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KARLA PETERSON
Columnist

S.D. native choreographs the stories of Black lives

Of course, Jeremy McQueen wants to be relevant. The San Diego-born, New York City-based performer and choreographer would not have formed the socially conscious Black Iris Project if he didn't want to tell relevant stories about Black lives and Black history. He would not have created a ballet inspired by the life of anti-apartheid activist Nelson Mandela if he didn't have something serious to say.

And he certainly would not have choreographed "A Mother's Rite," a 2018 piece that follows the emotional journey of a grieving mother whose son was shot and killed by a White police officer. In the wake of George Floyd's May 25 death while in police custody in Minneapolis, McQueen's 2-year-old ballet is so in tune with our current tumultuous reality, it could have been created yesterday.

As an artist, McQueen is thrilled that his work feels more relevant than ever. As a Black man, he can't help wishing it didn't.

"The things we are experiencing now are not very different from the things we experienced in 2018, which were not different from what Emmett Till's mother experienced (in the 1950s)," McQueen said during a recent phone interview from the apartment in the Bronx that he shares with his partner. "We wanted to make something that was timeless, but it's heartbreaking for me that this is still relevant the way it is. It is very heavy."

For McQueen, art wasn't always an instrument of social change. But from the moment he saw "The Phantom of the Opera" from the upper balcony of the San Diego Civic Theatre, art felt like something that could change him.

"I sat on the edge of my seat the entire time, with the binoculars glued to my face," said McQueen, who was raised in Oak Park and attended La Jolla Country Day School, Francis Parker School, the Oak Park Music Conservatory and the San Diego School of the Creative and Performing Arts.

"From the costumes to the push red seats to the lighting and the curtains, everything just gave me chills up my spine. When it was over, I just looked at my mother and said, 'Can I do that?' I didn't care if I was a stagehand or if I was playing an instrument. I just wanted more of it."

So he took violin lessons at La Jolla Country Day, followed by acting classes at San Diego Junior Theatre. Ambitious even then, McQueen knew he wanted to be a "triple threat" performer who could act, sing and dance. The problem was, he wasn't very good at dancing. Not only that, he didn't like it much either.

It wasn't until he started taking ballet classes at SCPA that McQueen really took to dance. That was all due to the influence of the legendarily demanding dance teacher Donald Robinson, who was able to convince McQueen that there was room in the rarefied ballet world for a kid like him.

"What really helped me was the fact that I had a

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DIANE BELL
has the day off.

PANEL DRAWS VARIETY OF RESIDENTS

Revived Human Relations Commission has 20 members, 11 seats to fill

BY CHARLES T. CLARK

Two months ago county supervisors unanimously agreed to revive the region's long-defunded Human Relations Commission and a month later tasked the commission with defining the scope and mission of a new countywide Office of Equity and Racial Justice.

That office will likely play a role in directing millions of dollars in taxpayer funds, making the membership of the 31-person Human Relations commission even more important — especially as protests persist over police brutality and systemic racism.

Although 11 seats remain unfilled, San Diego County has at least 20 new commission members. They come from a variety of backgrounds, ranging from longtime community activists and behavioral health specialists to artists and gun rights advocates.

Each San Diego County supervisor nominates three members to the commission, including one who is supposed to be between the ages of 16 and 24.

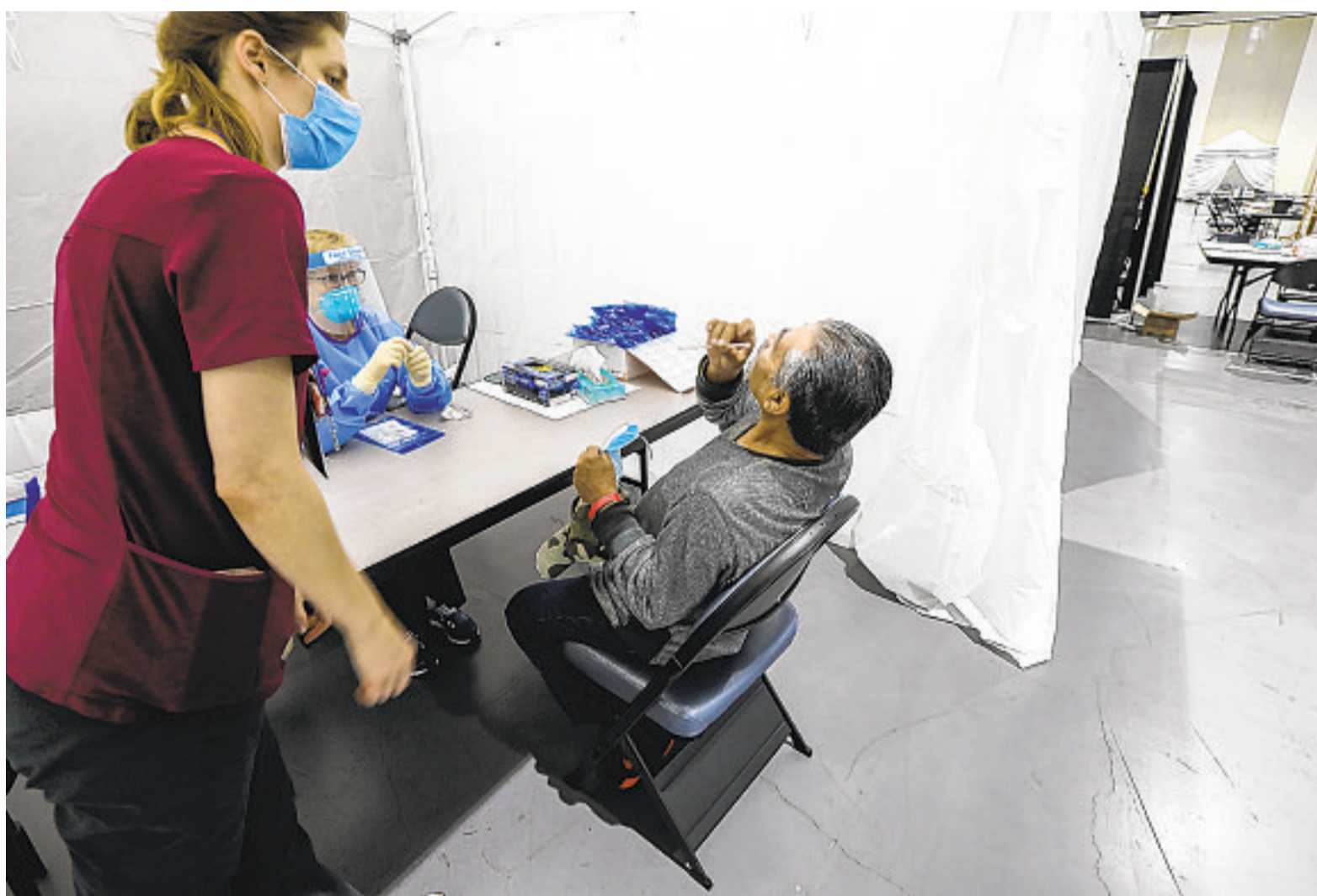
Supervisor Greg Cox, who represents the South Bay, has had all three of his nominations confirmed: Daphne Watson, Enrique Morones and Ryan Joseph Garcia.

Watson is executive director of Mental Health America of San Diego County, serves on two county behavioral health commissions and has worked on disparities in mental health care and foster care.

Morones founded and until as of last year was executive director of Border Angels, a non-profit that has fought more than 30 years to reduce fatalities along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Joseph Garcia is Cox's youth appointee to the commission. Garcia graduated from San Diego State University in May with a major in social science and previously worked on U.S. Rep. Mike Levin's congressional campaign in 2018 as a paid canvasser. In his application he said, "As a Filipino-American who has

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EDUARDO CONTRERAS U-T

Luis Gonzalez self-administers a COVID-19 test at the homeless shelter at the San Diego Convention Center as public health nurses Janette Wolski (standing) and Stacey Sundling supervise. Almost 3,000 tests also have been conducted at the shelter.

CASES LOW AMONG HOMELESS

COVID-19 positives, hospitalizations rising in general population, but impact on S.D.'s unsheltered not as dire

BY GARY WARTH

SAN DIEGO

The number of homeless people who have contracted or been hospitalized with COVID-19 has remained relatively low in San Diego County while cases continue to rise among the general population.

San Diego County has reported 15,696 coronavirus cases among residents this year and 387 deaths as of Thursday. Among the area's homeless population, 147 people have tested positive for the virus and none have died. While almost 500 county residents were hospital-

ized with COVID-19 on June 29, only 41 homeless people have been hospitalized with the disease this year.

Cases among the homeless are increasing, but not rapidly. Numbers released Thursday showed only 32 more cases and nine additional hospitalizations since June 19. People who tested positive included 16 in shelters, 26 in vehicles, 25 outside without shelter, 23 couch-surfers and 43 in hotels or hostels, with the remainder in unknown lodging.

While the data suggests homeless people in San Diego County have not been hit hard by the pan-

demic, it's difficult to know for sure.

A person's housing status isn't asked when tests are administered, so there's no way to know how many homeless people outside of shelters have been tested. Without that number, it's impossible to know what percent of homeless people have tested positive.

But while that exact number is not known, it is clear that thousands of homeless people have been tested. About 2,000 tests have been conducted on about 1,650 people at the Father Joe's Villages health center, and many of those people are known to be homeless and living

without shelter.

Almost 3,000 tests also have been conducted at the shelter in the San Diego Convention Center, where about 1,300 people are staying. Only seven clients have tested positive, or about 0.46 percent. In comparison, the county reported a 7 percent positive rate on June 28.

It's also clear the disease has had a greater impact on the homeless population in other cities. A shelter in San Francisco saw 66 percent of its clients testing positive for the coronavirus this year while a Boston shelter had 36 percent positive tests

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LA JOLLA OUTDOOR DINING PLAN SCRAPPED

Expense of parking enforcement halts two months of preparation

BY ELISABETH FRAUSTO

LA JOLLA

With no resolution to a last-minute, expensive roadblock, the La Jolla Shores Association says it can't proceed with its proposed outdoor dining on Avenida de la Playa.

"It's really a slap in the face to any small community trying to help its mom-and-pop businesses," LJSA President Janie Emerson said July 2.

The plan was intended for restaurants to be able to serve more customers while observing social-distancing guidelines related to the coronavirus pandemic.

After more than two months of preparation to obtain permits and complete paperwork on behalf of restaurants, LJSA said it received a letter from the city of San Diego saying the association would need to pay for any ticketing and towing of cars each day before setting up tables for outdoor dining on Avenida de la Playa between El Paseo Grande and Calle de la Plata.

The one block would be closed from 10:30 a.m. to midnight Thursdays through Sundays, with dining furniture set up every morning and cleared after service ended at 10 p.m.



FILE

Patio dining and tables along the sidewalk are pictured in 2016 at Osteria Romantica on Avenida de la Playa in La Jolla.

LJSA has been working with the city's Special Events & Filming Department, following an "existing process" to permit the closure of Avenida de la Playa, according to city spokeswoman Nicole Darling.

Following the department's notification regarding the ticketing and towing fees — which LJSA board member Phil Wise estimated would run nearly \$17,000 — Wise asked representatives of the department and City Council member Barbara Bry's District 1 office for a workaround.

Wise said special-events directors called the \$17,000 estimate a worst-case scenario and said that after a few days of towing, police probably wouldn't have to be called because people would stop parking there, though no guarantees

could be made.

"We can't agree to [the worst-case scenario]," Wise said.

"Had we known this expense from the get-go, we would have stopped our efforts at that time," Wise said in an email to the special-events directors.

Stopping the project now means a financial loss for the restaurants, many of which have already purchased additional liability insurance for the street space they would occupy, Wise said.

"This is an expense that will be hard to recover," he said. "Additionally, some of the restaurants have ordered additional tables, chairs and umbrellas that they hoped to place onto the street. They made these financial com-

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IMMIGRANTS IN S.D. FOCUS OF STUDY ON WORKERS

They're employed in more than a third of health care, food and agricultural jobs

BY GREG MORAN

SAN DIEGO

A new report on immigrants in the city of San Diego shows that more than a quarter of the city's population is foreign born, they constitute more than a third of all essential workers in the health care, food and agriculture industries, and immigrants from African and Middle Eastern countries make up the fastest-growing segment of new arrivals.

The "Immigrant Integration in the City of San Diego" report is a product of the U.S. Immigration Policy Center at UC San Diego. The findings are based on the center's own analysis of 2018 American Community Survey data compiled by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Among the findings in the report:

- There are about 344,000 immigrants in the city, or 27 percent of the population. That is nearly twice the 13.7 percent national average of the U.S. population that is foreign born.
- A little under 20 percent of those

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