

The State of Things
Monday – Friday, 12 – 1pm
Lines For Quarter 4 of 2020

December 31, 2020

Category: Arts

Frank Stasio's Fondest Shows: Meet Little Brother:

In 2003, Frank Stasio spent time in North Carolina guest hosting The State of Things, and one of the conversations from his early days on the show is one of his most-memorable from his 15-year tenure as host: sitting down with hip-hop group Little Brother. At that time, they had just broken through with a video on MTV and the release of their first record "The Listening." 9th Wonder, Phonte, and Big Pooh were just starting out back then, and went on to have successful careers as a group and individually, including Grammy awards and nominations. "Little Brother" got back together for a surprise show in 2019, and Phonte joined host Anita Rao earlier this year to share more of that story.

Category: Arts

Frank Stasio's Fondest Shows: The Bucket Brothers Tune Their Talents:

Logan Valleroy and Casey Valleroy might be teenagers, but their musical prowess makes them seem like professional musicians. The brothers have been playing music since they were young. Today, the pair play a myriad of instruments like the violin, keyboard, drums, saxophone and guitar, but started out as kids banging on pots and pans around the house. Host Frank Stasio interviewed The Bucket Brothers in 2016 about their debut album, called "Our State." The brothers also talked about developing their talents and playing everything from old-time folk music to gypsy jazz. This was one of Frank's most memorable conversations as he looks back on his time in the host chair.

December 30, 2020

Category: Arts

WUNC Podcasts Year-End Special

WUNC's locally produced podcasts — Tested, Politics Podcast, Embodied, Creep and Phoebe Reads A Mystery — take a look back at some of their favorite episodes from the past year, hosted by Kamaya Truitt.

December 29, 2020

Category: Economy

Frank Stasio's Fondest Shows: North Carolina's Unions And Organized Labor Saved Lives In 2020:

Union membership in the United States is at a record low. About 10% of workers nationwide are currently union members, and only 2.7% of workers in North Carolina are unionized, which places the state second-to-last in the nation. But workers on the front lines have taken up collective action as a means of survival in the face of the coronavirus pandemic. Even without the protections of union representation, healthcare workers risked their jobs to raise the alarm about PPE shortages, and fast-food workers continue striking to improve safety measures. Unionized workplaces were found to be 30% more likely to be inspected for health and safety violations in a recent study, and those benefits extend out into the community. Customers can thank organized grocery workers for increased sanitation and protective shields at stores across the country.

With North Carolina's minimum wage stalled at \$7.25 while the cost of living continues to rise, many of the essential workers advocating on behalf of community health are also facing eviction and food insecurity. In September, host Frank Stasio reflected on a year of labor movements with David Zonderman and Maxwell Millington. Zonderman is a professor and head of the history department at North Carolina State University. Millington is a writer for Cardinal & Pine, part of the Courier Newsroom, a project funded by the progressive nonprofit Acronym. He is also the host of "The Barbershop (919)" podcast.

North Carolina's long history of anti-labor law and vigilante violence leaves many workers afraid of retaliation. At the age of 29, Ella May Wiggins was killed for organizing textile workers in western North Carolina. Part of the communist-led National Textile Workers Union, Wiggins united Black and white millworkers in fighting for a 40-hour week and living wages. Stasio talked with Wiggins' great granddaughter, Kristina Horton, who carries on her ancestor's legacy through education and an annual celebration of her life and movement. Horton is the author of "Martyr of Loray Mill: Ella May and the 1929 Textile Workers' Strike in Gastonia, North Carolina."

The textile workers movement went dormant for many decades in the region after the assassination of Wiggins and other intimidation killings. In Morganton, globalization in the '90s shut down plenty of mills, but some drew on the region's history of labor organizing to rebuild resilient employee-owned factories. Opportunity Threads practices a cooperative structuring that equitably distributes profits back to employees.

The co-op is a member of The Industrial Commons, a network of like-minded small industrial businesses committed to regional economics and the nonprofit affiliate of the Carolina Textile District. The network's localized agility was on display at the outset of the pandemic, when they were able to rapidly source, test, manufacture and distribute PPE as globally-consolidated companies struggled to move materials and products through closed ports. Stasio talked with Molly Hemstreet, founder of Opportunity Threads and co-executive director of The Industrial Commons, and Walter Vicente, plant manager at Opportunity Threads.

This program stuck out to Frank as he looked back on his time in the host's chair because it focused on the progress workers are making today and also included the legacy of Ella May Wiggins.

December 28, 2020

Category: Arts & Culture

'Has The World Ended Yet?' Students Reflect On Letters To The Future

The letters begin with various greetings. "Dear 50 year of age self." "To my future children." "Dear future me, It's me, I mean you, but circa 2020." These are the words of a group of University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill undergraduates who processed the reality of a pandemic-dominated year through letters to the future as a class assignment this spring. The letters reveal a vulnerable side of the writers — a side that has gone through anger, grief and fear during the uncertainties of 2020. The students penned the letters more than six months ago, but second-year student Ankita Chopde and third-year student Isabel Salas say the words to themselves still ring true. Host Anita Rao talks with Chopde and Salas about their letters and how writing helped them process isolation from family and cancelled plans. Their course instructors also join the conversation to discuss the concept of the assignment and the value of

letter-writing. Alison LaGarry is a clinical assistant professor in the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Education, and Lucia Mock Muñoz de Luna is a doctoral student in the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Education.

Category: Arts & Culture

Not Your Old-Fashioned Bookworms: How Librarians Became Digital Connoisseurs In Pandemic

This March, our world turned digital. Zoom meetings, virtual school and video chats dominated work, school and home life. To ease this transition to computer-based life, the state's public libraries stepped up for their communities. Hugh Davis is director of the Albemarle Regional Library, which serves the northeastern counties of Hertford, Bertie, Gates and Northampton. Working in counties that the Hertford County-native described as "internet deserts," Davis had his work cut out for him. He took the director position in March as the pandemic moved into full swing, and his brief time has been spent connecting patrons with hotspots, computer classes and e-books. Both Davis and Iredell County Public Library Youth Services Manager Carole Dennis say the libraries have always had useful online resources, and the pandemic encouraged people to seek them out and use them to their full potential. Their libraries also acted as important community connection points as pandemic isolation set in. Dennis and her staff created "Maker Videos" on Facebook to give parents and kids fun home activities. Host Anita Rao talks with Davis and Dennis about their experiences as librarians during the pandemic and the books that helped them along the way.

December 25, 2020

Category: Arts

NPR Tinsel Tales 1

This year a radio tradition continues — stories from the NPR archives that touch on the meaning of Christmas. David Sedaris, Bailey White, John Henry Faulk — these and other NPR voices, past and present, tell stories of the season.

December 24, 2020

Category: Education

Frank Stasio's Fondest Shows: Meet Cecilia Polanco, Who Runs 'So Good Pupusas':

Cecilia Polanco's parents did not dream of their daughter owning a food truck when they emigrated from El Salvador to the United States in the early 1980s. Their expectation was that she would get a respectable profession after college, or even better, a career, like her older sisters who work in law and insurance. So when she proposed the idea of a pupusa business, her mother naturally had some concerns — Polanco did not even know how to make the traditional Salvadoran fare. It became clear to Polanco that — after graduating from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill — she would have to attend what she calls "The School of Pupusas" under the instruction of her aunt and mother. With the guidance and support of her family, Polanco has leveraged her grandmother's recipe into a force for change in Durham. The food truck So Good Pupusas funds a nonprofit that Polanco founded to provide college scholarships to undocumented students and DACA recipients. Polanco hustles to make ends meet, yet continues improving her food truck's model for economic justice and environmental sustainability. Those values permeate all of her work. In addition to being the CEO of So Good Pupusas, she is the executive director of SEEDS, a nonprofit urban garden and kitchen classroom in Durham, and serves on various boards, including Durham's Racial Equity Task Force and LatinxEd. Host Frank Stasio talked with Polanco in 2019 about balancing

work, passions and mental health as a young entrepreneur. Frank says this story sticks out in his mind because “Cecilia is reaching back into her own ethnic heritage even as she points the way forward for new immigrants with stories much like her own family's.”

December 23, 2020

Category: Arts

NPR’s Tinsel Tales 3

Listeners tune to NPR for extraordinary Christmas stories that transport you to unexpected places. Baxter Black ponders the meaning of Christmas for Cows, Bailey White sneaks into her neighbor’s yard in search of an elusive hemlock tree and Julie Zickefoose serenades her neighbors on the coldest night of the year.

December 22, 2020

Category: Sports/Recreation

Frank Stasio’s Fondest Shows: Meet Surf Philosopher And Educator Maia Dery:

For Maia Dery, sitting still has never been much of an option. Her teacher had her sit out in the halls to not disturb other students, and as soon as she had her precious driver’s license, Dery routinely skipped school to escape to Duke Forest. As Dery says, she never did well in boxes. Her awe for the natural world led her to a career as a photographer and later as an award-winning professor at Guilford College where she subverted the education system by forcing students to learn outside – sometimes in wind, rain, or snow. She developed the Cape Fear River Basin Studies Program at Guilford College, a curriculum that helped students understand how North Carolina waterways are inextricably linked to race, class, and broader economic systems. At 40, Dery’s life started anew when she took on a lifelong dream. She hopped on a surfboard, paddled out, and with her first waves discovered a new kind of connection to nature. Dery’s love of water and her unrelenting commitment to connect education to tactile natural spaces drove her to found “Waves to Wisdom,” a program that combines surfing with deeper critical and philosophical thought. Dery spoke with host Frank Stasio in 2018 about her upbringing, her podcast that captures probing conversations about surf culture, and about the transformative effects of plunging your feet in the water. Frank chose this as one of his most memorable conversations.

December 21, 2020

Category: Race

A ‘Black Economic Development Zone’ Grows In Rural Durham County

Activist Skip Gibbs was in the midst of leading a protest in Durham this summer when he felt that something wasn’t right. In the crowd, which had gathered to demand that the city council redirect the police department budget into social services, he saw mostly white faces. “It was a way for these people to prove they weren’t racist,” said Gibbs in an interview with WUNC reporter Will Michaels. “It made me feel like a puppet.” So Gibbs set off on a mission to create a self-sufficient settlement for Black farmers and entrepreneurs. A Durham couple heard about Gibbs’ idea and donated four acres of land to his vision. The seeds for Brightwood were sown. Though there have been a few setbacks — threats from older, white neighbors and a lack of early buy-in from Black community members — construction is underway and ahead of schedule. Gibbs said he envisions a garden, a market, a library and enough living space for 100 Black people. Host Anita Rao talks with Michaels about his interview with Gibbs and other Black entrepreneurs and farmers about the vision for Brightwood.

Category: Arts and Culture

All The Songs We Sing: A Celebration Of North Carolina's Black Writers

Twenty-five years ago, renowned poet Lenard D. Moore invited a group of his peers into his basement for a session of writing critique. That monthly gathering evolved into the Carolina African American Writers' Collective, which has supported over 60 writers across a variety of styles through their careers. Members have published books, chapbooks, essays and their writing appears in a variety of literary magazines. The collective celebrates 25 years of honing their craft with the anthology "All the Songs We Sing" (Blair/2020), out June 2. Host Anita Rao reflects on the CAAWC's history with founder and editor of "All the Songs We Sing" Lenard D. Moore. Journalist and author Bridgette Lacy joins the conversation and shares her memories of the collective. And writer Angela Belcher Epps talks about how working with the collective helped sharpen her writing.

Please note: This program originally aired May 29, 2020.

Category: Arts & Culture

Ben Phantom's Music Video 'Saigon' Documents His Father's Return To Vietnam

Asheville-based singer-songwriter Ben Phantom's father never talked about his time in Vietnam. So when he finally decided to go back for a visit after 42 years in the United States, Phantom brought a video camera. As he filmed the sights and sounds of his father's homeland, their family cemetery and the homes of family members, he started writing a song. Three years later, Phantom's song and music video "Saigon" tell the story of his father's return home. The musician joins host Anita Rao to talk about his father's story, their travels in Vietnam and how the pandemic has shaped the year for the musician.

December 18, 2020

Category: Religion

In 'Broken Faith' Reporters Uncover Decades Of Abuse Inside Cult-Like Spindale Church

When former schoolteacher Jane Whaley and her husband, Sam, founded Word of Faith Fellowship in Spindale, NC in 1979, no one could have imagined all that the institution would become: a religious movement with global impact; a community that provides housing and job opportunities to its congregation; and a cult dogged with allegations of physical, psychological and spiritual abuse.

John Cooper grew up in Spindale as part of the Word of Faith Fellowship community, and the abuse he suffered then haunted him well into his adult life. While attending medical lectures on how to recognize signs of domestic violence, he was reminded of multiple church members attempting to exorcise Word of Faith Fellowship congregants through "blasting" — or screaming and punching a person believed to be demon-possessed. Wanting to stop the suffering of other children and families, Cooper eventually reported his experiences to two investigative journalists at the Associated Press, Mitch Weiss and Holbrook Mohr.

Weiss and Mohr not only found other church members willing to corroborate Cooper's claims, but they unearthed even more disturbing accounts of manipulation and abuse at Word of Faith Fellowship. Their investigation is the subject of a new book, "Broken Faith: Inside the Word of Faith Fellowship, One of America's Most Dangerous Cults" (Hanover Square Press/2020).

Host Anita Rao talks with Mitch Weiss and Holbrook Mohr about their investigation and the more than 100 interviews with people connected to the church that comprise their book.

Please note: This program originally aired on April 1, 2020.

Category: Economy

With Rezoning Approval For Downtown South, Affordable Housing In Raleigh Remains A Concern

This week the Raleigh City Council approved rezoning for Downtown South, a \$2.2 billion development project that will bring shops, housing and a soccer stadium to southeast Raleigh. The space was previously zoned as an industrial district. Downtown South's mixed-use zoning clearance is just an early step in the project's progress. As developers move forward, activists continue to express concern that the new space will displace the few residents left who have been able to retain affordable housing in southeast Raleigh. Since developers will need to appeal to the City Council for public funding and tax incentives, some believe local government may be able to insist that developers include more affordable housing plans in their building proposal. Host Anita Rao talks to WUNC data reporter Jason DeBruyn about this most recent in a string of developments that have led to gentrification in urban communities statewide.

December 17, 2020

Category: Race/Minorities

Frank Stasio's Fondest Shows: Meet Bree Newsome, Who Removed South Carolina's Confederate Flag

Activist Bree Newsome gained national attention in the summer of 2015 when she was arrested for scaling the flagpole at the statehouse in Columbia, South Carolina, and removing the Confederate flag. The act of civil disobedience took place in the wake of the killing of nine African American people at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, S.C. While Newsome continues to engage in political activism in Charlotte, N.C., her roots are in the creative arts. As a kid growing up in Columbia, Maryland, Newsome started composing songs when she was seven years old. She eventually became a filmmaker and grappled with social issues through her work. Today she lives in Charlotte and is a community organizer working with several groups. Frank says he remembers this 2017 conversation well "for the way Bree was able to chart her own growth as an artist and an activist and to understand the unique and at the same time inseparable roles each play in the development of an individual and a community."

December 16, 2020

Category: Arts and Culture

#BackChannel: Celebrating 'This Christmas', Steve McQueen's Powerful Film Anthology & More

Academy Award-winning director Steve McQueen took over a decade to fully realize his vision of a collection of stories about the West Indian community in London in the '60s, '70s and '80s. That idea came to life last month with the release of a five-part film anthology called "Small Axe." The films explore the joy and pain of life in this immigrant community — and its important contributions to London's history. Host Anita Rao digs into this anthology with popular culture experts Natalie Bullock Brown and Mark Anthony Neal. The three also talk about HBO's visually stunning adaptation of Ta-Nehisi Coates' 2015 best-selling book "Between The World And Me." In the new film, Coates' singular story is told through a multi-generational chorus of voices,

including actors, activists and the author himself. They also commemorate the 50th anniversary of Donny Hathaway's "This Christmas," which many cultural critics call a Black Christmas anthem. To celebrate this milestone, Rhino Records released a new animated music video featuring Hathaway strolling through the streets of Chicago in the 1970s. Plus, Rao, Brown and Neal break down the legacy of Patti LaBelle and critically examine last week's execution of Brandon Bernard.

Natalie Bullock Brown is a filmmaker and teaching assistant professor at North Carolina State University. Mark Anthony Neal is the James B. Duke Professor and chair of the department of African and African American studies at Duke University and host of the webcast "Left of Black."

December 15, 2020

Category: Race/Minorities

Frank Stasio's Fondest Shows: Meet Lumbee Scholar And Filmmaker Malinda Maynor Lowery

Malinda Maynor Lowery is a Lumbee Indian whose family goes back more than 10 generations in Robeson County. Lowery was born in Lumberton, N.C. but raised in Durham, where from an early age, she often fielded the question, "what are you?" Although she grew up in a family with a strong sense of Native identity, this question stayed with her much of her life, and eventually became the subject of much of her academic and documentary work. Lowery earned a masters in documentary film from Stanford University and worked on three films exploring questions about what constitutes a so-called "real Indian," and who gets to decide. She went on to earn a PhD in History from UNC-Chapel Hill, and came back to work there as a faculty member in 2009. In her tenure at UNC, she has continued to explore Lumbee history and Native identity, published the book "Lumbee Indians in the Jim Crow South," (UNC Press/2010) and directed the Southern Oral History Program. Host Frank Stasio spoke with Malinda Maynor Lowery in 2016 about her family history, documentary work, and being Lumbee in North Carolina. This conversation stands out to him because of "the way it explores the complexity of Native identity in a land where white supremacy has acted to erase or distort indigenous stories."

December 14, 2020

Category: Business

Black Businesses Continue To Innovate During COVID-19

When the first wave of federal COVID-19 provisions became available to businesses in April, Black business owners received a very small amount of relief funding. And the North Carolina Business Council estimates the number of Black businesses in the state has decreased by 41 percent since the beginning of the pandemic. There are several reasons for this, including the racial wage and generational wealth gaps, both of which contribute to Black businesses starting up with lower capital and struggling to sustain themselves without economic relationships with banks and other wealth-holding institutions.

North Carolina's Black business owners face an uphill climb in the aftermath of COVID-19. Provided they find a way to remain afloat during the pandemic, business growth will be challenging. Partners in Equity has launched a new data and investment initiative, [ResilINC](#), designed to help Black businesses sustain themselves long-term, after the economy restabilizes and businesses reopen permanently. Host Anita Rao talks to Napoleon Wallace, founding partner of Partners in Equity, as well as several local Black business owners, including Dorian Bolden, owner of Beyu Caffe and Beyu Blue Coffee; Justus McGee, owner of Soul Fresh Spring

Rolls; Jackie Morin, co-founder of Wonder Puff Cotton Candy; and Shine Carter, owner of Shine Diamond Nails.

December 11, 2020

Category: Crime/Law Enforcement

More Protections Needed In NC State Prisons As COVID-19 Cases Rise

Increased coronavirus case numbers and deaths in North Carolina have taken a lethal toll on people inside state prisons. The number of coronavirus-related deaths has doubled since the end of September, and more than one of every six prisoners has tested positive, according to reporting by Charlotte Observer investigative reporter Ames Alexander. In December, four prisoners at four different facilities died in the span of five days. Outbreaks have continued across the system.

The risk of transmission is high for prisoners because of close living quarters and prison-to-prison transfers. The North Carolina Department of Public Safety reduced transfers in April, but three prison facilities closed last month and reshuffled staff and prisoners to address increased case numbers.

The ACLU and other civil rights groups filed an emergency lawsuit in April calling on Gov. Roy Cooper and DPS to reduce overcrowding in prisons and take “concrete action” to protect prisoners according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines. A Wake County Superior Court judge ruled in favor of the plaintiffs in June, ordering the state to reopen programs for early release and increase testing for staff and prisoners. In a Dec. 4 order, the judge mandated that staff who interact with prisoners be tested every two weeks and appointed a “special master” to oversee prisons’ COVID-19 response. Host Anita Rao discusses what’s happening inside prisons and efforts to curb virus transmission with Alexander.

Category: Gender

Embodied: Child-Free Not Childless

There will be no COVID baby boom in the United States. In fact, a decrease in childbirth is expected, with existential fear prevailing over hormones and boredom. Similar downward trends occurred during the 2008 recession and the 1918 Spanish flu. Now experiencing their second economic crash, 15% of millennials are less interested in having children due to COVID-19. Meanwhile, others made the decision long before the pandemic. On this edition of the Embodied series, host Anita Rao talks with three women about their reasons for living child-free.

Rao’s guests are: Uriah Rex, a jet mechanic at Raleigh-Durham International Airport; Samhita Mukhopadhyay, the executive editor of Teen Vogue and co-editor of “Nasty Women: Feminism, Resistance, and Revolution in Trump’s America”; and Sarah Deavitt, a certified holistic nutritionist.

Many women are medically unable to bear children. Trans men and nonbinary people face systemic medical discrimination and oftentimes experience gender dysphoria during pregnancy. Others forgo procreation to avoid passing on genetic risks. For this conversation, we chose to focus on the experiences of cis women without socially acceptable justifications for opting out of childbirth. In addition, these particular women have chosen not to adopt or foster children, though many of them nurture and care for others’ children as well as aging family members.

Their experiences inform a feminist philosophy that emphasizes humanity regardless of reproductive status and desire.

December 10, 2020

Category: Arts

Frank Stasio's Fondest Shows: Brazil And Branford And Beyond

Saxophone master and Durham resident Branford Marsalis has never shied away from a challenge when it comes to tackling music. In 2008, the jazz legend incorporated his sax into the classical music traditions of South America in a show called "Marsalis Brasilianos: Villa Lobos, Milhaud and the New Worlds of Brazilian Modernism." The series of musical works paid homage to Heitor Villa-Lobos, perhaps the most famous classical composer to hail from Brazil. Marsalis joined host Frank Stasio to talk about the legacy of Villa-Lobos and what it took to reinvent classical works for a contemporary audience and adapt them for the saxophone. Frank interviewed Marsalis many times on The State of Things, but he chose this 2008 interview because "in this conversation, Branford Marsalis, once again demonstrates his versatility and his creative understanding of cultural influence."

Category: Arts

Frank Stasio's Fondest Shows: The Infamous Mickey Rooney Interview

Mickey Rooney's Hollywood acting career began in the 1930s. He starred as an all-American teenager in the Andy Hardy series. He was Judy Garland's partner in musicals from the 1940s, and a cautious old trainer in the 1979 classic "The Black Stallion." He was married eight times, including a partnership with North Carolina's own Ava Gardner. Host Frank Stasio spoke with him in 2006 as he prepared to stage a show about his life in North Carolina.

December 9, 2020

Category: Race & Demographics

Third And Final Confederate Monument To Leave Asheville's Pack Square

The Asheville City Council voted to remove the third and final Confederate monument from Asheville's Pack Square Tuesday night. The 65-foot Vance Monument commemorates Zebulon Vance, North Carolina's governor during the Civil War and U.S. Senator during Reconstruction who opposed civil rights for Black people. The Buncombe County Commissioners also voted to remove the monument Monday, following a recommendation for removal from a task force created by the city council and the county commissioners. The task force was created in June to decide whether to remove and relocate the obelisk or leave it in place and recontextualize it. During the summer, the city removed a plaque bearing Robert E. Lee's likeness in Pack Square and a memorial to Confederate soldiers outside the Buncombe County courthouse. Blue Ridge Public Radio's news director Matt Bush joins host Anita Rao to talk about the history of the monument and next steps for removing it.

Category: Health

NC's Nursing Shortage Complicates Current COVID Care And Vaccination Planning

COVID-19 has exacerbated an existing shortage of licensed nurses in the state of North Carolina. Too few nurses are available for staffing at local hospitals, leading to double and triple shifts for nurses who are healthy enough to work, as well as nurses' increased exposure to COVID-19. This problem is expected to persist after vaccines become available, and retired nurses are being asked to return to work and assist with future distribution. Host Anita Rao talks

about the impact of the nursing shortage with Dennis Taylor, president of the North Carolina Nurses Association; Schquthia Peacock, family nurse practitioner at Preston Medical Associates in Cary; and Audrey Snyder, an Associate Dean for Experiential Learning and Innovation at the UNC-Greensboro School of Nursing.

Category: Arts & Culture

Wendell, NC Equestrian Is Using Her Horses To Inspire Children's Literacy

When Caitlin Gooch began working at a daycare center and a Boys and Girls Club in her hometown of Wendell, North Carolina, she noticed that students were not as interested in reading as she would have hoped. She started showing them pictures of her horses at her father's farm, if they agreed to read and work on their vocabulary. When that worked, she visited a local library and partnered with it to enter children who checked out books into a raffle. The winner could win horse rides at the farm. When that worked too, she scaled up to create Saddle Up and Read, a nonprofit initiative dedicated to raising literacy rates — including one program that brings donated books to children in underserved communities, with one of Caitlin's horses in tow. Host Anita Rao talks to Gooch about the history of Black equestrians and the intersection of horse husbandry and children's literacy.

December 8, 2020

Category: Crime/Law Enforcement

Frank Stasio's Fondest Shows: 19 Years Wrongfully Imprisoned: Meet Darryl Hunt

Darryl Hunt served 19 years in prison for a rape and murder he did not commit. The crime committed against him by the state — his wrongful conviction and wrongful imprisonment — stands as one of the most egregious examples of the injustice built into our penal system. Hunt was accused in the 1984 rape and murder of Deborah Sykes, a copy editor at The Sentinel, a former Winston-Salem newspaper. Hunt was found guilty in Sykes' stabbing death despite the lack of a murder weapon or any physical evidence linking him to the crime. Despite two trials, no physical evidence, questionable witnesses and a deeply-flawed police investigation, Hunt was still unable to get a new trial. It wasn't until DNA linked another man to the crime that the real murderer was found and subsequently confessed. After he was released, Hunt created a nonprofit called The Darryl Hunt Project for Freedom and Justice. Twelve years after his release from prison, he was found dead of an apparent suicide. As host Frank Stasio reflected on his tenure with the State of Things, the story of Darryl Hunt was one that stuck with him. Stasio spoke with Hunt in July 2007, and Hunt was joined in studio that day by his longtime attorney Mark Rabil.

December 7, 2020

Category: Economy

Lion & Ingles & Harris, Oh My! NC Grocery Bonanza Blowout

Harris Teeter or Food Lion? Earth Fare or Ingles? Lowes Foods or Lowe's lumber yard? Groceries matter a lot to North Carolinians. And for good reason — our state produced some groundbreaking supermarket chains. From the end of the independent butcher shop to the racial integration of the checkout aisle, businesses experimented and changed the course of how we get our food. Host Anita Rao lingers in the aisle with grocery scholars (yes, there is such a thing) and independent grocers to learn about the suburban supermarket and alternative foodscape futures. Her guests are Demetrius Hunter, founder of Grocers on Wheels and the Black Farmers' HUB; Lisa Tolbert, associate professor of history at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and author of the forthcoming book "Doggeries, Jungles, and Piggly Wiggles: Southerners and the Social Landscape of Food Shopping, 1840-1940"; as well as

David Gwynn, creator of the Groceteria website and an associate professor and digital projects coordinator for the UNC-Greensboro libraries.

December 4, 2020

Category: Economy

New Economic Measurement Highlights North Carolina's Growing Wealth Gap

The inventor of gross domestic product — the sum of all goods and services of a particular nation — warned that it was not a good measurement of human welfare. Yet, since the 1940s, the single number has dominated policy recommendations, despite those foundational shortcomings. A recent report highlights the economic contributions and costs that GDP fails to take into account. "Economic Well-being in North Carolina" uses state and federal data to account for the hidden cost of water pollution or divorce rates. Meanwhile, unpaid labor like parenting is given a dollar value and the report adds it into the overall economic picture. The author of the report, Juhi Modi, talks with host Anita Rao about how a new measuring stick for the economy can help policymakers prioritize human wellbeing over industrial growth. The report was supported and published by Gross National Happiness USA, a non-profit advocating for new measurements of progress and success.

Category: Health

Herpes Is A Common Virus. Why Do We Treat It Like The Plague?

When Ella Dawson got diagnosed with genital herpes, she felt like her body betrayed her. Herpes was something dirty, something bad that happened to other people. For a 20-something coming into her sexuality and body confidence, a sexually transmitted infection was a huge setback.

It took Dawson the next couple years to understand the diagnosis — how the disease worked and how she experienced it in her body — all while navigating stigma that painted her as promiscuous and irresponsible rather than the recipient of an infection that affects 776,000 people in the U.S. each year.

Herpes is more common than many people realize, says Dr. Peter Leone, a professor at the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Medicine and an adjunct associate professor of epidemiology at the Gillings School of Global Public Health. An estimated one in eight people in the U.S. have the herpes simplex virus type 2, which causes most cases of genital herpes. As many as one in two people have the herpes simplex virus type 1, which causes most cases of oral herpes.

Host Anita Rao talks with Dawson about navigating awkward conversations with romantic partners and how she overcomes judgement based on misconceptions about herpes. Rao also lays out the basics of how the virus works with Leone. And Tanya Bass, Southern sexologist and sex educator, joins the conversation to discuss barriers to treatment and education about herpes.

December 3, 2020

Category: Race/Minorities

Frank Stasio's Fondest Shows: Meet Preeminent Scholar And Tireless Activist John Hope Franklin

When John Hope Franklin chaired former President Bill Clinton's initiative on race in the 1990s, he started with what he called "the naivete that often accompanies optimism." That he could be

either naive or optimistic after documenting the long struggle for civil rights is remarkable, and was no doubt, the kind of optimism born of intellectual integrity and an open mind. Almost from the time he was born in Oklahoma in 1915, John Hope Franklin encountered racism. As a 6-year-old, he was thrown off a train for sitting in a whites-only coach. That same year his father's law practice was burned to the ground during the infamous Tulsa Race Riot. When he was 19, he was nearly lynched in Mississippi. When he was a graduate student at Harvard, he was denied service at a restaurant. At age 45, he was denied a home loan, and on the very night he received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, he was mistaken for a coat-check attendant. John Hope Franklin pursued one of the most remarkable academic careers of the 20th century. He was valedictorian at Booker T. Washington High School, attended Fisk University for undergrad and earned a Ph.D. at Harvard. Franklin went on to become the first Black professor to chair a department at a predominantly white university when he joined the faculty of Brooklyn College in 1956 before moving on to the University of Chicago and finally Duke University. In 1947 he published "From Slavery to Freedom: A History of American Negroes," which quickly became the definitive history of African Americans and sold more than three million copies before his death. He wrote or edited almost 20 other books including his autobiography "Mirror to America." John Hope Franklin passed away in 2009. Host Frank Stasio spoke with him in 2006 and considers that conversation one of the high points of his career.

December 2, 2020

Category: Health

Rural NC Warned Of Critical COVID-19 Community Spread:

While North Carolina's urban centers were the sites of COVID-19 concern in March and April, the more sparsely populated parts of the state are now facing the highest rates of community spread of the coronavirus. Today, clusters of infection remain centered in the state's urban centers, but broader community transmission is increasingly common outside the cities. Based on data from the first half of November, Durham, Wake, New Hanover and Mecklenburg counties are all classified yellow, in the lowest tier of risk in the state county alert system. Meanwhile, the color-coded county map warns of critical community spread in more rural areas like Bertie, Vance, Hoke, Robeson, Wilkes and Swain counties, all painted red. That classification system is determined through a combination of three metrics: case rate, percent of positive tests and local hospital impact. Host Anita Rao and reporter Jay Price discuss how workplace hazards and fatigue are affecting rural counties. Price is WUNC's military and veterans affairs reporter.

Category: Health

Amid Proposed Vaccine Plans, NC COVID-19 Hospitalizations Reach An All-Time High

With more than 2,000 hospitalizations in North Carolina, Gov. Roy Cooper has announced a tentative plan to make Pfizer's vaccine available to state residents, regardless of health insurance status. While this long-term plan may mitigate future spread, residents are still struggling with how to protect themselves from contracting COVID-19. Host Anita Rao talks to Lisa Gralinski, assistant professor of epidemiology at the Gillings School of Global Public Health at UNC-Chapel Hill about how to continue ensuring safety during a new wave of positive cases and hospitalizations.

Category: Arts & Culture

Musician Markee Steele Is On A Journey Of Reinvention

North Carolina-based emcee Markee Steele recently changed his name. Formerly known as Mark Steele, a moniker given to him by super-producer 9th Wonder, Steele felt the need to change the course of his career this year. The ESPN-featured indie artist started with a new

stage name, then created a new label, Thee Marquee Recordings. And he's released a full-length album, "Time Heals," and a new three-track project with a self-directed music video, "3 Piece," which he likens to a reimagining of Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper." Host Anita Rao talks to Steele about arriving at a new stage of his life as an artist.

December 1, 2020

Category: Arts

Frank Stasio's Fondest Shows: Meet Joshua Lozoff: Chapel Hill 'Cheers' Actor-Turned Magician

When Chapel Hill-native Joshua Lozoff was 19, he moved to Los Angeles to be an actor, and the move paid off. He played a recurring role on the sitcom "Cheers." He was part of the ensemble cast in the hit movie "Clueless," and he was also on the cult favorite nighttime sitcom "Sisters." But after the Northridge earthquake in 1994, Lozoff decided to devote himself to public service. He volunteered with a Red Cross emergency crew, traveled through Latin America and eventually returned to North Carolina. It was then that he fell in love with magic. Lozoff created a close-up magic show that was wildly popular when Host Frank Stasio spoke with him back in 2007. This is one of the conversations that stands out for Frank because, "on the one hand, it was a profile of a man with a fascinating life story: actor-turned-volunteer-turned magician. But it was more. It was also a close look at the nature of human perception and attention, and he read minds over the radio!"

November 30, 2020

Category: Arts & Culture

How Global Issues At The Dinner Table Made A Cultural Anthropologist: Meet Anne-Maria Makhulu

When Anne-Maria Makhulu tells her family history, it sounds as if she is paging through a well-worn textbook in her mind, memories written in the margins next to dates and city names. And in a way, she is. Makhulu is a cultural anthropologist who teaches at Duke University. Her research work is autobiographical, she says, based on her experiences as a child of an English mother and a South African father growing up in Europe and Africa. Her family lived in England, Switzerland and Botswana by the time Makhulu was 16. She describes it as a cosmopolitan upbringing — one filled with diverse worldviews, landscapes and people. When the family lived in Botswana in the late 1970s and early 80s, her father served as an archbishop, but he was also working to establish an underground railroad to get anti-apartheid activists out of South Africa. People frequently showed up at their doorstep, even in the middle of the night. Family dinner conversations included everything from discussions of geopolitics and activism to literature and poetry. After a brief career as a dancer, she made the leap into academia in her 20s and began her foray into cultural anthropology.

Host Anita Rao talks with Makhulu about the experiences in her childhood and upbringing that influence her work today. Her research includes studies on South Africa, the anthropology of finance, cities and space. She is the author of "Making Freedom: Apartheid, Squatter Politics, and the Struggle for Home."

November 27, 2020

Category: Religion

'A Church Of Listening' With Haven Kimmel And Frank Stasio

After their initial conversations on “The State of Things” in 2006 and 2007, author Haven Kimmel and host Frank Stasio hit the road. Libraries invited the pair to talk about anything. It was less the topic that mattered than the atmosphere they created through their intense connection. Kimmel describes Stasio’s hosting as a “church of listening.” Stasio credits Kimmel with orienting the show towards human connection and compassion. Their connection served as a touchstone for over a decade of Stasio’s daily interviews. He welcomes Kimmel back to the show for his final edition of the program to consider what prevents us from truly listening to one another.

Haven Kimmel is a poet and author based in North Carolina. Raised in rural Indiana, she is known for her memoirs, “A Girl Named Zippy” and “She Got Up Off the Couch: And Other Heroic Acts from Mooreland, Indiana.” She is also the author of children’s books as well as a creative retelling of the Bible’s Book of Revelation. Kimmel currently serves as an instructor of creative nonfiction at The Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University.

November 25, 2020

Category: Arts & Culture

That’s All, Folks! A Farewell To Frank Stasio

Frank Stasio bids WUNC goodbye today as he hosts his last live show before retirement. Stasio hosted thousands of live conversations in his 14 years as permanent host of The State of Things, with guests ranging from politicians and musicians to academics and activists.

For the last live show, Stasio reconnects with two old friends to share memories and stories from his time as host. Rose Hoban was a reporter at WUNC before heading off into the digital journalism sphere. She founded and is now an editor and reporter for North Carolina Health News. He is also joined by Howard Craft, a playwright and arts educator. Craft was a frequent guest of the show, and he and Frank jointly created the superhero audio drama “Jade City Pharaoh.” After Stasio announced his retirement in September, listeners emailed and called WUNC with their stories and best wishes. As part of his last show, Stasio reflects on listeners’ recorded memories about their favorite parts of the program.

Stasio also talks with WUNC’s president and general manager Connie Walker about his retirement, the decision to end “The State of Things” and the future of programming at WUNC.

The show will continue airing until Friday, Jan. 1, 2021. Rebroadcasts of Stasio’s favorite interviews from his time as host will play Tuesdays and Thursdays, and host Anita Rao will conduct new live interviews Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

November 24, 2020

Category: Arts and Culture

#BackChannel: Death Of Quawan Charles, ‘A Most Beautiful Thing’ And New Beats By Dre Ad

A Louisiana family is sounding the alarm over the disappearance and death of 15-year-old Quawan “Bobby” Charles. The teen was missing for days before being found face down in a creek. Local law enforcement officers say the boy drowned, but Bobby’s family says his disfigured corpse tells a different story. Host Frank Stasio talks about this 2020 death that calls to mind the 1955 murder of Emmett Till with popular culture experts Natalie Bullock Brown and

Mark Anthony Neal. The three also examine a new highly-artistic ad campaign from Beats by Dre under the banner “You Love Me.” It is a celebration of Blackness and a condemnation of anti-Blackness. They also preview the documentary “A Most Beautiful Thing,” that tells the story of a group of high school students from the West Side of Chicago who became the first Black high school rowing team. And they look at the role COVID-19 and Black Lives Matter protests are playing in this season’s television series. Natalie Bullock Brown is a filmmaker and teaching assistant professor at North Carolina State University. Mark Anthony Neal is the James B. Duke Professor and chair of the department of African and African American studies at Duke University. He is also an author and the host of the webcast “Left of Black.”

November 23, 2020

Category: Race/Minorities

‘Don’t Look Away’: Iheoma Iruka Confronts Bias And Inequities In Early Childhood Head-On

Iheoma Iruka has devoted her career to understanding bias in early-childhood education, but she has very few memories of that period in her own life. Iruka was born in Texas, but her parents moved back to Nigeria when she was 3. She stayed there until after second grade when she and two of her sisters moved to Boston with her mother, and the family was split between Nigeria and the U.S. Returning to the U.S. was a challenge: her family was living in poverty and Iruka struggled with culture shock in her American school. Iruka studied psychology in college, got a master’s degree in applied developmental psychology and worked briefly as a social worker specializing in infantile and child sexual abuse cases. Her experience working with these families fed into her curiosity about how policy changes and social programs could improve outcomes for young children. Today she is a research professor of public policy and director of the Equity Research Action Coalition program at FPG Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. She is also the author of “Don’t Look Away: Embracing Anti-bias Classrooms.” Iruka joins host Frank Stasio to share her personal story, her research into bias in early-childhood education and tips for parents who are trying to enrich the lives of their young children during the pandemic.

November 20, 2020

Category: Politics

Digging Into The Political Uncertainties Left After The Election

The election is over, but many big questions remain for the political future of our nation. Which political party will control the U.S. Senate? Will the Democratic Party move more to the left or more to the center under a Biden administration? And will the Republican Party accept the election results and support a peaceful transfer of power? Host Frank Stasio talks to political analyst Ken Rudin about these questions and more, including the two U.S. Senate runoff elections in Georgia slated for January and what policy decisions President Donald Trump is making as his time in the White House comes to a close.

Category: Arts

The Black Roots Of Latin Music And Dance

Activists and artists continue fighting to awaken U.S. arts institutions to the foundational Blackness of Rock, EDM and Punk. The whitewashing of music and dance is a supremacist project throughout the Americas. Choreographers and instructors oftentimes ignore the West African traditions undergirding salsa, merengue,

tango, and bachata. The whitewashing of national art forms reinforces the pervasive erasure of Afro-Latinxs.

Two dancers in North Carolina aim to reincorporate that history and celebrate the continued contributions of African artistry in Latin music and dance. “The Mix(ed) Tape” podcast features the voices of Afro Latino and African American dancers describing racism and cultural marginalization — both on the dancefloor and in the genre. It also breaks down hit songs by Black artists to contextualize and amplify their socially-conscious lyrics. Host Frank Stasio discusses the project with co-hosts Melissa Villodas and Andrés Hincapié. Villodas is a doctoral student of social work at UNC-Chapel Hill, and Hincapié works there as an assistant professor of economics.

Category: Race/Minorities

‘I Am White And Mexican’

Scrolling through the comments on her article published in the online news platform Latino Rebels, Roosbelinda Cárdenas found a picture of herself alongside a lively discussion of her race. Non-Latinx white users weighed in, confident she did not meet their standards of whiteness. Others used their own genetics and apparent non-whiteness as evidence against her own assertion of whiteness. It was all familiar banter to Cárdenas, who is used to being called güera in the tiendas of New York City and among her family in Jalisco. When travelling, she notices the easy invitation into all-white social circles. Cárdenas clearly acknowledges the ways U.S. society marginalizes non-English speakers, immigrants and their children. Yet she elaborates that “racial blindness tends to be compounded by our experiences with other forms of discrimination—which can look and feel a lot like racism but should not be conflated.” Her assertion of whiteness is not a proud claim, as it might have been for a second-generation Sicilian or Irish person. Cárdenas refers to her whiteness as a weight of responsibility. Writing the article is one way she is working to dismantle the supremacist system that offers her privileges denied to her darker-skinned cousins. It is a difficult weight to pass on to her teenage daughter, who is already questioning the definitions placed on her by classmates. Cárdenas talks with host Frank Stasio about the uncomfortable conversations she is initiating with other white Latinxs. She is a co-dean of institutional diversity and inclusion and an assistant professor of anthropology and Latin American studies at Hampshire College.

November 19, 2020

Category: Health

Embodied: Hemp, Health And Highs In North Carolina

Hemp — including smokable hemp — is legal in North Carolina. But that is only the case if the hemp does not contain more than trace amounts of THC, the main psychoactive compound in marijuana. Hemp and marijuana can be similar in appearance. Both contain some level of THC, though hemp’s concentration is much lower. It can be difficult to determine whether or not a plant strain contains enough THC to be illegal without extensive testing. But marijuana possession is still a punishable offense in the state, regardless of whether or not that test is conducted. Host Anita Rao talks through the complexity of state law with Phil Dixon Jr., defender educator at UNC-Chapel Hill’s School of Government. Marijuana pharmacist Markita Wilburn and marijuana decriminalization advocate Ashe Harris, co-founder of We Go High NC, also join the conversation to share the benefits of these products and their arguments for legalization.

Category: Economy

Many Tenants Still At Risk Despite Eviction Moratorium

A Centers for Disease Control and Prevention eviction moratorium protects North Carolina tenants from evictions until the end of the year. Any tenant can provide their landlord with a declaration form that attests they are unable to pay their rent and at risk of homelessness. To give further aid to people facing eviction, Governor Roy Cooper's Executive Order 171 made it mandatory for landlords to provide tenants facing eviction with blank copies of the CDC declaration form. More than 37,000 people have also applied for his rent and utility assistance program, NC HOPE. But advocates are concerned that thousands of tenants are still at risk of losing their homes because landlords refuse to maintain the property or refrain from renewing tenants' leases. These are not classified as evictions for data purposes. Host Anita Rao talks with Jason DeBruyn, WUNC data reporter and a member of the NC Watchdog Reporting Network, about eviction numbers in the state, solutions in place and ongoing challenges.

November 18, 2020

Category: Arts & Culture

Finally! Frank's Favorite Film Revealed On Movies On The Radio

What movie is the top of the list for a Buffalo-born, Durham-residing, grandchild-adoring talk show host? For host Frank Stasio's grand "Movies on the Radio" finale, listeners have submitted their guesses.

Is Frank a fan of car chases and cheap beer? Then it might be "Smokey and the Bandit." But he may reveal his romantic, swashbuckling side that is satisfied by no other film than "The Princess Bride," or maybe "Pirate Radio."

Film experts Marsha Gordon and Laura Boyes reflect on the highlights of hosting "Movies on the Radio" over the past seven years with Frank. They hear listener picks for Frank's favorite film and discuss who was most on base — and who was out in left field — before Frank tells all. Gordon is a film professor at North Carolina State University and a public scholar at the National Endowment for the Humanities. Boyes is the film curator for the North Carolina Museum of Art and the curator of the Moviediva series at The Carolina Theatre of Durham.

November 17, 2020

Category: Economy

The Economy Has Never Worked For Mothers, And COVID-19 Is Pushing More Women Out Of Work

In September, 865,000 women left the workforce, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Eighty percent of the people who stopped working or looking for work that month were women. It's no coincidence that this large drop out happened around the same time that the fall semester began: data confirms that mothers disproportionately shoulder the burden of childcare, supervising virtual learning and domestic work.

The disproportionate demands on mothers to provide childcare and home education in this moment are not new, but will have lasting impacts on their careers in both the short and long term. A report from the Center for American Progress estimates the cost of mothers leaving the workforce and reducing their hours to take on unpaid labor to be \$64.5 billion per year in lost wages and economic activity. There are also longer-term consequences for future earnings, retirement savings and more.

Host Frank Stasio talks to Katherine Goldstein, journalist, host and creator of The Double Shift podcast, about how the pandemic has affected working mothers. Shilpa Phadke and C. Nicole Mason also join the conversation to dig more deeply into what public policies could be implemented to address the inequities for working mothers. Phadke is the vice president of the women's initiative at the Center for American Progress, and Mason is the president and CEO of the Institute for Women's Policy Research.

Category: Economy

When Carolina Carpet Mill Workers Fight Back

He found his calling in a liberal college town, but no university degrees were needed for the fights Phil Cohen would go on to pick with union busters. After organizing Chapel Hill transit drivers in the early 1980s, Cohen went on to a career of bringing together Southern industrial workers. As a representative for the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (now UNITE), he championed the need to heal racial divides and stand united amidst the export of industrial jobs in the 1990s. Host Frank Stasio talks with Phil Cohen about his newest book detailing the strategies he used to defend a millworkers union in Eden, NC entitled "Fighting Union Busters in a Carolina Carpet Mill: An Organizer's Memoir." Cohen is also the author of "The Jackson Project: War in the American Workplace," which offers a unique on-the-ground perspective on labor history and globalization.

November 16, 2020

Category: Arts

Chef Hanan Shabazz Reminds Asheville Of Its Black Restaurant Roots

When Hanan Shabazz was a child in her grandmother's Asheville home, she remembers their house as the one where those in need of a good meal would come to be freely fed. The experience was formative for her as she grew up and opened Shabazz Restaurant in the early 1970s. The restaurant was part of Asheville's thriving Black business scene in the historic neighborhood known as The Block until urban renewal forced its closure. However, Chef Hanan has continued feeding others, both inside and outside of restaurants. She was one of the organizers of Kitchen Ready, a nonprofit-funded culinary career-readiness program and most recently helped to re-launch the Southside Community Kitchen, which trains aspiring chefs and feeds seniors and those in need in Asheville. Chef Hanan was this year's recipient of the annual Ruth Fertel Keeper of the Flame Award, an honor presented by The Southern Foodways Alliance, to celebrate her work as a food activist, cultural historian, and visionary. Host Frank Stasio talks to Chef Hanan about her life and career.

November 13, 2020

Category: Politics

Lottery-Selected Politicians? Start Thinking Outside The Ballot Box

If there is one thing a majority of Americans can agree on, it is that we do not have much trust in our federal government. Congress currently boasts an 19% approval rating and presidential approval has dropped steadily for decades, according to Gallup. Despite these trends, citizens continue rallying around elections with the dream that this time will be different. But did you ever vote for the electoral system itself? Every four years, we toy with reforms — abolishing the electoral college, ranked choice voting, AI-designed congressional districts, etc. Alex Guerrero wants the U.S. to open its imagination and allow for more creative solutions. Host Frank Stasio talks with Guerrero, an associate professor of philosophy at Rutgers University, about whether

lottery-selected leaders could improve age-old byproducts of representative democracy, like corruption, responsiveness and representation in government. There is historical precedent for the system. In ancient Greece, randomly selected leaders were considered essential to a fair and representative democracy. You also might recognize the lottery method if you have ever been called for jury duty. European traditions of governance were uncommon outside the continent in the 17th century, now they are considered the status quo and enforced by international standards. In what is now eastern North Carolina, the Tuscarora Nation relied on gender to check and balance political power. Councils of elderly women selected and advised a hierarchy of chiefs. Men were required to give up possessions to assume the powerful position and were always beholden to the advice and ultimate authority of the grandmothers, who could dehorn them at any time and choose a new leader. Stasio discusses the history and power of this system with Arwin Smallwood, professor and chair of history and political science at North Carolina A&T State University. But are any of these lessons useful to North Carolina voters today? Rosemary F. Blizzard joins the show to reflect on the challenges and opportunities for reform in our state. Blizzard is the communications director for the Ranked Choice Voting Resource Center and a former director for the Wayne and Duplin County Boards of Elections.

November 12, 2020

Category: Arts/Culture

Embodied: A Love Letter To Friendship

Friendships carry us through the high and lows of life. From celebrating our successes to helping salve the sting of rejection, the people we choose to surround ourselves with offer an unparalleled kind of support. But there is not much structural guidance on how to nurture our platonic, intimate relationships. On this installment of Embodied, host Anita Rao examines the importance of friendship with guests that are best friends themselves. Aminatou Sow and Ann Friedman are co-authors of “Big Friendship: How We Keep Each Other Close” (Simon & Schuster/2020), as well as co-hosts of the podcast “Call Your Girlfriend.” They share their insight on “big friendships” and how to care for them as life puts them to the test.

Note: this program originally aired July 23, 2020.

Category: Arts and Culture

Forget Hogwarts: Author Tracy Deonn Uncovers Magic And Darkness At UNC-Chapel Hill

Bree Matthews is a 16-year-old girl with a desire to separate herself from her old life after her mother’s passing. While attending a residential program for bright high schoolers at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Bree is thrown into the world of magic. She witnesses a flying demon feeding on human energies and learns about the “Legendborn,” a secret society of students dedicated to hunting these creatures. The young hero must grapple with her grief in order to save her peers from dark antagonists and their allied law enforcement. Author Tracy Deonn joins host Anita Rao to talk about her debut young adult novel “Legendborn” and her local vision for Afrofuturism and fantasy.

November 11, 2020

Category: Politics

Cooper’s Missing Coattails

Down-ballot Democrats struggled in North Carolina’s 2020 elections. While Gov. Roy Cooper garnered a hefty lead over his challenger, Republicans furthered their control over the council of state and general assembly. While there is expected friction between Cooper and the GOP legislature over the usual issues like Medicaid expansion and public school funding, the party

lines are drawn differently in the council of state. The incumbent state treasurer and insurance commissioner have often stood apart from party allies. Plus, there are multiple statewide races that remain too close to call, as of Nov. 11. Why the razor-thin margins in the races for attorney general and chief justice? Host Frank Stasio discusses the expected political negotiations and stalemates with Chris Cooper, political science professor and department head at Western Carolina University.

Category: Politics

What Lessons Did The Mainstream News Media Learn Under President Trump?

Three major broadcast news networks cut away from President Donald Trump's press conference last week because of his on-air lies about election fraud. CBS, ABC and NBC cut away from his live stream to fact check the claims. Fox and CNN carried the entire press conference but reported afterward that the president had no evidence to back up his accusations about the election. Many media critics applauded the fact checks and refusal to air misinformation as a positive change in journalism. As the nation prepares for a presidential transition, host Frank Stasio explores how the Trump administration has changed the mainstream news media and which of those changes could stick with Gina Baleria, Jon Allsop and Pete Vernon. Baleria is the host of the podcast "News In Context" and an assistant professor of journalism, media writing and digital media at Sonoma State University. Allsop and Vernon are both freelance journalists. Vernon is the former author of the Columbia Journalism Review newsletter "The Media Today," and Allsop is the current author of that newsletter.

Then Stasio looks to what the future of journalism could look like with Cierra Hinton. She is the co-director of strategy and operations at Press On and the executive director and publisher of Scalawag. She explains what movement journalism is and what role it can play in the future of the institution.

November 10, 2020

Category: Politics

Youth Voters Turned Out For The Election. How Do They Feel About Results?

Youth voters came out in record numbers in North Carolina and across the nation. By the end of early voting, North Carolinians aged 18-29 had already reached 93% of their total 2016 turn out, according to data from NextGen America. More data about the impact of youth voters in the 2020 elections is still forthcoming, but preliminary analysis by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement at Tufts University suggests the youth vote helped power Biden into the White House in key states like Michigan and Pennsylvania. Host Frank Stasio talks youth voting statistics and analysis with Rachel Weber, the North Carolina Press Secretary at NextGen America, a nonprofit focused on youth voter engagement and funded by the billionaire former Democratic presidential candidate Tom Steyer.

Stasio also talks with first-time voters about their experiences and reaction to the results. Kathleen Hablutzel is a second-year student at Smith College, and Cobey Ledford is a first year student at Wake Forest University. Youth organizer Loulou Batta also joins the conversation to talk about her efforts to get out the vote on campus. Batta is a fourth-year student at North Carolina State University who organized an event on NC State's campus to encourage community members to vote early.

Category: Education

UNC Defends Its Race-Conscious Admissions Practices in Court

Do UNC-Chapel Hill's admissions policies disproportionately favor underrepresented minorities? That question is at the center of a federal court case on trial in Winston-Salem. This is the third attempt by the plaintiff Students for Fair Admissions to overturn affirmative action admissions policies at a university for alleged discrimination against White and Asian college applicants. They were unsuccessful against the University of Texas at Austin, and the Harvard University case is awaiting appeal. Students for Fair Admissions, Incorporated claims that race-conscious admissions policies at UNC-Chapel Hill provide Black, Latinx, and Native American students with an unfair advantage. The university has asserted that its admissions policies are constitutionally sound, though race is considered when reviewing applicants. Host Frank Stasio talks to WUNC education reporter Liz Schlemmer about arguments on both sides of the case and its long-term implications.

November 9, 2020

Category: Religion

Meet Sandra Lawson: Musician, Activist And First Openly Gay, Black, Female Rabbi

In 2018, Sandra Lawson became the first openly gay, Black female rabbi in the world. But her path to rabbinical school was far from traditional. Lawson grew up in a Christian household with parents who didn't get along. When she got to college, she lacked focus and dropped out. Her dad, a veteran himself, suggested she join the military, and after learning that the military would help her pay off her student loans, Lawson was convinced. She worked for the military police in the U.S. Army for seven years. After leaving the service, Lawson began a personal training business, and it was a friendship with one of her clients, Rabbi Joshua Lesser from Atlanta, that set her on a path that eventually led to rabbinical school.

She attended a service at Lesser's synagogue and felt a connection with the community and the faith that was distinct from her experiences in church as a young person. Her interest in Judaism bloomed, and she converted in 2004. Lesser noticed her steady commitment to learning about the faith and its culture and suggested that Lawson look into becoming a rabbi herself. Lawson applied and was accepted to the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in Pennsylvania in 2011. She spent six years learning Hebrew and working an array of jobs as part of her education, including one in a Catholic medical center. Lawson now works as the associate chaplain for Jewish life and as a Jewish educator at Elon University. The coronavirus pandemic has thrown new challenges into how she works with students and practices her faith, including the proceedings of Jewish High Holy Days like Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Host Frank Stasio talks with Lawson about her journey to becoming a rabbi and the ways she hopes her community will evolve.

November 6, 2020

Category: Health

North Carolina's High COVID-19 Rates Mirror National Trends

The United States hit a new record this week: more than 120,000 new COVID-19 cases in one day. The virus is surging around the country — including in North Carolina. The state broke its own record last week with 2,886 new infections in one day on Thursday, Oct. 29. Hospitalization rates have been holding relatively steady at a rate of more than 1,000 for the past month. Host Frank Stasio checks in with Rose Hoban, reporter and editor for North Carolina Health News, about where we stand in this second wave of the pandemic. She also talks about what

she heard from voters at polling places on Tuesday about the importance of healthcare in this election.

Category: Arts & Culture

Holding Space Through Art: Artist Shanequa Gay Honors Breonna Taylor

When a Kentucky grand jury failed to indict police officers responsible for killing 26-year-old Breonna Taylor, multidisciplinary artist Shanequa Gay turned to her work in a search for justice. Her exhibit “*holding space for nobility: a memorial for Breonna Taylor*” opened last week at the Ackland Art Museum in Chapel Hill. With oils and acrylics, Gay combined larger-than-life images of Taylor with nature and animals that represent unity and community. Gay’s own experience with a loss that left her family with many unanswered questions sparked her desire to build artistic spaces for memorializing lost life. Host Frank Stasil talks with Gay about the exhibit and what it means to “hold space” through art.

Category: Arts and Culture

Elizabeth City’s DL Zene Releases Debut EP Ringing Of Hope And Love

DL Zene was born and raised in Elizabeth City, North Carolina. As a young kid, Zene learned to love the overflowing harmonies of her aunts and mother singing atop her grandmother’s baritone voice. Zene began singing with the local gospel group Mary and Martha at age 13 and took lessons at the renowned jazz program at Elizabeth City State University, a historically black college. In high school, she coupled her music with athletics, lettering in track and basketball. But after her coach set her up for a walk-on opportunity at North Carolina Central University in Durham, she chose to leave behind sports for music.

At Central, Zene made a name for herself. She opened for Rapsody, Anthony Hamilton, Common, and other visiting stars. But amidst the academic and artistic success, she struggled with heartbreak. After years of teaching herself guitar and reflecting on the many definitions of love — including those that hurt — she has released her first record. “Love Again Unplugged” is a live-recorded EP featuring Zene’s impressive range and a classic R&B sound. The live recordings show off Zene’s ability to amplify her musician’s contributions with vocal riffs. Songs move from trauma and regret to hopeful notes of self-forgiveness and bliss. Host Frank Stasio takes a listen to some samples off the EP and discusses the messages within with musician DL Zene.

November 5, 2020

Category: Politics

Voter Engagement Was High In NC. Here’s What Turnout Tells Us

Over 5 million North Carolinians cast ballots in this year’s election, many of them opting for mail-in and early onsite voting. While there is still a lot we do not know about voter demographics, we do know that the pandemic did not deter voter engagement. Republican voting resulted in big gains for the party on the legislative level, but there are at least three races that are still undecided: attorney general and two state Supreme Court seats. With 117,000 absentee ballots still pending, the results could be determined by very small margins in the days to come. Host Anita Rao talks to WUNC data reporter Jason DeBruyn about voter engagement and what the numbers tell us.

Category: Gender

Embodied: Kinfolk Beyond Biology:

Does your sick leave policy include time off to care for roommates, best friends or chosen siblings? Over 60% of people under the age of 25 live in non-family households, and 28% of all adults live alone in the U.S. It is a distinct turn from historical numbers and the persistent, politicized ideal of the two-parent nuclear family. Workplaces and governments are beginning to broaden the definition of family to include non-biological relationships in their sick-leave protocol. Much of that impetus comes from LGBTQ activism, which champions non-traditional family structures that extend far beyond marriage. Chosen families are a survival mechanism for many queer folks. Nearly three in five trans and gender non-conforming people experience significant family rejection as well as double the rate of unemployment and homelessness compared to the general population. Support groups and friends become family, providing the essential support structure when a biological family chooses to refuse those resources because of gender or sexuality.

El Centro Hispano facilitates those connections among Latinx LGBTQ people in Central North Carolina. Eliazar Posada first joined a support group while he was in college, finding a sanctuary from the constant questioning and discrimination from conservative family members in Texas and Mexico. Since then, Posada has begun facilitating the groups, calling that transition like becoming an older sibling to newer members. While he has worked hard to re-establish a loving relationship with his biological family, his chosen mother is a godsend. Cristina keeps tabs on him and many others in their multigenerational chosen family, offering unconditional love in the ways many of them lost when they came out to parents. KHX05 is a Durham-based multi-disciplinary artist and performer with the House of Coxx who describes the necessity of mutual aid in the trans community during the COVID-19 pandemic. They reflect on the history of Black queer kin networks as a form of resistance to capitalism and white supremacy. On this edition of the Embodied series, host Anita Rao is joined by Posada and KHX05 to share lessons about chosen family as well as respond to listeners struggling to decide who is in and out of their COVID bubble and trusted inner circle. Posada is the community engagement and advocacy department director at El Centro Hispano.

November 4, 2020

Category: Politics

North Carolina Sees Record Voter Turnout And Unclear Results So Far

Republicans outperformed polls in North Carolina and much of the nation in last night's general election. But many results are still unclear and likely will be for days. The presidential and U.S. Senate races in North Carolina are still too close to call, and there are also 117,000 outstanding mail-in ballots that could impact the state's results. We do know some winners so far: Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper won his re-election bid. Republican Mark Robinson will be our next lieutenant governor. And both chambers of the North Carolina legislature will remain under Republican control.

Host Frank Stasio gets on-the-ground reports about how Election Day went in the state from several reporters: WUNC Capitol Bureau Chief Jeff Tiberii in Raleigh, WECT investigative reporter Emily Featherston in Wilmington, BPR News Director Matt Bush in Asheville and WUNC politics reporter Rusty Jacobs in Chapel Hill. Then, Stasio gets analysis and reaction from a panel of political scientists from around the state: Michael Bitzer is a professor of politics and history at Catawba College. Deondra Rose is an assistant professor of public policy and political science and the director of research at Polis: Center for Politics at the Sanford School of

Public Policy at Duke University. Susan Roberts is a professor of political science at Davidson College. And Kerry Haynie is an associate professor of political science and African and African American studies at Duke University.

November 3, 2020

Category: Politics

Election Day Is Here: Live From Voting Sites In North Carolina

Election Day has arrived. North Carolinians must visit the polls today or turn in their absentee ballots to get their votes cast in the 2020 election. How will the day go for those voting in person? Host Frank Stasio talks with WUNC Greensboro reporter Naomi Prioleau and WUNC military reporter Jay Price about what's happening at voting sites in Alamance and Wake counties. While voters may be anxious to know results, it will likely take longer for a final tally this year because of the coronavirus pandemic and a higher number of mail-in ballots. WUNC will be providing up-to-date coverage on air and online from reporters on the ground.

<https://www.wunc.org/post/2020-election-day-north-carolina-live-updates> Follow the live blog here.

Category: Education

After First Quarter, North Carolina Public Schools Continue To Adapt To COVID-19

Report cards have been distributed for the first time in the 2020-21 school year, and in many school districts across the state, students have yet to set foot inside a traditional classroom. Among those who have returned, positive COVID-19 cases are a constant possibility. We'll hear more about how students, families and educators continue to face challenges and discover unique benefits to their school districts' decisions on COVID-19. Host Frank Stasio talks to Julie Pittman, NC Education Outreach Manager of No Kid Hungry North Carolina and mother of twin sixth graders in Rutherford County; and Maggie Simpson Murphy, teacher at Piney Creek School in Alleghany County. Then he is joined by WUNC reporter Liz Schlemmer to hear about the experiences of teachers who wanted to teach remotely but were denied their requests.

November 2, 2020

Category: Law Enforcement

March To The Polls In Graham Interrupted By Police Using Pepper Spray

Law enforcement officers pepper sprayed peaceful protesters in Alamance County this weekend on the last day of early voting. The group of about 150 people were participating in a "Legacy March to the Polls" in downtown Graham that included a stop at the controversial Confederate monument there and a plan to march two blocks to an early voting site. But officers from the Graham Police Department and the Alamance County Sheriff's Department deemed the demonstration an "unlawful assembly" and deployed pepper spray in an area that included children. WUNC politics reporter Rusty Jacobs was in Graham on Saturday, and he joins host Frank Stasio to share what happened on the ground.

Category: Sports/Recreation

Lex Gillette: World Record Long Jumper From Raleigh

While he sprints toward the sand pit, his coach shouts and claps to offer direction. 16 steps. That is all it takes before Lex Gillette flies. After losing his sight at age 8, Gillette found others' expectations burdensome. From the classroom to the playground, he sought out adults who understood his extraordinary skills. Growing up with a single mother who is also visually-

impaired, Gillette had an obvious role model and supportive figure. Together, they chose for him to stay in public schools instead of joining specialized programming. That decision led Gillette to an adapted recreation specialist at Athens Drive Magnet School in southwest Raleigh.

Under coach Brian Whitmer's urging, Gillette joined the track and field team. International competition followed soon after. He joined Team USA for the 2004 Paralympics in Athens where he landed a silver medal. In 2011, he broke the world record in long jump for totally blind athletes, leaping at 22 feet 1 inch. Yet during the Paralympics in Beijing and London, he continued a streak of silver medals. He broke his own world record and set a new one in 2015, so when he arrived at the 2016 Paralympics in Rio, Gillette felt confident. But the crowd was too loud. Unable to hear his coach over the noise, Gillette struggled to time his steps and maintain a straight line. For the fourth time, he took second place. Now, with the 2020 Paralympics delayed, he is pushing 36 years old. Gillette is itching for a shot at the highest honor. Host Frank Stasio talks with Lex Gillette about leaving behind others' expectations and finding his vision for success.

Friday, October 30

Category: Politics

Presidential Race Remains Tight In North Carolina Four Days Before Election Day

More than a third of registered voters in the U.S. have already cast their ballots. North Carolina saw visits from the president and vice president this week as early voting winds down and Election Day approaches. Poll results reveal a tight contest in North Carolina: President Donald Trump trails former Vice President Joe Biden by less than one percentage point in Real Clear Politics' average of recent polls. Their averages also show Biden leading in Florida, Pennsylvania, Iowa, Wisconsin and Michigan with the two tied in Arizona and Ohio. Political analyst Ken Rudin joins host Frank Stasio to talk about which states he's keeping an eye on and how much weight to give to the polls. He also talks about the battle for North Carolina's senate seat, which is now the most expensive U.S. Senate race in American history. Rudin also discusses Judge Amy Coney Barrett's recent nomination to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Category: Politics

Will Candidates Care About Robeson County Next Year?

South of Fayetteville along I-95 is North Carolina's outlier county. It is one of the most diverse and poorest of the hundred. But, like the state as a whole, Robeson County is contested in the 2020 elections. President Trump made a stop through the county on Saturday, Oct. 24, countering the Biden campaign's push in the toss-up county. Both presidential candidates — as well as the congressional candidates for the 9th district — now promise federal recognition for the Lumbee Tribe. Chairman Harvey Godwin, elected leader of the state-recognized tribe, said he believes competitive political attention is a boon for tribal members. Yet other issues dominate Robeson politics, with Second Amendment rights and agriculture prioritized in many local candidates' platforms. Affected by Hurricanes Matthew and Florence, voters are still seeking out politicians who can help neighborhoods rebuild. WUNC digital news producer Laura Pellicer heard from Robeson County residents about their priorities. Pellicer shares those local insights with host Frank Stasio.

Category: Gender

Unearthing The Forgotten Feminism Of The '90s

Hundreds of thousands of women from across the country donning pink hats flooded onto the nation's capitol in 2017 for the largest single-day protest in U.S. history. The Women's March in

Washington D.C. — along with sister marches held in all 50 states and more than 30 foreign countries — had some pundits claiming the 2016 election of Donald Trump had awakened the women-identifying electorate. But Lisa Levenstein argues in her latest book that the Women’s March and other contemporary activism is rooted in important groundwork laid by feminists in the 1990s. This period of time in feminist history is largely overlooked, with Time Magazine asking “Is Feminism Dead?” on its front cover in June, 1998. Host Frank Stasio talks to Levenstein about “They Didn’t See Us Coming: The Hidden History of Feminism in the Nineties.” Levenstein is also the director of the Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program at the University of North Carolina Greensboro.

Thursday, October 29

Category: Politics

NC’s Shrinking Split-Ticket Voters And Encouraging Immigrant Turnout At The Polls

North Carolina has a history of split-ticket voting. In 2016, the state voted in a Republican president — but put a Democrat in the governor’s seat. The same thing happened in 2004, with George W. Bush for president and Mike Easley for governor. But that trend may change this year, according to recent reporting by Cass Herrington, reporter and “Morning Edition” host for Blue Ridge Public Radio. She talked to one split-ticket voter who is angered by President Donald Trump’s coronavirus pandemic response and is now voting Democrat down the ballot. Other voters may be aligning more with one party or the other as ideologies have become more polarized. Host Anita Rao talks with Herrington about her reporting on split-ticket voters, as well as her feature on efforts to increase voter turnout among immigrant groups in North Carolina. Language, transportation and emotional barriers prevent voters from casting their ballots. Herrington shares how organizations across the state are reaching out to challenge those barriers.

Category: Health

Embodied: The Social Politics of Pigment

In the U.S. as well as around the world, skin color has long been associated with social perceptions of beauty, intellect and class. Studies have shown that many perceive lighter skin as indicative of higher intelligence. Research also suggests that those with darker skin experience higher instances of criminalization. When these perceptions are internalized, they may lead people to seek out procedures and products that claim to be able to lighten their skin. In this segment of Embodied, host Anita Rao talks to Priya Rao, executive editor of Glossy and host of “Unfair,” a podcast about the global skin-lightening industry; Alicia D. Williams, a teacher based in Charlotte and author of the young adult novel, “Genesis Begins Again”; and Dr. Nkanyezi Ferguson, dermatologic surgeon and director of the Ethnic Skin Care Clinic at The University of Iowa’s Carver College of Medicine.

Wednesday, October 28

Category: Politics

N.C. House Races Heat Up in Key Counties

With less than a week till the end of voting, residents in key North Carolina counties are heading to the polls to determine who will take control of the state’s House of Representatives. Though Republicans currently hold a majority in the House, Democrats would need to secure just six more seats to flip power in their favor. With new redistricted maps in play this year, election outcomes may be more unpredictable. WUNC Capitol Bureau Chief and host of the WUNC

Politics Podcast Jeff Tiberii joins host Frank Stasio to discuss the impact of college voting, high-profile endorsements, and updated districting maps on potential race outcomes.

Category: Arts

Sequel Movies On The Radio — Your Picks For Best And Worst

It is the season of undead film franchises. You can catch plenty of reboots and movie series in which they had to swap out the lead actor after a decade of sequels. While some series recycle the first film's formula, others break the mold. A pioneering example mentioned by listener Austin Simons is "Bride of Frankenstein" (1935), which carries on the timeline from the original 1931 "Frankenstein" while switching the focus from the doctor to the monster. Nick Knittel called in from Durham to highlight how "Doctor Sleep" (2019) uses a jump in chronology in addition to a perspective shift to bring a new life to the iconic setting of Stanley Kubrick's "The Shining" (1980). Other studios rely on an expansive cinematic universe to generate fodder for follow-up plotlines. Listeners also shared their thoughts about series like "Star Wars" and "The Lord of the Rings," which inspired fans to write sequels and spin-offs themselves. Host Frank Stasio discusses listeners' picks with film experts Marsha Gordon and Laura Boyes. Gordon is a film professor at North Carolina State University and a public scholar at the National Endowment for the Humanities. Boyes is the film curator for the North Carolina Museum of Art and the curator of the Moviediva series at The Carolina Theatre of Durham.

Tuesday, October 27

Category: Politics

With Partisan Tensions Rising, Are Fears Of 'The Other Side' Justified? We Asked The Experts

Tensions between parties are high as Election Day approaches. President Donald Trump has wavered on his commitment to a peaceful transition, leaving some to wonder: is election-related violence a threat this year? In North Carolina, there has been friction at some polling places but people are still motivated to turn out to vote, according to reporting by Courtney Napier, a Raleigh-based freelance journalist and As the South Votes contributor at Scalawag magazine. And while fears of election-related violence are rooted in real concerns about rising militia activity and inflammatory political comments, some concern may be overblown, says Rachel Kleinfeld, a senior fellow in the Democracy, Conflict and Governance Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Each political party has stoked a hatred of the "other side" in their rhetoric, leaving people to feel fear for what may come should their political party lose the election, she explains. Host Frank Stasio talks with Kleinfeld about the definition of violence and the roots of post-election fears. Also joining the conversation are journalists Napier and Lilly Knoepp of Blue Ridge Public Radio to talk about how people feel about their safety in North Carolina leading up to the elections. And Joanne Freeman, professor of history and American studies at Yale University, talks about what historical events she is recalling to contextualize the present atmosphere.

Monday, October 26

Category: Arts

Art Is Her Response To Inequity And Invisibility: Meet Cortina Jenelle Caldwell

The world of artistic expression called to Cortina Jenelle Caldwell at a young age. As a child she dreamed of becoming an architect, spent a lot of time journaling and loved losing herself in a good book. Her early life was characterized by hard work and perseverance, but it was also marked by trauma. Raised in western North Carolina, Cortina identifies as queer with African,

Indigenous and Southern roots. She bore the full brunt of systemic inequality and poverty it often breeds, and that pushed her away from creative pursuits and toward a more “practical” career choice: nurse practitioner. After years of studying at UNC Greensboro, she decided to take some time off. Through the process of resting and confronting childhood traumas, she rediscovered the power of art. Today she is the founder and creative community organizer for Artists Designing Evolution, or adé PROJECT. Her organization brings together artists, students, organizers, entrepreneurs and community leaders in a cooperative model to create equity and opportunities for excellence. Host Frank Stasio learns more about Caldwell’s childhood and how her personal experience with systemic oppression informs her work today. They also discuss her spiritual journey, how she grappled with her sexuality and how racial equity work has changed in light of mass protests against police brutality.

Friday, October 23

Category: Politics

Women And National Donors Swing Big In North Carolina Races

Money is flowing freely into politics, despite the global recession. Top donors, like Michael Bloomberg and Charles Koch, are targeting competitive elections. North Carolina is ripe with opportunity for either party. From the record-breaking U.S. Senate race down to the suburban state House districts, the deluge of ads is doing more than just affecting voters. New issues are cropping up in campaign speeches and debates. Once candidates know they have the reinforcement of ads paid for by issues-based organizations, issues like gun control can be more safely highlighted. While conservative donors focused their dollars on North Carolina state candidates in 2010 and 2012, left-leaning interest groups are now counterstriking. Women donors are leading the charge, chipping in record amounts, mostly toward Democrats as well as PACs pushing the conversation toward abortion access and gun control measures. Host Frank Stasio explores how money tips the political scales in North Carolina with WUNC’s data reporter Jason deBruyn and Grace Haley, the gender and race researcher for the Center for Responsive Politics, which runs Opensecrets.org, a website making campaign finance records more easily accessible.

Category: Science/Technology

Before Google And Facebook, A 20th Century ‘People Machine’ Tried To Predict The Future

Before tech companies like Google and Facebook, before algorithms became the norm for internet experiences, a mid-20th century company attempted to manipulate the future by simulating human behavior. The Simulmatics Corporation, founded in 1959, built a “People Machine” that modeled everything from how people might vote to what kind of dog food they might buy. The company’s clients included the Democratic National Committee, The New York Times and Department of Defense. But issues with the company’s colorful founders and their personal lives led to Simulmatics’ collapse. After it closed its doors in 1970, many of the archives of its work were lost. But Harvard University American history professor Jill Lepore came across some of the company’s papers in MIT’s archives, and she set off to uncover 11 years of its history. Host Frank Stasio talks with Lepore about her new book, “If Then: How the Simulmatics Corporation Invented the Future.” Lepore is also a staff writer at The New Yorker and host of the podcast, “The Last Archive.”

Thursday, October 22

Category: Politics

Uncertainty And Discouragement Shape The Experience of First-Time Voters

Youth reporter Ellie Stevens hears a lot about what adults want out of the election. But the high school senior felt that she didn't know what her peers wanted from the candidates running this year. In an episode of her podcast "Lunch Break," Stevens set out to explore that topic by interviewing three young people about how the first presidential debate influenced their voting decisions. The discussion brought up feelings of uncertainty and disappointment in the chaotic nature of both candidates fighting to be heard. Host Frank Stasio talks with Stevens about her podcast and what she learned about young people's views in the aftermath of the debate.

Category: Environment

The Effects Of Climate Change Are Already Impacting North Carolinians

It's estimated that annual average temperatures in North Carolina will rise between 2 and 5 degrees by the middle of this century, and 2019 was the warmest year on record for the state. This heat has already had a significant impact on farmworkers, who have reported noticing both an increase in temperatures outdoors while working and afterwards, in lodging that does not offer relief from evenings that are trending increasingly warmer. Host Frank Stasio talks to News and Observer reporter Aaron Sánchez-Guerra and Report for America fellow Adam Wagner about farmworkers and heat-related illness. Sammy Fretwell, environmental reporter for The State in South Carolina, also joins Stasio to discuss an increase in reported vibrio bacteria cases. The toxic germ is still considered uncommon, but the increase in its presence in the Carolinas is related to warmer coastal water temperatures and rising sea levels. Each reporter is featured in the seven-part series, "Danger Beyond the Beach: Climate change and its toll on health in the Carolinas," a partnership of The News and Observer in Raleigh, North Carolina; The State in Columbia, South Carolina; the Columbia Journalism School; and the Center for Public Integrity.

Category: Law

'Just Over the Line' Tackles Sentencing Disparities in NC Counties

What's the difference between committing the same non-violent crime in one North Carolina county and another? For Daniel Noell, a homeless man convicted of obtaining a controlled substance by fraud and drug trafficking in Buncombe and Yancey counties, the difference was vast: he was sentenced to 30 months of probation in Buncombe County and nearly six years in prison in Yancey County. Director Adams Wood tells Noell's story in a new short documentary called "Just Over the Line." The documentary will premiere on Blue Ridge Public Radio's Facebook page on October 28. Wood joins host Frank Stasio to talk about the process of making the film and what Noell's story can tell viewers about mass incarceration and unfair sentencing.

Wednesday, October 21

Category: Arts & Culture

#BackChannel: The Power Of 'Being Seen,' Media Representations Of Police & 'The Forty-Year-Old Version'

How much does it matter to see people who look and identify like you in the media that you consume? In the new podcast "Being Seen" host Darnell Moore examines what it means to have culturally accurate and responsible depictions of the Black, male, queer experience. He joins host Frank Stasio and popular culture experts Natalie Bullock Brown and Mark Anthony Neal on this edition of #BackChannel, a series connecting culture and context, to talk about his

interviews with artists, writers and others. Stasio, Brown and Neal also look at the way police officers have been cast in the media, dig into Megan Thee Stallion's New York Times opinion piece on why the phrase "protect Black women" shouldn't be controversial and break down Radha Blank's film "The Forty-Year-Old Version." Plus, they look at the racial disparity in who gets funding and support in the documentary community and examine the new PBS documentary "Driving While Black" as a case study.

Natalie Bullock Brown is a filmmaker and teaching assistant professor at North Carolina State University. Mark Anthony Neal is the James B. Duke Professor and chair of the department of African and African American studies at Duke University. He is also an author and the host of the webcast "Left of Black."

Tuesday, October 20

Category: Politics

Ballot Stuck In The Mail? Here Are Your Options For Voting In North Carolina

While North Carolinians requested nearly 1.4 million absentee ballots, fewer than half of those have been returned and accepted. Government and watchdog experts continue to express public confidence that mail-in votes are safe and will be counted if filled out properly. But long delay times are expected as postal workers deal with a record influx. If your ballot is stuck on the return trip to your local board of elections, you may be wondering about ways to ensure your vote is tallied. Host Frank Stasio checks in with reporter Jordan Wilkie about new guidance and suggestions for North Carolinian voters in 2020. Wilkie is a Report for America Corps member working for Carolina Public Press and the NC Watchdog Reporting Network.

Category: Crime/Law Enforcement

Durham County Sheriff Clarence Birkhead On His Jail's Pandemic Response

COVID-19 is spreading more quickly throughout North Carolina's population: public health metrics in the last week have some experts worried the state is heading in the wrong direction. Research shows the virus spreads more quickly indoors and when people have prolonged close contact with one another — something that's almost unavoidable in places like jails and prisons. Host Frank Stasio talks to Durham County Sheriff Clarence Birkhead about how the Durham County Detention Facility is adapting its policies to protect its inmates. Felicia Arriaga joins the conversation to talk about how other sheriffs are responding to the pandemic. She is an assistant professor of sociology at Appalachian State University who's been collecting data on jails' responses to COVID-19.

Category: Arts & Culture

Live Theater In A Pandemic: A One-Woman Show For An Audience Of Four

Burning Coal Theatre Company's only in-person performance this fall opened last week to a rapt audience of...four. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the live production of "A Hundred Words for Snow" is being performed before drastically-reduced audience sizes, creating an intimate atmosphere. The show has another unconventional feature — the audience spends a portion of the play blindfolded, while sound design and dialogue from the play's sole character help convey images of plane rides and the snowy landscape of the Arctic. "A Hundred Words for Snow" tells the story of 15-year-old Rory — played alternately by Laura Lillian Baggett and Kimmy Fiorentino — who sets off on a journey to scatter her father's ashes at the North Pole. Host Frank Stasio talks with Baggett and director Jerome Davis about creating live theater in a pandemic.

Monday, October 19

Category: Arts & Culture

Meet Phonte Coleman, North Carolina's Multi-Hyphenate Native Son

Raleigh-born, Greensboro-raised musician Phonte Coleman has traveled all over the world, but there's no other place he can imagine living than North Carolina. A founding member of the rap group Little Brother, as well as a member of the genre-bending music group The Foreign Exchange, Coleman appreciates the quiet, lowkey community he's built in the state and the focus on his craft that it affords him. Hometown life has made for an extremely prolific career that spans over a dozen albums, mixtapes and production credits on television series, including "Black Dynamite," VH1's "The Breaks" and "Sherman's Showcase." Host Anita Rao talks to Coleman about being intermittently recognized as a celebrity, his love of 1980s culture and dipping his toe into political statement-making this year with "Turn It Blue," a "Schoolhouse Rock"-style video promoting voter registration and early voting in Georgia.

Friday, October 16

Category: Health

North Carolina Re-Enters The 'Red Zone' For COVID-19 Case Counts

North Carolina hit its highest one-day case count of COVID-19 since the pandemic began. The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services reported 2,532 new cases of COVID-19 yesterday, and shared that hospitalizations are also creeping back up. The state's higher daily case count puts it back in the "[red zone](#)," for cases according to the White House Coronavirus Task Force. Coronavirus researcher Lisa Gralinski joins host Frank Stasio to reflect on the state's trends and how folks can best plan for a safe holiday season. Gralinski is an assistant professor in the department of epidemiology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Category: Race

UNC Greensboro Builds A Visual History Of Unsung Heroes

Many people know the role that Rosa Parks or Martin Luther King Jr. played in the fight for civil rights. But what about Willena Cannon, a student at North Carolina A&T University who was arrested after protesting to integrate Greensboro's businesses? Or Reverend Steve Allen, who founded one of the first African American law firms in Greensboro in 1979? The University of North Carolina at Greensboro is bringing together the media studies and history departments with the university libraries to catalogue the visual histories of the activists who aren't included in the way we retell the fight for civil rights. Host Frank Stasio is joined by three folks from UNC-Greensboro to learn more about "The Unsung Heroes of the Civil Rights Movement Visual History Project": Matthew Barr is the co-director of the project, a professor in the department of media studies and an oral historian and documentary filmmaker; Torren Gatson is an assistant professor in the department of history who talks about student involvement, and Atigre' Farmer is a recent graduate who interviewed some of the unsung heroes.

Category: Religion

Worshipping The Divine Feminine

The Pachamama, La Virgen, Parvati, Ala, Hera, the Cailleach, and the White Buffalo Calf Woman. Devotion to a masculine god was not always as widespread as in contemporary faith traditions, nor were feminine deities always relegated to gender roles we consider traditional today. Dating back to 4000 BCE, Sumerians and other Mesopotamian cultures worshipped their supreme being Inanna, goddess of everything from sex to political power. While feminine deities and saints are still important figures in modern pantheons, many have been demoted from their original standing. From supreme mothers of creation — like the Pachamama — down to the

Black Madonna. Author and psychologist Rachael Wooten explores these traditions of the divine feminine and their place in our world today. Host Frank Stasio talks to Wooten about how tragedy and revelation led her from a Methodist upbringing in Kinston, North Carolina to worshipping a Tibetan deity. Her book is “Tara: The Liberating Power of the Female Buddha” (Sounds True/2020).

Thursday, October 15

Category: Military

Lessons From Overseas Military Voters:

Voting by mail is nothing new for military service members. Deployed worldwide at any of the nearly 800 foreign bases, military personnel are offered some exceptions during the elections. Some vote by fax from a battleship, and many sent their ballots in weeks ago after receiving them earlier than most voters, at least 45 days before the election. This year, ballots were sent automatically to citizens overseas if they voted in the last cycle, no request needed. If that ballot failed to arrive in time, voters could fill out a back-up blank write-in ballot for any election. Candidates are vying for the attention of the 1.3 million active duty service members. But reaching the voters at remote military outposts can be difficult, and even troops stationed in the U.S. are likely not in their home state. Host Anita Rao talks about the effort to get out the vote in the military with Steve Walsh, a military and veterans affairs reporter for KPBS and the American Homefront Project.

Category: Business & Economy

Black Farmers Draw On Age-Old Ingenuity To Navigate COVID-19

For over a century, Black farmers have faced challenges in securing federal and local funding to aid their farms in times of need and during crises. COVID-19 has been no different. From lack of access to information about coronavirus relief provisions for farmers to difficulty finding spaces to safely vend during the crisis, the pandemic has made obstacles even more stark. Some farmers and organizers are finding creative ways to address Black farmers’ needs, including creating and selling community-supported agriculture (CSA) boxes and continuing to offer space at the Triangle-based Black Farmers’ Market for produce vendors to safely sell their crops. Host Anita Rao talks to Melody Hunter-Pillion, a North Carolina State University public history doctoral student; Kendrick Ransome, a fourth-generation farmer at Golden Organic Farm in Pinetops, North Carolina; Samantha “Foxy” Winship, owner of Mother’s Finest Urban Farms in Winston-Salem; and Crystal Taylor, co-founder of the Black Farmers’ Market in Durham and Raleigh.

Wednesday, October 14

(NPR special coverage of Barrett hearings preempted noon show- but this content aired in the second half of the 8 p.m. hour)

Category: Arts & Culture

Civil War And Southern Charm: How Hollywood Takes On The South

Some of the most popular films in our nation’s cinematic history are about the life, culture and customs of the American South. “Gone With the Wind” — the story of Southern belle Scarlett O’Hara and her love life set against the backdrop of the Civil War and Reconstruction — remains one of the highest-grossing films to date. And the first film to ever be screened in the White House was the 1915 silent film “Birth of a Nation,” a film set in Civil War and Reconstruction-era South Carolina that glorifies the Ku Klux Klan.

But despite their box office successes and large cultural footprint, these films omit crucial pieces of history, truth and nuance about the South. In this month's Movies on the Radio, host Frank Stasio and film experts Marsha Gordon and Laura Boyes discuss how Hollywood films have shaped cultural knowledge and narratives about the region. They talk about watching films that gloss over the darker parts of Southern history, but they also explore how more contemporary films, like "Junebug" and "ATL," resonate with viewers as true to their own experiences. Gordon is a film professor at North Carolina State University and a public scholar at the National Endowment for the Humanities. Boyes is the film curator for the North Carolina Museum of Art and the curator of the Moviediva series at the Carolina Theater in Durham. This program originally aired August 26, 2020.

Tuesday, October 13

(NPR special coverage of Barrett hearings preempted noon show- but this content aired in the second half of the 8 p.m. hour)

Category: Economy

Is The American Dream Out Of Reach For Millennials?

Owning your first home is a rite of passage — a marker of true adulthood. For those privileged enough to buy a house, it is often the first step in building wealth. But millennials are not achieving that milestone at the same rate that Baby Boomers and Gen Xers did at their age. Host Frank Stasio examines the reasons why with Jung Choi, a research assistant at the Urban Institute who studies the barriers to millennial home ownership. Sasha Kanarski also joins the conversation to share her personal experience buying a home in the Triangle and her expertise as a real estate agent with The Spot Studio. Stasio, Choi and Kanarski reflect on recorded voice memos from real estate agents in other parts of the state, including Faith Triggs, a Charlotte-based real estate agent with Keller Williams Realty who details the reasons behind lower rates of Black home ownership in Charlotte. Real estate agent Tony Harrington, president of Cape Fear Realtors, reflects on the market in eastern North Carolina. Stasio, Choi and Kanarski also hear from millennials about their experiences in the market, including Nick Knittel, Sarah Odum, Anna Shelton-Ormond, Kirsten Engelbert and Matthew Hoagland, author of "Think Small: A Millennial's Guide to Building a Meaningful Life in Rural America" (Matthew Hoagland/2020).

Then Stasio further examines the racial gap in home ownership and the current relationship between homeownership and wealth building in the American economy with Roberto Quercia. Quercia is the Harris distinguished professor in the department of city and regional planning at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and co-author of "A Place Called Home: The Social Dimensions of Homeownership" (Oxford University Press/2017). This show originally aired September 2, 2020.

Monday, October 12

(NPR special coverage of Barrett hearings preempted noon show- but this content aired in the 8 p.m. hour)

Category: Environment

From ‘Death And Dirt’ Law To Conservation For Black-Owned Forests: Meet Mavis Gragg

Mavis Gragg never thought her work would “take her to the trees,” but that is where she has found herself. She grew up during the 80s in Black Mountain, North Carolina as the middle child to a long-haul truck driver and a bank teller. Gragg had her sights set on law school from an early age after her father promised her an orange corvette as a law school graduation gift. After studying unions and labor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill as an undergraduate, she went on to graduate from Pepperdine University Rick J. Caruso School of Law in 2002. She did not get the corvette, but Gragg knew she had made her parents proud and she started working for a large firm in Washington, D.C. Then in 2012, Gragg’s parents died unexpectedly. The sudden loss propelled her into an emotional and career reckoning. Was she really practicing law because she wanted to, or because her parents wanted her to? About a year of career guidance and therapy later, Gragg realized she was just practicing the wrong kind of law. In 2014 she moved to Durham and opened her own law firm that specialized in what she calls “death and dirt” law. The idea to focus on estate planning and heirs’ property law came after her parents’ death, when Gragg suddenly became the custodian to a number of family estates, and her family lost considerable property. She wanted to help other families get organized and prepared for what happens when a family member passes, particularly for people of a low socioeconomic class whose wealth is even more precious. That practice ran until 2019, when Gragg accepted the position of director of the Sustainable Forestry & African American Land Retention Program with the American Forest Foundation. Black land ownership in America has steadily declined since its peak 100 years ago, so Gragg helps black families maintain and keep their privately-owned forest land. It is a departure from the legal world, but Gragg enjoys the conservationist aspect to her work in protecting African American property. Host Anita Rao talks to Mavis Gragg about finding purpose in her work and how families can protect intergenerational wealth.

Note: this show originally aired June 15, 2020.

Friday, October 9

Category: Politics

Queen, Clampitt Race In WNC Marks Fifth Face-Off In A Decade

One of the most competitive local races in the state is in District 119, which includes Jackson, Swain and Haywood Counties. Democratic Rep. Joe Sam Queen and his Republican challenger Mike Clampitt have vied for the same seat in the North Carolina House of Representatives since 2012. This is their fifth race against one another and its outcome will take Western North Carolina’s political temperature this election season.

On Sept. 24, Blue Ridge Public Radio reporter Lilly Knoepp co-moderated a virtual town hall in which both candidates spoke on a number of issues including Medicaid expansion, defunding the police and medical marijuana legalization. Knoepp joins host Frank Stasio to discuss the race.

Category: Agriculture

State Fair Traditions Remembered

Pig racing, giant pumpkins and a tour of the old grist mill — with a free hushpuppy at the exit — are common traditions we all need badly this year. The rituals of the North Carolina State Fair connect disparate communities and celebrate traditional livelihoods. Host Frank Stasio hears from some of the characters, competitors and vendors who ensure that nothing could be finer.

Brent Cook is the owner and an announcer for the Hogway Speedway Racing Pigs. Lance Williams is a sophomore at Bunn High School boasting nine first place prizes in the culinary, and bees and honey categories at the 2019 State Fair. Mike Neal is the owner of Hickory Tree Turkey BBQ, whose stuffed turkey leg won the 2019 People's Choice Best New Food at the fair. Lee Baker is a professor of cultural anthropology, sociology and African and African American studies at Duke University. Franklin County's livestock and beekeeping extension agent Martha Mobley is the owner of Meadow Lane Farm and serves on the board of the Durham Farmers' Market. In fact, you can see Meadow Lane Farm's very own giant pumpkin at the Durham Farmers' Market on Oct. 31.

While the public celebration of the State Fair is cancelled, you can still get your fair food fix from Oct. 15 to Oct. 25 from 22 local vendors. There will also be a drive for the Food Bank of Central & Eastern North Carolina on the fairgrounds on Oct. 22 from 8 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. Various junior and youth competitions will be held remotely or distanced without spectators at the fairgrounds.

Thursday, October 8

Category: Health

Whose Story Gets Told In The Abortion Debates?

As the Supreme Court confirmation hearings for Judge Amy Coney Barrett approach, abortion issues have been thrown into the spotlight once again. President Donald Trump nominated Judge Barrett after the death of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg last month. Justice Ginsburg was a vocal advocate for women's rights and endorsed abortion rights when questioned by the Senate Judiciary Committee at her confirmation hearing in 1993. While Judge Barrett has not signed onto an official opinion cutting back on the rights guaranteed in the landmark Roe v. Wade decision, she has disagreed with appeals courts who struck down laws that restrict abortion in her home state of Indiana.

But while advocates on both sides contemplate the future of abortion laws, misconceptions and stigma around who gets abortions and why make it difficult to understand who might be affected by changes in legislation. Individual stories of patients and providers get lost in the broad-sweeping debates and laws, such as stories of those who seek abortions in the second trimester or those who terminate wanted pregnancies.

Host Anita Rao talks with Gretchen Sisson, a research sociologist at Advancing New Standards in Reproductive Health, about how television and real life diverge when it comes to abortion — and how that may influence our understanding of the issue. Dr. Rathika Nimalendran also joins the conversation to break down North Carolina's abortion laws and misconceptions. And Rao talks with Margaret and Ruth, two women who terminated wanted pregnancies in their second trimesters for medical reasons.

Wednesday, October 7

Category: News

Greensboro Massacre Survivor Responds To City's Formal Apology

More than four decades after the Greensboro Massacre, the city formally apologizes for the role of city police. On Nov. 3, 1979, a caravan of Ku Klux Klansmen and American Nazi Party members pulled out weapons and killed five people protesting at an anti-Klan march in Greensboro. Ten people were injured, and the police were nowhere to be found — even though they knew a violent attack was coming. The Greensboro City Council voted 7-2 on a resolution that includes both a formal apology and details about an annual scholarship program that awards \$1,979 to five graduates of Dudley High School in memory of the five victims. Host Frank Stasio gets reaction from Reverend Nelson Johnson, executive director of the Beloved Community Center in Greensboro and a survivor of the Greensboro Massacre.

Category: Politics

How To Navigate Your Newsfeed And Sort Fact From Fiction

In the past decade, we've grown increasingly accustomed to a news cycle that operates at a breakneck pace and the ability to follow along with news updates on devices that fit into our pockets. But constant access to information does not necessarily make us more informed. The proliferation of social media and online information sites opened the doors to a less-regulated news economy, which means misinformation and hoaxes can often spread faster than the facts themselves. Hours after President Donald Trump disclosed his positive COVID-19 diagnosis last Friday, hoaxes and confusion about his condition were rampant, and official reports and unnamed sources contradicted one another. This is just the latest example of misinformation polluting the news ecosystem this election cycle. Others include continued Russian interference on social media, conspiracy theories about child sex trafficking and the president's lies about mail-in ballots and election fraud. Host Frank Stasio talks to two experts on misinformation: Deen Freelon, an associate professor in the Hussman School of Journalism and Media at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Brendan Nyhan, professor of government at Dartmouth College. Chavi Khanna Koneru also joins the conversation to share her work as the executive director of North Carolina Asian Americans Together. The nonprofit group formed to provide specific voter information and education to Asian American North Carolinians.

Tuesday, October 6

Category: Politics

Scandal, Sickness & Secrecy — NC Election Updates

If you had trouble keeping up with news over the weekend, you are not alone. Democratic U.S. Senate candidate Cal Cunningham admitted to extramarital sexting, while his opponent, Republican incumbent Sen. Thom Tillis tested positive for the coronavirus. Not in the top headlines: the latest in the most competitive races for State Senate seats. Republicans currently hold a majority, with 29 out of the 50 seats. State Senate Districts 9, 24 and 31 are toss-ups and could prove the tipping point for breaking a gridlocked state government that was unable to pass a budget in 2020. What are the issues at stake in New Hanover, Alamance and Yadkin counties? Host Frank Stasio discusses the candidates, policies and accusations with WUNC's Capitol Bureau Chief Jeff Tiberii.

Category: Politics

The 2020 Election Could Change The Redistricting Conversation, Again

The past 10 years have seen North Carolina's legislative and congressional district maps drawn and redrawn, court-ordered resolutions to partisan and racial gerrymandering and the long-term impact of racial redistricting. The upcoming 2020 election will determine how the state's communities will be represented for the next decade. Host Frank Stasio talks to David Daley, author of "Ratf**ked: The True Story Behind the Secret Plan to Steal America's Democracy" and "Unrigged: How Americans Battled Back To Save Democracy." Also joining the conversation is Tomas Lopez, executive director of Democracy North Carolina and North Carolina Sen. Valerie P. Foushee, D-Chapel Hill, chair of the board of directors for North Carolina Black Alliance about what's at stake for voters.

Monday, October 5

Category: Agriculture

From Land-Locked Durhamite To Oyster Connoisseur: Meet Ryan Bethea

Ryan Bethea has a job to make many computer-bound office workers jealous. As an oyster farmer, his work takes him out into the waters of Westmouth Bay just off Harkers Island. Bethea farms on five acres and runs his business, Oysters Carolina, which sells fresh oysters to individuals, group events and one restaurant in Durham. He works by kayak, paddling out to look for crowding in the oyster cages or damage to the gear. The North Carolina oyster industry has lagged behind other states, but the coast's estuarine systems make prime habitats for wild and farmed oysters.

Bethea didn't grow up with an obvious bent for oyster farming. He spent his childhood and teenage years in Durham, where his dad worked as the assistant city manager. He cultivated a passion for law as a teenager, but it did not congeal as he started college. He ended up dropping out of school, traveling and making money by bartending. Bethea learned about the untapped potential for oyster farming in North Carolina from a magazine in 2011, and it sparked an idea — what if he could have a job working in the outdoors that highlighted something unique about the state he loved? This dream motivated him to return to finish his bachelor's degree in geography at North Carolina Central University. He then attended the Virginia Institute of Marine Science Oyster Aquaculture Training program and studied oyster genetics to further his technical skill. His oyster farming company became a reality in 2015. Host Frank Stasio talks with Bethea about his non-linear path to oyster farming, the effects of the coronavirus pandemic and climate change on his business and where his future life goals are taking him.

Friday, October 2

Category: Politics

The Changing Role Of Debates In American Politics

North Carolina voters had the opportunity to watch two high-profile debates this week: the first presidential debate in Cleveland and the final U.S. Senate debate in Raleigh. President Donald Trump and former Vice President Joe Biden faced off Tuesday night in a contentious debate that left many voters feeling disappointed and disillusioned. Republican Sen. Thom Tillis and his Democratic challenger Cal Cunningham took the stage Thursday for the last of three scheduled debates. With just over a month to go until Election Day, host Frank Stasio and political analyst Ken Rudin look at the history of presidential and vice presidential debates in American politics and how they have changed over time. Rudin also shares his thoughts on how the U.S. Senate race is shaping up and about how the Senate confirmation hearings for Amy Coney Barrett in a

couple weeks could impact the election in November. And he talks about how the news that President Trump tested positive for the coronavirus will change the next few weeks on the campaign trail.

Category: Education

As More N.C. School Districts Announce Reopening Plans, Teachers' Concerns Intensify

Wake, Charlotte-Mecklenburg and Guilford Counties are among the state's public school districts that have announced mid-fall reopening plans for elementary and middle school students. Each district intends to implement reopening differently based on their community's size, distinct challenges and specific concerns. The reopening decisions come as a relief to some parents who have struggled to balance the demands of work and remote instruction. However, other families are still reticent about students returning to classrooms due to concerns over schools' ability to ensure safety. Teachers are also voicing their own safety concerns as more reports of COVID-19 among educators emerge. Host Frank Stasio talks to Cole del Charco, WUNC's Fletcher Fellow for education policy reporting and Kristin Beller, an educator and president of the Wake County North Carolina Association of Educators.

Category: Arts & Culture

'ROW': A Musical Odyssey Of One Woman's Solo Boat Trip Across The Atlantic

In 1998, Tori Murden McClure set off in a boat she made herself to become the first woman to row solo across the Atlantic Ocean. She did not make it. Eighty-five days into her journey, Hurricane Danielle capsized her boat more times than she could count. McClure returned to her home in Louisville, rebuilt her boat and tried again in 1999. This time, she achieved her goal and became the first woman and first American to row solo across the Atlantic Ocean. McClure's story of determination and perseverance is the subject of the new musical "Row." Louisville native and North Carolina-based singer-songwriter Dawn Landes wrote the music and lyrics for the musical. The music and the script, written by playwright Daniel Goldstein, are based on McClure's memoir, "A Pearl in the Storm." While the musical's debut was interrupted by the coronavirus, Landes' album "Row" was released Oct. 2. Host Frank Stasio talks with Landes about the music that documents McClure's adventure and the parallels between their lives that drew Landes to McClure's story.

Thursday, October 1

Category: Economy

The Future Of Sex Work: Working from home looks a little different for sex workers. With most strip clubs closed and dancers excluded from larger pots of money in the coronavirus relief package, the sex trade has largely gone online. From strippers to erotic masseuses to full service workers, virtual sex work required innovation. While OnlyFans' explosive growth captured the public imagination, erotic content dominated the internet since the beginning. For performers, the battle over digital security and profits continues today. Similar to strip clubs and pimps, most sites take a cut of every transaction or charge a hosting fee.

Cinnamon Maxxine, a sex worker based in Maine, finds the online work more fun and liberating than in-person service. She says, "It feels like some kind of normalcy during these times." Cereza Cykes found her online colleagues and audience far more welcoming of gender and body diversity than her former service workplace. Cykes is a transgender woman who started doing online sex work this year. While she finds customers are appreciative of transgender performers, some sites, like OnlyFans, make work difficult due to identification checks. "I think there's extra difficulty with verification with someone like me because my ID obviously doesn't look like how I look now," she explains.

On this edition of the Embodied series, host Anita Rao explores how sex workers are making online work more equitable and secure. Looking towards the future of the sex trade, Rao is joined by three activists: Antonia Crane, SX Noir and Teddy B. Ruxpin. Crane is a leader at Soldiers of Pole, an organization dedicated to decriminalizing and unionizing sex work. She is also the author of "Spent: A Memoir" (Rare Bird Books/2017) and a former sex worker at the Lusty Lady, a unionized and worker-owned peep show. Noir is the vice president of Women of Sex Tech, an organizer for the Black sex worker liberation march and the host of the "Thot Leader" podcast. Ruxpin is a burlesque dancer, writer and organizer on the board of Soldiers of Pole.