't, because the rest of this recipe is a doddle. You can cheat and blanch the beans in their skins in boiling water for 30 seconds and then throw them into very cold water. The beans will pop out more easily but the blanching does cook them and removes that mealy flavour.

The pastry in this recipe is unusual. It is from Marcella Hazan: she calls it a *pasta frolla* but it is not like any *pasta frolla* that I know. With more ricotta than flour, it bakes crisp on the outside but remains soft and pliant in the middle. To make, it is a piece of cake. **FT**

More columns at ft.com/leigh

Broad bean and ricotta pie

I used a 28cm tart tin: a smaller, deeper tin would work just as well.

- For the pastry**
- 160g butter
 - 225g ricotta
 - 240g flour
 - 1 tsp salt

Cream the butter and ricotta together before sifting in the seasoned flour. Knead gently to make a pliable paste. On a floured board, mould into two balls, one twice the size of the other. Wrap in film and refrigerate for at least half an hour.

- For the filling**
- 1.5kg broad beans
 - 100g double cream
 - 2 whole eggs + 2 egg yolks + 1 egg for egg wash
 - 450g ricotta
 - Grated zest of a lemon
 - 4 tbs olive oil
 - 1 full tbs chopped fresh mint (or savory, marjoram or basil)

1 — Heat the oven to 190C. Remove the beans from their pods (best done by snapping off the tail, opening the pod and running your thumb down the inside to push out the beans). Then peel each one, nicking the skin with your thumbnail and pulling it off. Skin and pods go to compost.

2 — Whisk together cream and eggs. Whisk into the ricotta and mix really well to get a smooth and homogenous mass. Add the lemon zest, a teaspoon of salt and plenty of milled black pepper. Whisk in the olive oil. Finally add the raw beans and the mint and taste for seasoning.

3 — Roll out the bigger piece of pastry into a disc about 2mm-3mm thick and big enough to cover the base and sides of the tin with a slight overlap. Drop this into the tin and make sure the pastry is filled right into the corners. Pour in the bean and ricotta mixture and

spread evenly. Roll out the top sheet of pastry, just wide enough to exceed the diameter of the tin. Trim the outside edge of the top sheet with a pair of scissors before turning the outside, bottom layer of pastry over the lid. Turn it down into the side of the tart like a coiled rope and crimp it in position.

4 — For the wash, beat the egg with a tablespoon of milk and brush the surface of the pie very well. Place the pie down directly on the floor of the oven and bake for 30-35 minutes (moving the pie up a shelf if the base is in danger of burning). A skewer should emerge clean when removed from the centre and it's worth remembering the pie will continue to set after it comes out of the oven. Leave to cool a little. It is best served at room temperature with the tomato sauce and a little salad.

- The tomato sauce**
- 3 tomatoes
 - 1 clove garlic
 - 2 tsp sugar
 - Red wine vinegar
 - Olive oil
 - 100ml passata

Cut tomatoes in half and insert slivers of garlic into the flesh. Sprinkle with two teaspoons of sugar, a teaspoon of salt, ground black pepper, a capful of red wine vinegar and a couple of tablespoons of olive oil. Bake in a hot oven for 30 minutes before adding the passata. Transfer to a saucepan, boil briefly and then liquidise, adding olive oil in a thin stream to emulsify with the tomato. Pass through a sieve and leave to cool.

Wine
A crisp white with a little oily body (a Vermentino perhaps) will do well but it is tempting to reach for a luscious but light fruity red. Bring on the Beaujolais.



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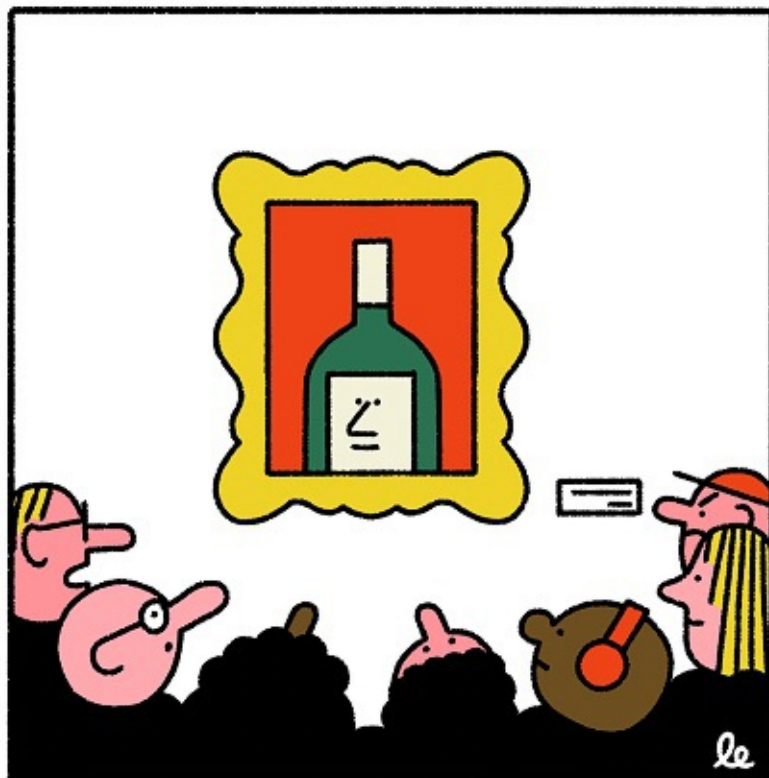
Future icons

Since the early 1990s, the Pomerol known as Le Pin has fetched prices that rival those of Petrus, the most expensive red bordeaux there is. Today, even young wines produced on these two small patches of land in Pomerol can sell for more than £3,000 a bottle.

Yet in December 1984, I was persuaded, slightly against my will, to part with £150 for a dozen bottles of Le Pin 1983. In the early 1980s, it was barely known. The first vintage – produced by Belgian Jacques Thienpont, who had renovated a mere hectare of well-drained gravel – was 1979. I remember sharing a taxi back from a tasting with wine merchant Simon Farr, then of Bibendum Wine. He clearly had quite a lot of Le Pin to sell and urged me to take a punt on this new name in the Bordeaux firmament. I did not regret it, but drank it all up far too quickly and insouciantly.

I was reminded of this recently when researching the history of the classic Bolgheri Cabernet, Sassicaia, in the UK. I remembered being given a taste of this new Tuscan red by Neil and Susannah Braithwaite in their Hampstead flat in the late 1970s and writing an article about it in *Wine & Spirit*, the trade magazine I was then editing. The Braithwaites represented half of the small UK wine importer Hunt & Braithwaite, so I asked Jeremy Hunt, who went on to found the wine importer Thorman Hunt, to relate the story.

“Neil Braithwaite was introduced to the estate by Piero Antinori [head of his family’s 635-year-old Florentine wine-merchant business] in, I think, 1973,” he wrote by email. “At Hunt & Braithwaite, we loved the wine so much we bought 200 dozen Sassicaia 1968 in late 1973 or early 1974. The wine was amazing, but could we sell the darn stuff? We even had Julian Brind [Master of Wine and head wine buyer for Waitrose then] and others to a picnic lunch to taste Sassicaia but it went out in dribs and



As imagined by Leon Edler

drabs! I think Neil still has the odd bottle and it is stunning.”

This was another wine whose reputation and prices soared remarkably fast after a slow start. Today, young vintages cost a few hundred pounds a bottle but Sassicaia 1985 is a legend. Far too few bottles remain undrunk but if you found one you would have to pay about £2,000 for it, or much more in a restaurant.

I’d be the last person to equate wine quality with price – I’ve always thought many wines are ridiculously overpriced and a few, fortunately, are underpriced. But it’s tempting to wonder which wines currently being launched on the market may develop massive reputations and even become cult wines.

I would like to nominate the Andalusian wines of



Muchada-Léclapart for starters – appropriately enough because their wines, effectively unfortified white wines from a single superior sherry vineyard, make the most exceptional aperitifs, while also being of suitable alcoholic strength (just 12.5 per cent) to be drunk with food.

This is a joint venture between Alejandro Muchada and extreme biodynamic enthusiast David Léclapart. Muchada did an internship in Léclapart’s cellars in Trépail, Champagne, while backpacking through France in 2011. Five years later, presumably enthused by the many similarities between sherry and champagne (white wines grown on chalk

‘It’s tempting to wonder which wines being launched on the market may develop massive reputations’

that need something more than fermentation – adding respectively alcohol and sugar – to turn them into a highly distinctive aperitif), they decided to embark together on a groundbreaking project in the far south of Spain.

They have a grand total of three hectares in some of the finer vineyards of mainly old Palomino Fino vines on the albariza chalk of sherry town Sanlúcar de Barrameda. They are farmed biodynamically, with the resulting wines unfiltered so potentially a little cloudy. These very precise terroir expressions seem to last awfully well in the fridge.

This is far from the only unfortified wine project in the greater sherry region. Others embarking on a similar course include Ramiro Ibáñez, Luis Pérez and, most importantly, the Dane Peter Sisseck, who made Pingus, in Ribera del Duero, one of Spain’s most revered wines. ►

Up-and-coming wine stars

- Muchada-Léclapart, Lumière 2018 Vino de España
£39 GB Wine Shippers, £50.75 Winebuyers.com
- Muchada-Léclapart, Univers 2017 Vino de España (younger vines)
£24 GB Wine Shippers, £25 Woodwinters, \$35.99 Henry's Wine & Spirit of Brooklyn
- Verum, Las Tinadas Airén 2018 Vino de la Tierra Castilla
From €9.75 from a range of Spanish retailers and one Belgian retailer
- David & Nadia, Swartland – pretty much any wine, red or white
£110-£240 for six bottles in bond Justerini & Brooks, \$19.99-\$77.99 a bottle from a wide range of US retailers
- Van Loggerenberg, Graft Syrah 2018 Polkadraai Hills
£32.99 Noble Grape of Wales, £35 Philglas & Swigot, Handford, £150 for six bottles in bond Justerini & Brooks
- Van Loggerenberg, Kameraderie Chenin Blanc 2018 Paarl
£32 VINO SA of Cornwall, £35-£36 Handford, The Wine Reserve, Vincognito
- Clément et Florian Berthier, Terre de Silex 2018 Coteaux du Giennois
€15.90 Weinbaer of Germany, €18.75 Les Grappes of France

Tasting notes on Purple Pages of JancisRobinson.com, more international stockists from Wine-searcher.com



◀ Another yet-to-be-discovered wine style comes from less than 500km north-east of the sherry capital Jerez. Until recently, the arid plains of La Mancha have been associated with massive yields of insipid white wine destined for distillation or bulk shipment to countries such as France and Germany.

But there are magnificent old vines here – again chiefly, though not exclusively, for white wine, and generally Albillo but also some really exceptional Airén, the traditional and often scorned La Mancha grape. Grown carefully and vinified as though for a top white burgundy, ambitious local producers such as Jesús María Recuero, Más Que Vinos, Verum and, especially, Vinos de Garaje (Garage Wines) are making fascinating fine wines from them.

South Africa is another source of wines whose producers' reputations are surely set to grow internationally. Sadie Family and Mullineux Wines are probably the new-wave producers best-known outside South Africa, and I have mentioned many others on these pages before. But, selfishly, I'm particularly glad to see London wine merchant Justerini & Brooks has already signed up David & Nadia Wines and the talented Lukas van Loggerenberg of Van Loggerenberg Wines.

The warming climate is changing which places are able to make seriously fine wine. I was sent the

'South Africa is another source of wines whose reputations are surely set to grow internationally'

current releases from Clément et Florian Berthier in the Upper Loire recently. They included a range of wines from the famous appellation Sancerre, as well as other terroir-specific bottlings from the very much less famous Coteaux du Giennois to the north of Sancerre. For many years, grapes in the Coteaux du Giennois struggled to ripen and the wines have had appellation contrôlée status only since 1998, but if these Berthier wines are anything to go by, in a warming climate, the humble Coteaux du Giennois is better placed to produce well-balanced, refreshing wines than famous Sancerre, whose Sauvignon Blancs may be in danger of being a bit too ripe to refresh.

This reflects what's happening in Burgundy, where previously too-cool regions such as the Hautes-Côtes are coming into their own. And one wine I tasted recently brought home the effects of climate change dramatically. It was a delicious dry white, from Johanniter grapes vinified by Kojder in... Poland. **FT**

More columns at ft.com/jancis-robinson

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FT Weekend



FANTASY DINNER PARTY

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

'Not a meal for amateurs' – the FT's US finance editor selects the chef, dishes, drinks and guests for his ultimate supper

No presidents. There is no one I admire more than Franklin Roosevelt, and no one I would rather spend an hour talking to than Abraham Lincoln. But this is not conversation or a trip into history: it's dinner. Put the great men at the table and the food and wine may as well disappear. It's my fantasy and by God we're here to eat.

My guests and I are headed – by Tardis, presumably – to the France of 70 years ago, to **Fernand Point's** La Pyramide, near Lyon. The mountainous Point, teacher of Paul Bocuse, liked to take a glass of champagne while he was shaved in his garden each morning to prepare for spending the day cooking with impossible amounts of the richest ingredients.

"If the divine creator has taken pains to give us delicious and exquisite things to eat, the least we can do is prepare them well and serve them with ceremony," Point said, summing up my approach to life as well as anyone ever has (with the possible exception of his most famous declaration: "Butter! Give me butter! Always butter!").

The menu, which will be bracketed by magnums of Pol Roger, will be simple, based on one the great cuisinier chose for his own

50th birthday. Foie-gras parfaits, roast woodcock, crayfish-tail gratin, stuffed Rhône trout, cardoons with truffles, beef *à la royale*, Saint-Marcellin cheese, marjolaine cake, lemon sorbet. And a little fruit to refresh the palate.

Not a meal for amateurs, and so the call goes out for a professional to anchor the table.

Julia Child, perhaps the most famous of American appetites, answers. The big, bluff, indomitable Bostonian will be equal to the menu ("The only time to eat diet food is while you're waiting for the steak to cook," she once said) and will choose the right wines to accompany it. Her good cheer will fill any lull in the conversation. And more importantly, she is just the right person to sit next to **Richard Pryor**.

While it is easy to imagine what Pryor would think of the current American president, I would be keen to hear exactly how he would express it. The most brilliant of comics was also the genre's master of pity and bathos, making him the right man to talk through our wretched times. The risk of inviting Pryor is that, like many great artists, he could be egotistical and sulky. But Child would have none of it and she wouldn't turn a hair at his

filthiest jokes. I predict they would get on like a house afire.

Pryor's appetites, by reputation, ran more to drugs than food, but I suspect he might perform admirably at the table too. After dinner, he and I could steer the Tardis to New York in, say, 1977 for a nightcap at Studio 54 (the others are welcome to join if they like, of course – though it might not be precisely her scene, the image of Mrs Child squeezed on a banquette between Andy Warhol and Freddie Mercury has a certain appeal).

Next to Pryor I place **Pauline Kael**, the film critic. She was

'Richard Pryor and I could steer the Tardis to New York in 1977 for a nightcap at Studio 54'

contrarian and kind-hearted, a party-lover and a former food writer – the platonic ideal of the dinner guest. Her reviews stitched together subtle analysis of art with an uncomplicated desire to be entertained. "If we've grown up at the movies, we know that good work is continuous not with the academic, respectable tradition but with the glimpses of something good in trash," she wrote, threatening to shove aside Point's aphorism as my personal motto and reserving herself an eternal seat next to me.

And I will have much to discuss with the woman on my other side: **Lauren Bacall**. Is it brutish of me to invite her simply because I find her the most beautiful woman of all time? Perhaps, but it takes more than looks to make Marilyn Monroe seem dowdy (watch them together in *How to Marry a Millionaire*). Her presence was strong enough to balance Bogart's, she hated Eugene McCarthy and boy, would she have stories to tell.

It might take Bacall's combination of beauty and steel will to bring out the last and trickiest of my guests: **Prince**. A vegetarian, he will require special care from the kitchen. And the man who wrote the soundtrack to my youth was a famously sensitive recluse. He was not known for sharing the stage and perhaps the same would be true at the table.

But Prince's goofy, generous side shone through when he popped up on episodes of *Muppets Tonight* and *New Girl*. He loved basketball and ping-pong. He was a huge, unique, inexplicable figure in American life. Could we unravel him over dinner? It seems unlikely but, if we fail, we can always focus on the food. **FT**

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L.S. Lowry, Entrance to the Dwellings, 1933, oil on board, 21" x 17"



Theodore Major, Roses, oil on board, 25" x 30"

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L.S. Lowry, Man Looking out to Sea, 1963, oil on board, 14" x 10"



Theodore Major, Dark Sky with Telegraph Poles, oil on board, 18" x 22"

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Games



A Round on the Links by James Walton



All the answers here are linked in some way. Once you've spotted the link, any you didn't know the first time around should become easier.

1. Which country (above) has the most castles per square mile?
2. Whose biggest hit (by far) – a number

one for five weeks in 1991 – was written by Nik Kershaw (right)?

3. In *The Simpsons*, what job does Joe Quimby do?
4. What type of ring is used to make an impression in sealing wax?
5. Who was George HW Bush's vice-president?

6. Which best-selling historian's books include *Stalingrad* and *Berlin: The Downfall 1945*?

7. In 2019, which England cricketer was awarded Specsavers glasses for life following his heroic last-wicket partnership with Ben Stokes to win the Headingley Ashes Test?

8. Whose novels include *The Waves* and *To the Lighthouse*?

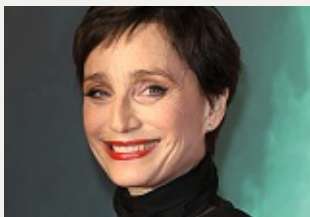
9. Which hippie musical – regularly revived since – opened at the Shaftesbury Theatre in 1968, complete with a controversial nude scene?

10. Which character in *EastEnders* is played by Jessie Wallace?



The Picture Round by James Walton

Who or what do these pictures add up to?



+

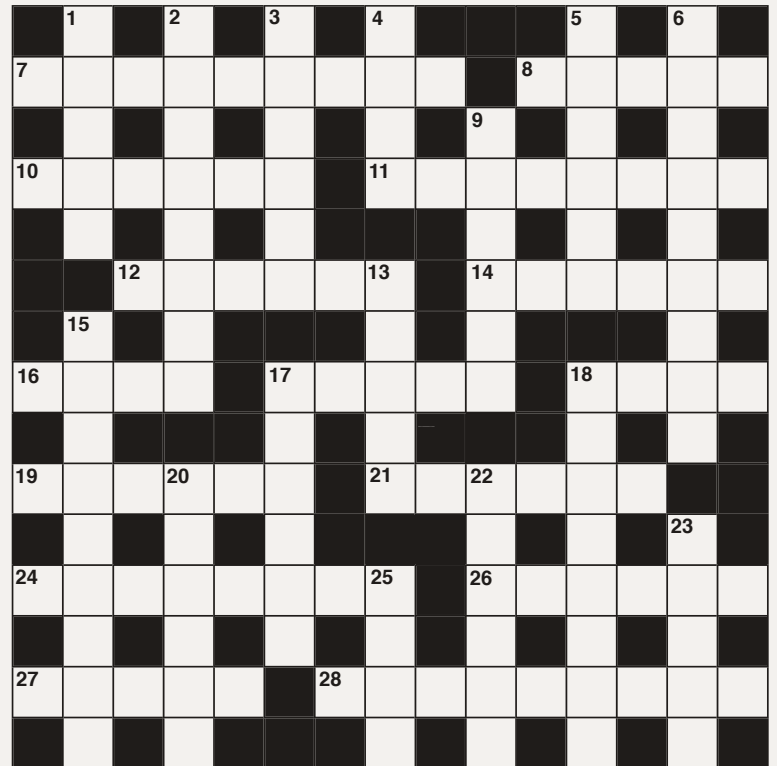


= ?

Answers page 10

GETTY IMAGES

The Crossword No 494. Set by Aldhelm



The Across clues are straightforward, while the Down clues are cryptic.

ACROSS

- 7 Unorthodox, blasphemous (9)
- 8 Run-of-the-mill (5)
- 10 Animated (6)
- 11 Solemn, grave (8)
- 12 Of the spring (6)
- 14 Flag (6)
- 16 Boxing match (4)
- 17 Ancient poet (5)
- 18 Badly injure (4)
- 19 Aromatic medicinal plant (6)
- 21 Respect (6)
- 24 Mad rush (8)
- 26 On the surface (6)
- 27 Vision (5)
- 28 Pirate (9)

DOWN

- 1 It's OK, commonly, to run away (5)
- 2 Strong superheroes taken in check (8)
- 3 African country almost grabs one that's near (6)
- 4 Young creature from ecological farm (4)
- 5 Get about in agricultural building that's empty of produce (6)
- 6 Get about with time for a journal and use just the odd bits for list (9)
- 9 Sharpshooter's right after bird (6)
- 13 The French encounter strange climbing creature (5)
- 15 First military camp when sailor's imprisoned (3, 1, 5)

- 17 A bit of heavy metal organised for a small settlement (6)
- 18 US state's light army manoeuvred first (8)
- 20 Vessel's mast put up without time to criticise (6)
- 22 Slight touch from grand weapon (6)
- 23 Drink in the village restaurant (5)
- 25 Case for regular pieces of beat music (4)

Solution to Crossword No 493





PATTI WALDMEIR

PARTING SHOT

How coronavirus reminded me that life is a risky business



Better be safe than sorry." I have never believed that. I have lived my first 65 years often turning a blind eye to risk. I lived in China for eight years, enduring some of the worst industrial pollution on earth, despite having asthma. I risked damaging the lungs of my then small children by raising them in a place where their school often locked them in air-purified classrooms to protect them from the smog.

Before that, I lived for 20 years in Africa, refusing to boil water in areas where it needed boiling, eating bushmeat at roadside stalls - not to mention the escapades that I got up to as a young woman in the pre-Aids era.

But now, as I peer over the precipice into life as a senior citizen, coronavirus has finally introduced me to the concept of risk. Part of it is the whole "60 is the new 80" paradigm that the pandemic has forced on us - but most of it is that, whether I like it or not, I fit squarely in the category of "at risk" for severe illness or death if I catch Covid-19.

I have diabetes, asthma and am finishing my 65th year. I don't live in a nursing home, a jail, a monastery or a convent (as does one close friend with Covid-19), but according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), I still qualify as high risk because of my underlying conditions and age.

So what do I - and people like me, I am far from alone - do now that the world is reopening without us? I've got some big decisions to make in the next few days. My youngest child is moving back to our flat outside Chicago after a month living elsewhere: does one of us need to be locked in the bedroom? Do I have to eat on the balcony for two weeks?

There is no shortage of people, not least President Donald Trump, telling me that all this is simple: vulnerable people should just stay home. But what if they live with other people? What if those people have jobs? And what about our dogs? Our two old mutts are overdue for a rabies shot because the vet was only seeing emergencies. Is it safe for me to take them in now? Can my kids go to the dentist, and then come home to live at close quarters with me?

I asked several medical experts these questions, and they all offered versions of "we haven't got a clue". Robert Gabbay, incoming chief scientific and medical officer of the American Diabetes Association, was the most helpful: "Individuals with diabetes are all in the higher risk category but even within that category, those who are older and with comorbidities are at more risk - and control of blood glucose seems to matter.

"You are probably somewhere in the middle" of the high-risk category, he decided. My diabetes is well controlled and I don't have many other illnesses. "But your age is a factor," he added.

Up to now, I've thought I was in the "60 is the new 40 crowd": now I know there is no such crowd.

The head of the Illinois Department of Public Health underlined this at the weekend when she gave her personal list of Covid dos and don'ts, including don't visit a parent who is over 65 with pre-existing conditions for at least a year, or until there is a cure. Dr Ngozi Ezike also said she would not attend a wedding or a dinner party for a year and would avoid indoor restaurants for three months to a year - despite the fact that Chicago's indoor restaurants reopened on Friday.

'Up to now, I've thought I was in the "60 is the new 40 crowd": now I know there is no such crowd'

I turned to the CDC, which initially said it would issue new guidance for "at risk" people last week, but didn't. This would be the same CDC that I trusted when it said not to wear a mask - though 1.3 billion people in China were masking up. Today China, which is 100 times larger by population than my home state of Illinois, has less than three-quarters as many total pandemic deaths. (Yes, I know China has been accused of undercounting cases, but so has the US.) Masks aren't the only reason; but they are enough of a reason to erode my trust in what the CDC thinks I should do now.

It doesn't help that the CDC website lists "moderate to severe asthma" as one of the primary risk factors for poor coronavirus outcomes - while the American Academy of Allergy Asthma and Immunology says "there are no published data to support this determination", adding that there is "no evidence" that those with asthma are more at risk. Who's right?

I need to know: this weekend is the one-year anniversary of the death of my eldest sibling. I've chosen not to make the trip to visit his grave in Michigan. Next month, I turn 65, and I want to spend that day with my 89-year-old father: should we rent a camper van, so we don't infect his household? I thought about a porta potty for the journey, since public toilets are apparently a coronavirus hotspot. When I started searching for "female urination devices" online, I knew it was time to ditch this new "better safe than sorry" persona I've assumed under lockdown.

Maybe it's time to remind myself of a fact that I once knew: that life is a risky business, and there is only so much I can do about that. I'll die when it's my time - probably not a day before or after, coronavirus or no coronavirus. **FT**

.....
Patti Waldmeir is the FT's North America correspondent; patti.waldmeir@ft.com; @WaldmeirPatti. Gillian Tett is away

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A different perspective

Some furniture is made for the here and now.
Some is built to stand the test of time.
At Neptune, we believe that the best can do both.
Because good design never gets old.



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