

## EDITORIAL

### Rising COVID cases point to a failing grade

It cannot be overstated that education, perhaps more than any other American institution, has been radically transformed by the raging virus that has now claimed more than 150,000 lives nationally, six months after the first evidence of a new, worrisome crisis in our world began to materialize.

And while we have all had to consider what our priorities are during this time, for many, the most basic of those are becoming increasingly threatened: food, shelter, socialization. Children have suffered greatly, too, in deeply profound ways. A total loss of routine, academic or otherwise; access to meals; recreation opportunities; time with friends; safety behind the walls of a building where they have advocates and support systems.

How wholly rotten, how unfair to the most vulnerable, how destabilizing, is that?

Chiefly on so many minds is how to conduct school as fall semester approaches. The American Federation of Teachers union — the second largest in the country — signaled on Tuesday that it would support teacher strikes among its members, albeit as a last resort, who organize in response to measures they view as inadequate to protect them or their students. That union is also pressing for member districts to keep schools closed until infection rates in their municipality fall below 1%. That's not happening in many places, including in King County.

The range of opinions on how to keep schools safest run the gamut — from continuing lessons in isolation on screens to hosting groups outdoors for learning in an environment that may pose a lesser risk for spreading COVID-19. To the other extreme, according to some in the federal government, we can't let science get in the way of this, and must push on no matter what with reopening schools.

Let's be clear that every student in this country would be better off among their peers in their own classrooms. And that's to say nothing of the conditions of those schools before this pandemic — in what is supposedly the greatest country in the world, the difference in the quality of the education your child receives could be determined by a zip code. As this conversation about whether — and how, if at all — to open schools or not continues, know that this pandemic has the potential to turn the achievement gap into the Mariana Trench.

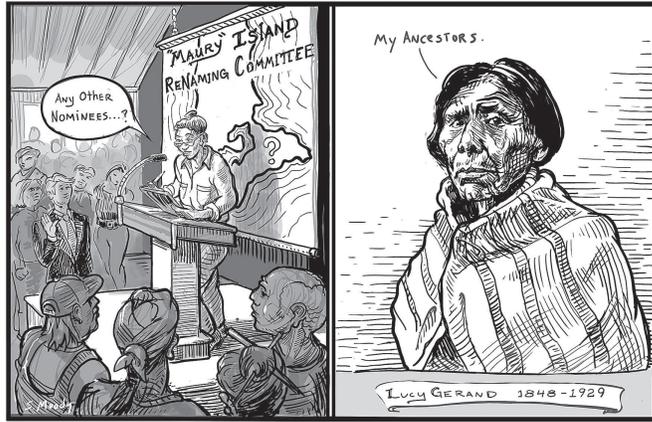
Vashon has the tremendous fortune of being a zip code where students are given many of the tools they need to aim high. But for them, and those serving them in the district, success doesn't come without hard work. We know students here are served by highly qualified, dedicated faculty and staff, people who care about the well-being of those they teach and who work tirelessly to provide them what they need to transform themselves into the people they need to become.

No doubt there is so much to consider, and so much at stake, for our students and those who teach them. But we cannot afford a single misstep in the crucial days ahead. If we ever could.

Rheagan Spark writes in her commentary for The Beachcomber this week that changes have been so rapid that it's made planning for the fall extremely difficult. The best that can be hoped for is to make lemonade out of COVID's lemons, she says. Surely our educators can do more for our students than that. And they would be able to — if only our county had flattened the curve and kept it there. Yet we continue to see new cases — two on the island just this week — proliferate in Washington. Gov. Jay Inslee is supposedly mulling over a new stay at home order while imposing additional restrictions last week. And here we are, all these months later after this all started with nothing to show for our early, earnest sacrifices, our blind hope that we could turn this around.

Clearly some people are just not getting it. Time for a pop quiz: 1) If you can't wear a mask in public to protect yourself and those around you, should you go out? Answer: No. 2) You and 14 of your relatives are invited to attend your cousin's "social distancing" (but not really) barbecue (Uncle Kevin thinks this is all a hoax). Should you go? Answer: No. 3) If you want to patronize a local business or restaurant — they do need your support — should you consider carry out as opposed to dining in? Answer: Yes. Don't put essential workers at greater risk than they have to be right now.

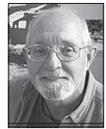
Every day — every week — counts. Our actions — yours, ours, what we do together — will determine when our students can return to school, and when our brilliant educators can meet them, finally. We will set our entire nation desperately behind if we fail them now.



STEFFON MOODY ARTWORK

## Antonia: A Maury to be Proud Of

The Beachcomber published our article "Should We Rename Maury Island?" on July 16. We posed three options: topple the name Maury from our islands and find another name; rename Maury Island after a different Maury who does not carry the legacy of support for slavery; or leave the name as it is and recognize the tarnished legacy William L. Maury's name carries.



BRUCE HAULMAN



STEVEN C. MACDONALD

In this piece, we explore Option 2, rename Maury Island after a different Maury who does not carry William L. Maury's tarnished legacy. This would accomplish something parallel to what happened here in 1996 when King County, which was originally named for William Rufus DeVane King (a senator from Alabama who enslaved people and was elected U.S. vice president in 1853 but died before

serving in office) officially changed its eponym to the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

We want to suggest that Maury Island could remain Maury Island, but be named for Antonia Gaetana Maury rather than William Lewis Maury. Antonia Maury was a remarkable early astronomer whose star classification system was adopted by the International Astronomical Union,

was the first woman to publish in an astronomical observatory publication, and was one of the first to be awarded the Cannon Prize in Astronomy by the American Astronomical Society.

Antonia Maury, born in Cold Spring, New York on March 21, 1866, was the daughter of Protestant Reverend Mytton Maury and Virginia Draper and was a very distant cousin ("second-cousin once-removed") of William L. Maury, after whom Maury Island was named in 1841. Antonia was the granddaughter of John William Draper, an astronomer who took the first detailed photograph of the moon in 1840, and a niece of astronomer Henry Draper, who pioneered star photography in the 1870s.

See **RENAME**, Page 7

## School Will Be Different in Fall, but Expect Nothing Less

The Vashon Island School District will open under a remote learning model this fall, along with a majority of other school districts in our region. The rate of COVID infection in our state is now higher than it was last March when Gov. Jay Inslee issued his stay home order and early efforts to flatten the curve have eroded. Given the increase in rates and direction from both Public Health - Seattle & King County and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, schools must prioritize the safety of kids and staff and start September with remote learning.



RHEAGAN SPARKS

You almost could hear the collective groan from parents and staff as these announcements were rolled out last week. While we heard more concern from our youngest student's families, students and families from our secondary schools

were also saddened. Nearly every family is undecided, stressed and anxious about how to meet income, career, and education needs. Every teacher and staff member mourns the loss of interpersonal interaction with a classroom full of students. The members of the Vashon School Board and VISD administrators, as parents and professionals, feel these same pressures and are tasked to navigate them effectively on behalf of our community. There are no easy decisions and there isn't a decision that fully meets the broad range of needs in our community.

Because of the rapidly changing circumstances and unprecedented situation, there's honestly just a lot we don't know yet. There's also, ironically, a lot we did "know" that immediately changed. Several times this has happened during the last four months and the only constant

has been change. Families need details in order to make plans, but concrete details are in short supply in July. Here's what I can tell you: We have an incredible team of seasoned VISD staff who have demonstrated their abilities at making "lemonade" from COVID's "lemons." Remember graduation?

When school starts under the Remote Learning 2.0 format, it will proceed very differently from the emergency measures in place for the last four months of the 2019-20 school year. There will be structured schedules and more real-time virtual instruction. The end of last year was about "doing no harm" academically and helping seniors complete their programs and graduate. The new school year will focus on building stronger relationships, advancing instruction, acquiring skills, and delivering standardized learning as required.

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### LEGAL SYSTEM

#### Thanks to Op-Ed Contributor

As members of the Criminal Justice Action Team of Vashon SURJ (Showing up for Racial Justice), we would like to thank Leslie Brown for her op-ed piece, "What it means to defend the Police" (July 9). The injustices and racial inequities prevalent in the criminal legal system of this country are enormous and long-standing. All of us, especially white people, must take action to address the many issues.

White people have directly and indirectly benefited from the criminal legal system which has upheld white supremacy in this country. As marchers have said "Silence = Complicity." Many folks have been actively working on these issues for years, including our group. Learn more at a virtual SURJ Abolition house party at 4 p.m. on Zoom on Sunday, August 16. Donate to organizations like the Northwest Community Bail Fund (nwcmbailfund.org) Community Passageways (communitypassageways.org) King County Equity Now (kingcountyequitynow.com) and the Freedom Project (freedomprojectwa.org).

To sign up for the Abolition house party or get more

info on SURJ activities, contact us at vmsurj@gmail.com or see our Facebook page at m.facebook.com/VashonMaurySURJ.

— Jean Berolzheimer, Bailey de Jongh, Cathy DeSmet, Susan McCabe, Janie Starr and Jay Williamson

### ELECTION

#### Vote for Joe

Barring unforeseen circumstances, I will be voting for Joe Biden for President this fall. I hope, fervently, for the sake of our Republic, that a majority of Americans do likewise.

Trump has shown himself incapable of leading this nation. I want a government that helps its citizens to cope with a pandemic that kills thousands, and sickens thousands more, not one that sows division with lies that cause even more deaths. I want a government that is committed to raising up all America, not just hedge fund managers and sycophants who fawn over the narcissist-in-chief.

I want a government that knows how to lead here at

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