

2020 RETROSPECTIVE



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-Winston Churchill

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It's almost over...



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It's almost over, New Jersey, this dreadful year of death, sapped of political events, where zoom calls replaced street interviews and awful truths supplanted diner booths. I wish it could end tonight, and we could spare ourselves a limp to the finish line.

But first we should understand a few things about what 2020 revealed, including the woeful lack of healthcare for working people, and the embarrassing underperformance by a political class mostly content to point fingers at Washington, D.C. Trenton in particular closed the year with several key self-serving pieces of legislation, which specifically lack social justice reinforcement as part of marijuana legalization.

If that weren't grim enough, we look to a future where the Democrats and Republicans who ran the state into the ground reassert their influence over the legislative and congressional redistricting process to

strengthen incumbents at precisely the time when we should relieve them of duty.

In the meantime, we await a gubernatorial election year wherein Republicans will continue to cower at the altar of disgraced ex-President Donald J. Trump and Democrats will complacently trust in margins widened in their favor during the Trump and Chris Christie epochs (which have, in fact, always disgracefully coexisted).

God willing, we will once more see you out there in the alleyways and on the highways of this embattled state, where we still believe in the political process, even if we know now more than ever that we have a long way to go, New Jersey.

Remember the dead. Celebrate the living.

Max Pizarro
Max Pizarro
Editor, InsiderNJ

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A WORD ABOUT WILDA DIAZ



The state's only elected Latina mayor lost her reelection bid this year after the Democratic Party got behind a referendum to require the victor to earn 50% plus one of the vote.

What a loss.

A former bank teller, Diaz first became mayor when she defeated fearsome jailbait incumbent Joe Vas in 2008. She brought integrity, vitality, guts, and a genuine caring about the people of Perth Amboy to her job.

Her defeat at the hands of a party machine-connected candidate in the Dec. 15th runoff election represents a significant loss not only to her hometown but to the state, for New Jersey fundamentally lacks those public service qualities in many of our so-called "leaders."

A daily communicant who comes from a blue-collar immigrant, military service-grounded family, Diaz spent 12 years working for the people who elected her. In addition to the crisis challenges of a pandemic, the mayor went through a very difficult year personally, as she lost her beloved father and nurtured her COVID-19-afflicted husband back to health.

Through the worst of it, Diaz maintained her sense of joyful commitment, and a veteran's dedication to the job. A serious politician with real leadership skills, we trust we have not heard the last of Wilda Diaz, and look forward to her entrance into more than just the discussion wherever the people seek an independent voice of integrity.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to those affected by COVID 19.



Despite the challenges, New Jersey leaders and residents demonstrated resilience and pulled together.

JERSEY STRONG!

During this Holiday Season please remember those we lost, thank our healthcare heroes and frontline workers and give your family and coworkers a virtual hug.

May the spirit of this Season bring us all relief and an end to this pandemic. May the New Year create a stronger and more United New Jersey! **From our MBI Family to yours.**



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WINNER OF THE YEAR: June Fischer



On the same day he scored decisive victories, Joe Biden's most loyal, "everlasting" friend (her word) in New Jersey filed to be a delegate at the Democratic National Convention in Milwaukee, which would be the 12th by June Fischer, the redoubtable octogenarian who last year told InsiderNJ she would walk to Scranton if she had to in order to prove her support for Biden.

"People trust him, they see a real human being," Fischer of Clark said following Biden's wins in Michigan, Mississippi and Missouri, which at 9:45 p.m. eastern time had propelled the former vice president farther past Bernie Sanders 704-587 in the delegate count in his quest for the Democratic nomination for president.

Fischer was profoundly ecstatic.

Fischer and Biden were already longtime friends when the latter campaigned for the presidency on the trail in 1987.

"Why else would I have a reason to go out to Sioux City?" she cracked as the returns poured in for her enduring presidential candidate.

"Does he make mistakes, sure he does, but so do I, that's why I use pencils with erasers," Fischer said, hours after Biden got into a dispute with a blue collar worker in Michigan.

"The average voter can relate to him," added Biden's New Jersey friend.

In the end, it goes without saying that Fischer could more than relate to Biden's 51.4% to 46.9% (306 to 232) win over Donald J. Trump.

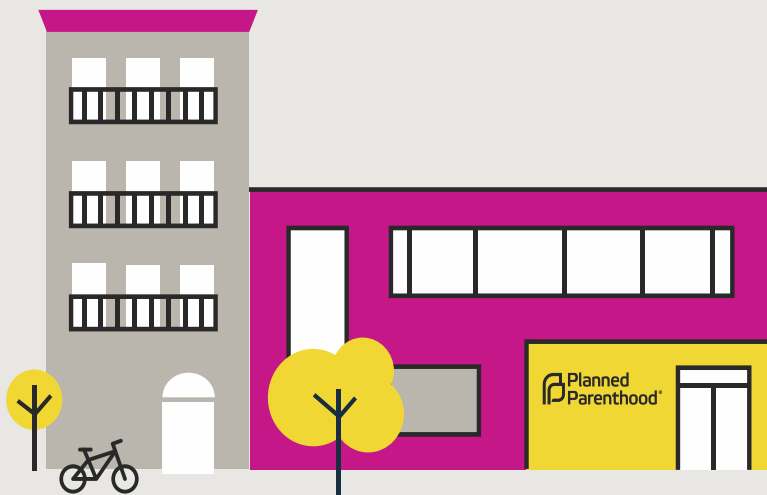
It actually happened. And she didn't even have to go to Scranton (or Milwaukee).



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WINNER OF THE YEAR: RUNNER-UP Jeff Van Drew



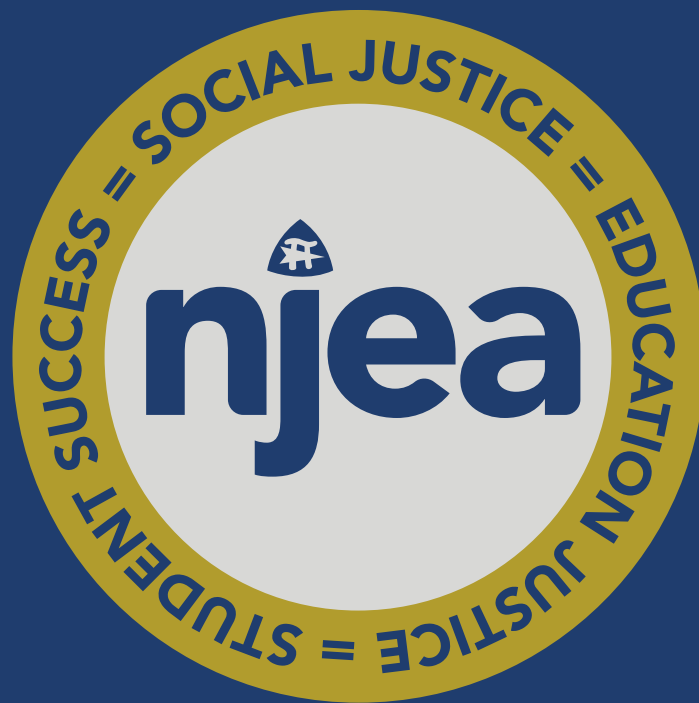
Defying his critics, the Republican congressman from the 2nd District proved the value of a 20-year base, as he changed parties and beat Democrat Amy Kennedy 195,526 to 173,849 to win reelection. Granted, he had some help. The Democratic Party establishment that lost the primary pouted in the general and sat on its hands while Kennedy lost by 3,000 votes in Senate President Steve Sweeney's home county of Gloucester. Also, Van Drew had the advantage of a longtime connection to Atlantic City operative Craig Callaway, who headed up his vote-by-mail program in a COVID-forced all vote-by-mail election.

WINNER OF THE YEAR: RUNNER-UP Marty Small



Appointed to fill the unexpired term of corruption-crackup Frank Gilliam, the Atlantic City Mayor prevailed in a special election this year and will run for a full, four-year term in 2021.

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WINNER OF THE YEAR: RUNNER-UP

Andy Kim



The incumbent Democrat from the 3rd Congressional District stuffed Republican challenger David Richter (229,840 to 196,327) in a race that insiders at the outset presumed would be more competitive.

WINNER OF THE YEAR: RUNNER-UP Mikie Sherrill



The future Governor of New Jersey stared down her Republican challenger without too much trouble.

WINNER OF THE YEAR: RUNNER-UP

Sean Spiller



The longtime New Jersey Education Association (NJEA) leader defeated Renee Baskerville to become Mayor of Montclair, and briefly found himself in contention to serve in the cabinet of President-elect Joe Biden, possibly as Secretary of Education.



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WINNER OF THE YEAR: RUNNER-UP Alex Mendez



The former at-large councilman from Paterson snagged a 3rd Ward Council seat after dispatching of long-serving incumbent Councilman Bill McKoy. Keep an eye on Mendez ahead of the 2022 mayor's race, when he presumably will challenge long-time rival incumbent Mayor Andre Sayegh. But know that before that, the already sworn-into office Mendez may have to face McKoy again if McKoy pursues a challenge to the Nov. 3rd election outcome.

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POLITICIAN OF THE YEAR

Craig Callaway



It takes a special kind of talent to wear the uniform of one team and then turn around on the 50-yard line and play the second half of the game in the uniform of the opponent. That's exactly what Callaway did when he helped Amy Kennedy land the Democratic nomination in CD2, then turned around in the general election and helped U.S. Rep. Jeff Van Drew (R-2) beat her.

"I think Van Drew will win and [Joe] Biden will prevail in CD2, but I think the Democrats have taken a lot of things for granted," said Callaway.

What, for example, do they take for granted?

"They don't have a street game," said the operative, whose operation is working to harvest Atlantic City and Pleasantville votes for Van Drew.

Callaway said he expected Kennedy to have "a modest showing" in Atlantic City, "when it should have maxed out."

He was right. Van Drew kept it close in Kennedy's home county of Atlantic (65,354 to 69,566) while blowing her out in his home county of Cape May (34,627 to 21,899) and beating her in Gloucester (27,930 to 24,350), home to (Democrat) Senate President Steve Sweeney (D-3).

POLITICIAN OF THE YEAR: RUNNER-UP Marie Strumolo-Burke



The Belleville First Ward Councilwoman showed old school credentials in the middle of a pandemic as she defeated convincing challenger Carmine Mattia, who ran with the backing of Mayor Mike Melham. If it wasn't quite the taking of Melham, one, two, three, it was a gritty win, nonetheless. But we'd really expect nothing less from Strumolo-Burke.

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LOSER OF THE YEAR

The Voters of the 7th Congressional District



No one really pays attention to that regional part of the state, which even strives to convince people that it actually exists. But the “contest” between incumbent Democrat Tom Malinowski and Republican challenger Tom Kean, Jr. had all the heavyweight panache of an arm-wrestling match between the two weakest kids in class. Seriously, if this is what a campaign looks like, hopefully reasonable heads will prevail during the redistricting process to ensure that both these duds get routed out of commission. It won’t happen, of course. The two guys who participated in the most shameful clash of non-ideas will assuredly have representatives on the commish to draw a map favorable to them, which will no doubt prolong the suffering condition of those voting residents of a district that is, at least on paper, more sophisticated than the muck Malinowski and Kean served up in 2020.

LOSER OF THE YEAR: RUNNER-UP

Transparency



Legislative Leadership rammed through multiple sensitive, detailed bills in the 11th hour, from marijuana legalization to Horizon restructuring to an “economic recovery act,” which left members’ heads spinning and a slack-jawed media trying to keep track. Don’t worry, it will be ok. We saw what happened when they rushed the Economic Opportunity Act of 2013. We got helipads for corporate overlords instead of food markets for working people.

LEGISLATOR OF THE YEAR

Ronald L. Rice



Sometimes he seems like the only noble guy left in Trenton, if that's a word that even exists anymore in Trenton. Certainly, he's one of the only ones who actually has the guts to protest big business grabs like marijuana legalization. But Rice, who had an awful year on one level (he lost his wife), also showed why he's indispensable to New Jersey. You know what's shameful? The fact that he's gotten next to no credit. A renowned book out there on black politics in New Jersey, contains not a single footnote on Rice. At least, we still have him here. When someone like Senator Nick Scutari – 25 years younger – literally takes off his jacket and acts like he wants to fight Rice when Rice attempts to introduce a social justice dimension into marijuana legalization legislation, the people of New Jersey can actually be represented by someone in Trenton. Remember, too, that Rice backed Joe Biden for president earlier than most other NJ Democrats bottled up on the ill-fated Cory Booker train.



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LEGISLATOR OF THE YEAR: RUNNER UP

Tony Bucco



In a difficult election year with anti-Trump sentiment and U.S. Rep. Mikie Sherrill (D-11) driving turnout toward Democrats, Senator Bucco (R-25) secured the seat left vacant by his late father with a vote tally of 67,142 to 57,192.

LEGISLATION OF THE YEAR

The Horizon Restructuring Bill



The same people who screamed when Gov Chris Christie tried to raid the Horizon reserves argued good government sensibility when they made the same grab for it this year. Sure, we get it. Governor Phil Murphy needs \$600 million for his COVID-19 budget while Mitch McConnell fiddles away in D.C. instead of fast-tracking a pandemic relief package. The bill enables not-for-profit Horizon to put charitable assets in a for-profit subsidiary that they create and control with voting shares and sell all the ownership interest to private investors. Sound like public interest government to you? Look, from the group that gave us tax incentives for helicopter pads in cities without food markets, we've grown accustomed to legislation that hurts – and doesn't help – the public. Here they are at their best! Of course, the bill's proponents promise an upside. We'll be waiting.

CLASS ACT OF THE YEAR

Nick Scutari



When Vietnam War veteran state Senator Ronald L. Rice tried to get social justice priorities into the marijuana legalization legislation and avoid precisely the derailment the legislation suffered with progressive groups on the other side of Nov. 3rd, Scutari tore off his jacket. That's a Vietnam combat veteran you're challenging; what's next, Scutari? Defacing Iwo Jima?

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JOHN VAN VLIET'S 2020

Who's Up and Who's Down



Governor Phil Murphy: With the passage of Referendum Item #1, Phil Murphy can tout a policy victory point on legal marijuana. The governor has championed the idea from the outset of his term, but was unable to get the matter resolved legislatively. By putting the matter to the people, Murphy can claim he was on “the right side of history” and assert a win for social and criminal justice, but while he caught the football, he had to pass it to the voters to see it carried across the goal line.



George Norcross: Having seen his candidate Brigid Callahan Harrison trashed in the primaries against Amy Kennedy, and the rise of Republican Senator Mike Testa as a South Jersey force to be reckoned with, Norcross’s marble plinth is showing some cracks in its base. Congressman Donald Norcross, however, has defended his seat handily, and while there may be some daylight between George and Senate President Steve Sweeney, any fissures in the Norcross base will not penetrate too deeply as yet.



Congressman Jeff Van Drew: While the jury is still out as to whether or not Van Drew will carry his district, the fact that the congressman, who was vilified by the Democratic Party not only in New Jersey, but nationally, and was branded a “traitor” by Governor Murphy just ahead of the election, has held on speaks volumes. South Jersey voters trusted Van Drew when he was a D and significant, perhaps the majority—we shall see, bloc still is confident in the conservative Dem-turned-Rep. Van Drew himself appeared wobbly at first, trying to walk back his “undying support” to Trump, but his base kept the faith regardless.



Tom Kean, Jr.: The name of Kean does not carry the same luster it did, opponents argue, saying that Kean, defeated by Tom Malinowski, failed to uphold the honorable and almost aristocratic expectation of a bygone kinder, gentler Republican Party by passively acquiescing to Trump-style attacks. In an ugly campaign full of at times vile hyperbole and eye-rolling jabs exchanged between the two Toms, pulling a victory, at least, could have allowed for an ends-justified-the-means rationalization. But no luck for Kean. His third defeat, the Kean brand may have run its course, bad news for Old Guard Republicans uncomfortable with the GOP rhetoric post-2016 and resigned to apathy. But he probably thinks he still has another post-redistricting shot.

JOHN VAN VLIET'S 2020

Who's Up and Who's Down Continued



North Jersey Democrats: With relatively few upsets to speak of, the Democratic Party bosses north of Trenton can sit back smugly, riding the status quo. All but certainly returning Gottheimer, Pascrell, Watson Coleman, Pallone, Payne, Malinowski, and Sherrill with comfortable margins, North Jersey's blue kingpins did just fine.



The NJ GOP: Bridgewater Mayor Matt Moench represented the Republican Party in court to force election officials to reveal the number of Election Day VBMs were recorded at polling stations. They said that they wanted to use that information to keep track of ballots, but Judge Marcy C. Jacobson struck it down. She ruled that the law requires only machine ballots and provisional ballots be counted every two hours.



Chris Smith: It was a little lonely for Chris Smith as the only Republican member of the Congressional delegation for a while — before Jeff Van Drew switched parties and ultimately prevailed in the election — but Smith has proven himself a survivor since 1981 and a Republican able to maintain his appeal in a state that is more sapphire than ruby. The blue wave failed to sweep him away, nor New Jersey discontent with Donald Trump. Smith's roots run deep and have served him and his constituencies well. No Democrat should approach Smith with any illusions of an easy fight.

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INSPIRATIONAL CAMPAIGN OF THE YEAR

Malinowski versus Kean



Cory Booker, eat your heart out. These two rock stars took it to another level in their CD7 clash, where their respective operatives had so much faith in the candidates' ability, they merely highlighted Malinowski's and Kean's individual strengths and never saw the need to go negative lest the principals risk coming across as lacking confidence or substance. Malinowski (barely) won. Now the talk is of Kean trying to craft a map that betters his chances in 2022. Great. That's just what the world needs. Another inspiring clash of these two titans.

COMEBACK (KIND OF) OF THE YEAR



ALEX MENDEZ

He may yet fall under the tires of a voting fraud indictment ordered by Attorney General Gurbir Grewal, but the 3rd Ward Council candidate still managed to eke out a win in a redo election over veteran incumbent Councilman Bill McKoy. Significance? If Mendez can weather his vote-by-mail fraud case, he may actually find himself in a good position to challenge for mayor in 2022.

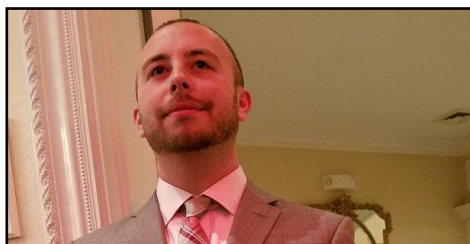
OPERATIVE OF THE YEAR



STEPHENINE DIXON

The Egg Harbor Twp. served as the campaign manager for Mayor Marty Small, who triumphed in a difficult Democratic Primary. She also worked as regional organizing director for Mayor Pete Buttigieg's Iowa Campaign, then as Buttigieg's Alabama State Director, and led get-out-the-vote efforts for President-elect Joe Biden in battleground Pennsylvania before going down to Georgia to hit that place where Dixon is most acclimated otherwise called the frontlines.

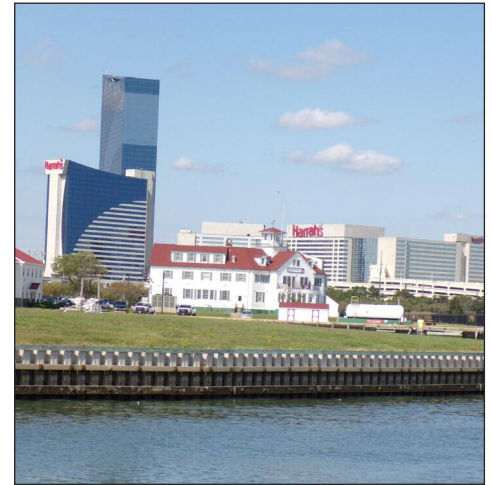
OPERATIVE OF THE YEAR RUNNER-UP



RON FILAN, VAN DREW 2020

The last surviving members of Van Drew World welcomed the Republican hand's campaign expertise with open arms, and he delivered.

CAMPAIGN BUST OF THE YEAR



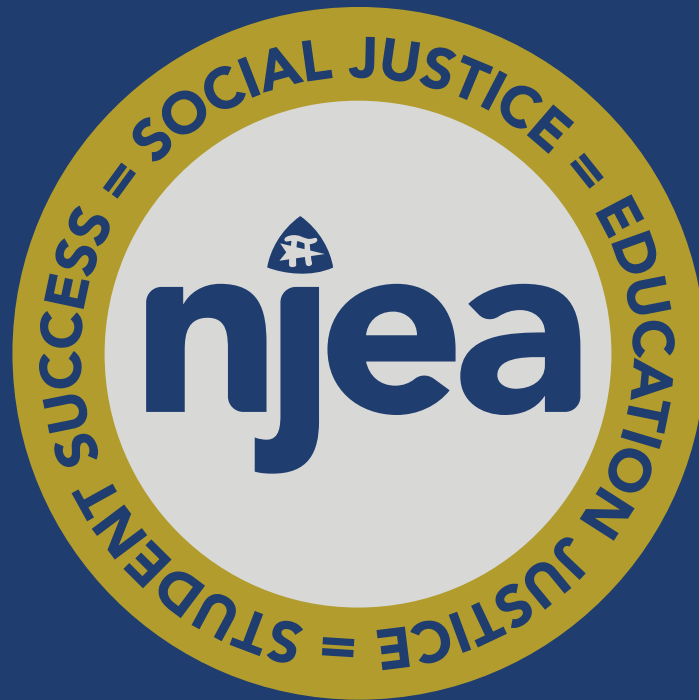
THE ATLANTIC CITY BALLOT REFERENDUM

Championed by a labor leader and casino money and put down by a bipartisan group of City Hall denizens and their allies and leaders from both parties and two factions of Democrats, the referendum vote for a change of government perished in Atlantic City.

The unofficial vote tally was 3,275 "no" to 985 "yes", with 1,800 votes still to count when the referendum backers threw up the white flag in recognition of Election Night results sufficient to kill – and bury – a challenge to the mayor and council form of government in the seaside gambling mecca.

"This feels great," said Mayor Marty Small. "It's a relief. For a year we had this hanging over our heads."

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HISTORY-MAKER OF THE YEAR



JUDGE FABIANA PIERRE-LOUIS

In tempestuous and turbulent times, in a country divided by race and bitter politics and a stalking virus, the New Jersey Senate this year finally did something genuinely worthwhile as it unanimously and passionately affirmed the nomination of Fabiana Pierre-Louis to be an associate of the New Jersey Supreme Court. The replacement for retiring Judge Walter Timpone, Pierre-Louis, 39, is the first African-American woman to sit on the state Supreme Court.

ACTIVISTS OF THE YEAR



LARRY HAMM AND RAS BARAKA

Founder of the People's Organization for Progress (POP), Hamm as a child watched Newark in flames, received a scholarship to Princeton University, and dedicated his life – sometimes an exceedingly lonely life as his peers either died or moved on – to the social justice movement.

Baraka for decades organized on the streets of his home city against police brutality and now as the mayor of Newark attempts to embody – in a vibrant and infectious way – not only the cultural, artistic and literary potency of his town, but the sacrifice of those before and *now* yearning to be free.

In the aftermath of the police killing of George Floyd, with the country inflamed, Hamm, Baraka and Rahaman Muhammad, deputy mayor of Newark and a former veteran labor leader out of the South Ward, whose U.S. Army veteran wife has served multiple overseas tours of duty in the Middle East, walked among the gathering street crowd. In the vicinity of the 17th Precinct, Muhammad made contact with a group noticeably separate from the swarm of masked peaceful protesters.

Dressed in black, masked, with skateboards under their arms, gear to protect themselves against tear gas, and even a medic identifiable by a Red Cross insignia, the group consisted of mostly white males. Their attire proceeded them. Baraka and company had done their homework, and were alert to similarly black-garbed and skateboard-toting youth creating havoc in other cities. This group – identified roughly by a pattern of behaviors at rallies everywhere – uses their boards to destroy property. In Los Angeles, just a such a group – again distinguishable from the peaceful protesters in their midst – lit an abandoned police car on fire.

Muhammad and Baraka and Hamm didn't want those young potentially property destructive kids unleashed on the streets of Newark, forced into a collision with a police force remade by past fights; streets where their own blood and the blood of their kin ran, hallowed by the worst violence, in its own way not dissimilar from Gettysburg and Antietam, for such is the test finally out of their sacrifice for we, the living. It demands the memory of Eddie Moss, shot in the back at the age of ten in Newark during the 1967 occupation; a part of New Jersey's social justice history, no less than George Floyd, whose memory together now strengthens only those who will be hardened off these necessary, bitter walks to do the grimy daily work of government and politics for the sake of peace.

This year, when things could have turned ugly, Hamm and Baraka led the state in the street.

CAMPAIGN OF THE YEAR



VAN DREW FOR CONGRESS

Voters don't generally look kindly on party-switchers. The late U.S. Senator Arlen Specter comes to mind. But Democrat turned Trump Republican Van Drew had put in enough work on the ground to know the will of his constituents, after his legislative allies lost in 2019.

CAMPAIGN OF THE YEAR: RUNNER UP



LARRY HAMM

He didn't win, but the lifetime of work the social justice activist put into combating police brutality gave him a righteous platform to run on in the Democratic Primary for United States Senate. In amassing 118,843 votes, far behind winner Cory Booker's 838,636, Hamm made a bold statement

about the establishment's failure to make significant gains for working class people, not up against not only a pandemic but an inadequate healthcare system and, too often, authorities that shoot to kill and don't even bother asking questions afterwards.

FIGHT OF THE YEAR



PHIL MURPHY VERSUS IAN SMITH

Atilis Gym owner Smith blamed Governor Murphy for punishing businesses like his while neglecting vulnerable populations, resulting in the deaths of 7,000 nursing home patients. After busting into his own gym in defiance of a gubernatorial shutdown order, the Conan the Barbarian movie extra -lookalike received a letter of seizure from the Camden County Sheriff's Office demanding the business owner turn over their assets and pay \$250,000 in fines. "Governor Murphy looks like he's coming after the total balance," Smith tweeted. That was just the beginning, as it turned out, as Atilis ultimately absorbed \$1.2 million in fines in an ongoing 'F' the lockdown brawl.

GEORGE FLOYD ADVOCATE OF THE YEAR AWARD



TORMEL PITTMAN

Driven to action by the 2011 police killing of Barry DeLoatch, and pulled again with renewed urgency onto the streets after the police killing of George Floyd of Minneapolis, Tormel Pittman of New Brunswick says he doesn't affiliate with Black Lives Matter, and instead calls himself a humanitarian and a global advocate.

If advocates are born, as he argues, that Sept. 22nd nine years ago resulting in Mr. DeLoatch's death after his initial interaction with police at the intersection of Throop Avenue and Handy Street, focused Pittman on his life's mission. "A man gets shot down in New Brunswick, and [the city] gives his family \$300,000. That's the salary for a police officer for three-and-a-half years," Pittman said in 2016. "This man is dead and gone and his family got the salary of a police officer for three and a half years."

The issue recurred with a vengeance when a policeman killed George Floyd on camera in May, and Pittman took the lead on the streets.



This year has been like no other. We rejoice in the blessings bestowed upon us, including the health of our families, but we acknowledge and feel the departure of many close friends and colleagues who left us too soon.

Looking forward to seeing many of our friends in-person in 2021!

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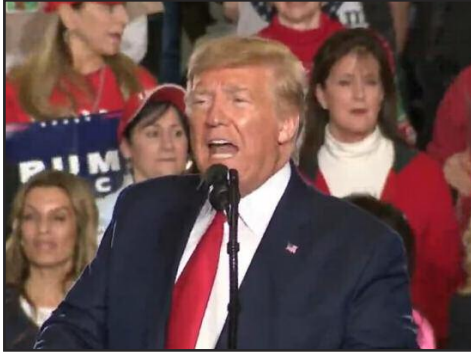
Troy Powell

Secretary

Rick Myers

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THE SILK CITY REFERENCE FROM HELL AWARD



DONALD TRUMP

President Donald J. Trump figured every time he mentioned – or tweeted – the words “Paterson, New Jersey,” his base would go crazy. They did. And he still lost.

THE WAY TO RIDE OUT A CRISIS AWARD



LAMONT REPOLLET

It’s a good thing our kids had Repollet on the job. When they get through the trauma of pandemic distance learning, they can get another dose of New Jersey’s Education Commish at Kean, where the new university prez doubled his salary from \$174,332 to \$365,000.

THE IZZIE STONE SHOE LEATHER AWARD



FRED SNOWFLACK

The veteran columnist for InsiderNJ fearlessly tackled rallies, events, and press conferences throughout the pandemic; one of the most visible reporters on the ground at both George Floyd actions and pro-Trump marches.

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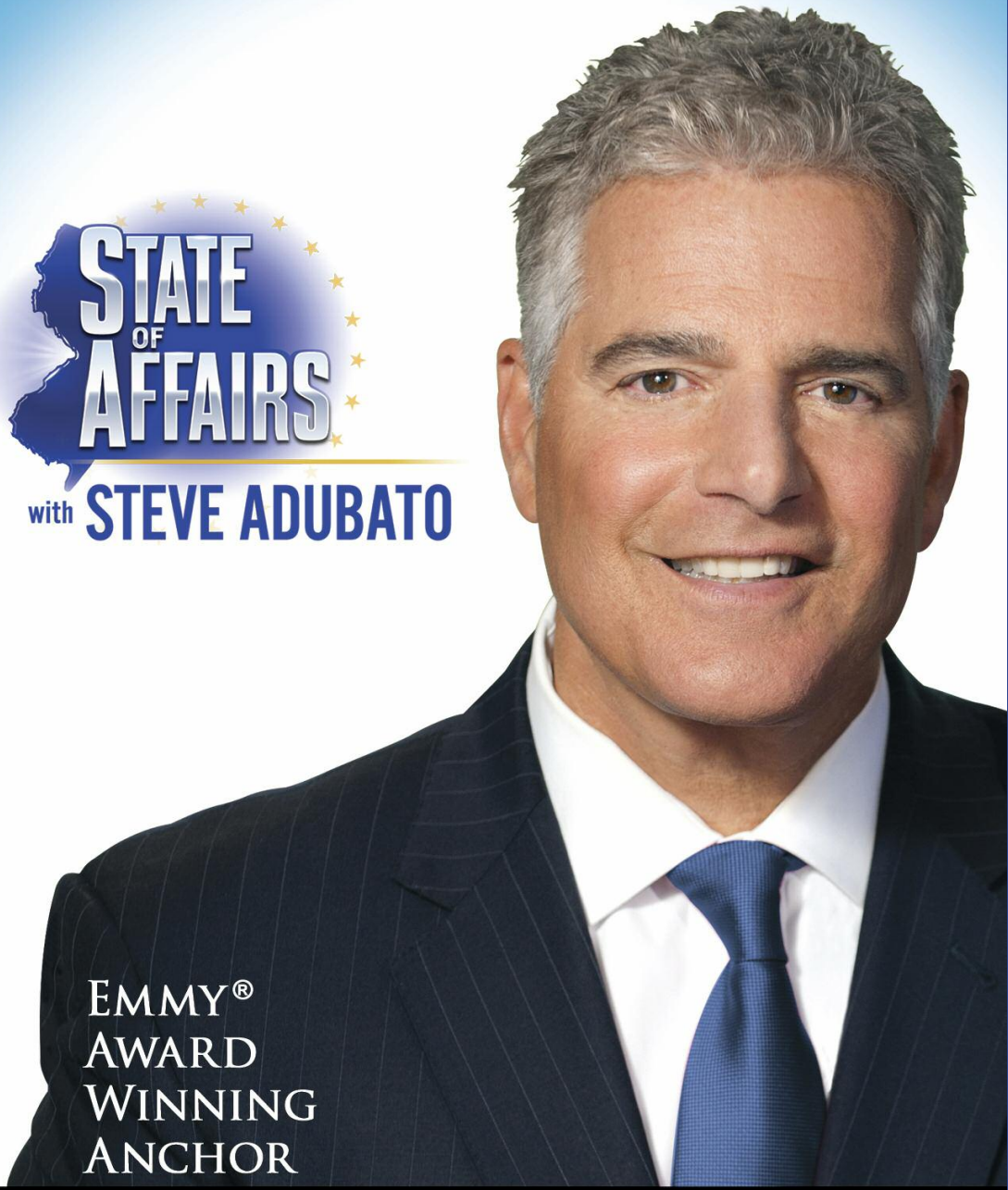
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BEST KNUCKLEHEAD ATTIRE OF THE YEAR AWARD



THE CONFEDERATE FLAG

Yes, Virginia (and even New Jersey!), there is a Stupid Claus.

THE PETE RODINO DUE DILIGENCE AWARD



JOHN MCKEON

The Assemblyman from South Orange was so intent on good government as chair of the Financial Institutions Committee, he referred all thorny legal questions by fellow members hung up on the public interest, to Horizon's outside counsel Tony Coscia, long-time partner with Windels, Marx, Lane and Mitendorf and a former chair of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey.

WORD OF THE YEAR 'SOCIALIST'

If you didn't support the re-election of President Donald J. Trump, chances are that someone, at some point called you this.

QUOTE OF THE YEAR

Joe Fiordaliso, president of the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities, didn't mince words when assessing the damage of Hurricane Isiasis.

"New Jersey got literally whacked," Fiordaliso said at an August press briefing.

In total, 1.4 million experienced a loss of power. By comparison, Hurricane Sandy at its peak left 1.7 million without power.

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CAMPAIGN AD OF THE YEAR AWARD



DOUG STEINHARDT 2021

The only one word that could possibly describe the feeling of watching an avid Trump backer looking to keep the movement alive in New Jersey: inspirational.

RALLY OF THE YEAR AWARD



TRUMP IN WILDWOOD

The pre-pandemic political year kicked off with a massive rally in Atlantic County for President Trump, anchored by U.S. Rep. Van Drew, who would go on to win reelection even as the president went down in defeat.

THE GOING OUT IN POLITICAL STYLE AWARD



MOHAMMED HAMEEDUDDIN

In Teaneck, Councilman Mark Schwartz and his Moving Teaneck Forward running mates, Michael Pagan and Karen Lew Orgen, prevailed over the rivals in a control election. Their victory over the People for Progress slate of Denise Belcher, Ardie Walser, & Gina Gerszberg represented a win by outgoing Mayor Mohammed Hameeduddin.

MORE INSPIRATIONAL LANGUAGE FOR OUR KIDS

“I’ll bet a lot of you didn’t expect me to be here today. I’m surprised I am,” Senate President Steve Sweeney said at a press conference with Governor Phil Murphy and Speaker Craig Coughlin announcing a deal for the millionaire’s tax.

He was quick to credit Coughlin – not long-time rival Murphy, whom he thanked for backing the speaker – for coming up with the idea to strike the deal.

“I vocally resisted the millionaire’s tax for years,” said Sweeney, who led the charge for a millionaire’s tax that for four years running ran into Christie’s veto pen, then adamantly opposed the measure when neophyte Murphy took office.


“It wasn’t a political thing but the pandemic hit,” said the senate president. “We have to face the reality [of the conditions created by COVID-19]. A lot of families are hurting here. Until he [Coughlin] came to me, I wasn’t really there. Helping middle class families makes all the sense to me in the world.”

GREEN, WITHOUT ENVY AWARD



MADELYN HOFFMAN

U.S. Senate candidate Madelyn Hoffman recorded 37,942 votes statewide in the 2020 general election, the most ever for a Green Party candidate for the U.S. Senate in New Jersey.



**BLACK
TRANS
LIVES
MATTER**



**GARDEN STATE
EQUALITY**

THE NON-FIGHT AT THE DOPEY CORRAL AWARD



WYATT EARP

The last chair standing in a congressional district that includes pieces of eight counties, Ocean County Democratic Chairman Wyatt Earp pulled the plug on awarding his organization's endorsement to a candidate in the CD2 primary contest, opting to stay out of the fight.

“They knew the vote was not going to go for the party recommendation Brigid Harrison,” said Bob Stern, party municipal chair of Beach Haven. “The cancellation is designed to prevent Amy Kennedy from winning. These are completely self-defeating exercises. We go into November with a lot of Democrats unhappy with our own party.”

The last-minute decision, which the chairman expressed in a phone call ahead of his noon-scheduled convention, reinforced Earp's political position as a Building Trades-affiliated ally of the South Jersey Democratic Organization, which opposed Amy Kennedy and favors Montclair Political Science Professor Harrison in the primary of a district currently occupied by U.S. Rep. Jeff Van Drew (R-2).



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WEST SIDE MORONS



Apparently inspired by Steven Spielberg's on-location shooting of the Sharks and Jets in *West Side Story*, these idiots tried to choreograph their own rumble two days before the vote-by-mail deadline in the Tuesday, May 12th election.

Running for a Ward 2 seat in one of the most competitive ward elections in Paterson, former Councilman Mohammed Akhtaruzzaman said three men affiliated with his rival's campaign beat him up on Sunday,

while his incredulous rival, Councilman Shahin Khalique, said Akhtaruzzaman instigated the violent street collision.

Someone with a camera supposedly trying to be a Silk City version of Spielberg, picked up a man running with a stick in his hand, an Akhtaruzzaman backer, according to an eyewitness, proof that the former councilman's own forces contributed to the mayhem and were, they said, the perpetrators.



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Building Awareness One Mind At a Time!

IN MEMORIAM

*Steve Aduato, Sr.*

The immensely engrossing and intellectually captivating political leader, teacher and patriarch who influenced the process to help the children of Newark through his founding of the North Ward Center, and never lost his purpose in politics, died this year.

He was 87.

The feverishly local man who threw himself headlong into school board races, and who loved being an American because of the ideas embedded in the country, defined himself publicly by his twin passions: education and politics.

A former public school teacher, Mr. Aduato forged the North Ward Democratic Organization into a major player in Newark City politics and statewide, and maintained his political hegemony while building service institutions to help people in his community, including the Blue Ribbon Award-winning North Ward Academy.

Mr. Aduato was the father of Emmy Award-winning television host Steve Aduato, Jr., and daughters Michelle, CEO of the North Ward Center, and School Principal Theresa. His wife Fran is a political force in her own right.

“My father was a special person,” said Steve Aduato, Jr. “A one of a kind leader who made a difference. So many knew him for being a political player in our state but he wanted people to respect him more for how he used political influence to help the people of Newark...the city he cared for so much. My father was tough, brutally candid about what he believed but cared so much for children and others in our urban communities that just needed a little help to make their lives better. New Jersey will never see another Steve Aduato Sr. He lived his life his way on his terms. He left a very powerful impact in the lives of so many. I am so proud to be his son.”



Best wishes for a Happy New Year



IN MEMORIAM



Dominick Marino

A fighter – not only of fires but key political battles too, Dominick Marino, president of the Professional Firefighters Association of New Jersey, has died.

President of the PFANJ since 2008 and a former treasurer of the association, Mr. Marino, 61, became a firefighter in 1986 for the North Bergen Fire Department. In 1999, the North Bergen Fire Department became the North Hudson Regional Fire and Rescue Department. Mr. Marino retired from that Fire Department in 2011. He served on the board of the local firefighters union for over 23 years.

His death was not COVID-19-related, according to the speaker's office.

Mr. Marino died after suffering a massive heart attack.

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Here's to 2021!



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IN MEMORIAM



Gerald Glisson

Dr. Gerald Glisson of Paterson, 46, principal of Eastside High School for the past three years, who began his career as a special education teacher before serving as athletic director and principal at Great Falls Academy and a coach, died of COVID-19.

“He was a beloved, respected presence, not to mention a role model,” said the governor. “A giant, literally.”

Dr. Glisson leaves his wife, Michelle, and daughter Sydney, 17, and Skyler, 12; and – as part of the larger Paterson family who owed him – coach Assemblyman Benjie Wimberly (D-35), a very close confidant.

“Our deepest prayers are with those he touched,” Murphy said of Dr. Glisson.

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IN MEMORIAM



Former Passaic City Mayor Sammy Rivera

A native of Puerto Rico, Mr. Rivera moved to Passaic in 1963, served on the Passaic City Police Department, and served as mayor of the city from 2001 to 2008.

He was 73.

“As a city we extend our condolences to the Rivera family on the passing of former Passaic Mayor Samuel Rivera,” sitting Mayor Hector Lora posted on his Facebook page. “I still speak to people today who share stories of how he helped them personally and how much he cared about people. Many in our community can remember his approach to cleaning up the streets of violent crimes and how visible he was in Passaic. Our prayers and thoughts are with his family and friends. May the memories of things he did to help others serve as some comfort during these difficult times.”

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IN MEMORIAM



Daniel Anderl

A lifelong Catholic and the only child of U.S. District Judge Esther Salas and defense attorney Mark Anderl, Daniel Anderl gave his life to protect his mother and father, taking the shooter's first bullet directly to the chest, when a man holding a package on their front doorstep opened fire into the family's home on July 19, according to the Diocese of Metuchen.

Remembered for having "lived his Catholic faith," his life a witness of selfless love and steadfast faith, Mr. Anderl was known to spend time in prayer in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, receive the gift of God's forgiveness in the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, and attend daily Mass at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., where he would have been a junior this year.

It is his "great gift of faith" that leaves his loved ones behind both heartbroken and inspired, said Bishop Checchio.

Latinas United for Political Empowerment PAC

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  LUPEPAC

LUPEPAC is a non-partisan political action committee whose mission is to increase the number of Latinas in elected and appointed office in the State of New Jersey.

We promote and support progressive Latinas running for local, state and federal office.

IN MEMORIAM



Eddie Cotton

A COVID-19 casualty, Mr. Cotton was one of the best-known and best respected referees in the sport of professional prize-fighting, whose celebrated work included the 2002 world heavyweight title match between Lennox Lewis and Mike Tyson.

A graduate of Eastside High School, former director of public works in Paterson, elected official, and the husband of sitting Councilman Ruby Cotton, he succumbed to COVID-19 after ten days in the hospital.

It was an irreplaceable loss to the City of Paterson and to the international boxing world, an intersection this wise and graceful man bridged seemingly effortlessly, as a model of excellence, both in Paterson and on the planet.

If you spent any time with him, you know.

He was one of those New Jersey spirits who epitomized pride in local service and community and the vast presence of one well-travelled in life. Humble and with a genteel demeanor, he was that lone force who could separate otherwise immovable objects and command respect, both in the ring and in the fight of life.



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INSIDERNJ SALUTES A LEGEND

*John Lewis*

A friend of New Jersey who appeared here often to back his allies in tough campaigns, the late U.S. Rep. John Lewis of Atlanta, Georgia was more than a leader. More than an elected official in the employ of a political boss. He was the leader of a movement, which goes back to the beginning of the country, back to the unsolved and unresolved agonies that plague us still, and persecute a race of people, a dislocation from what we say we are, which persecutes us all. When he threw on that backpack in segregated Alabama and peacefully led African American marchers across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in a demonstration for their right to vote as American citizens, he walked into a wall of all-white (some newly deputized) law enforcement officers with truncheons, and took a beating on the back of his head that nearly killed him.

This was a different war than the one Washington fought to establish the country, but the principle was the same. Battles unfought and unwon at the outset with muskets and guerilla tactics became the 1965 protest march of Selma's Bloody Sunday. That same year, directly forced by what happened on the bridge, Congress passed the Voting Rights Act, prohibiting racial discrimination in voting, one of the most significant pieces of legislation ever in this country, and critical to the creed of its founding.

“Do not get lost in a sea of despair,” Congressman Lewis wrote in 2018. “Be hopeful, be optimistic. Our struggle is not the struggle of a day, a week, a month, or a year, it is the struggle of a lifetime. Never, ever be afraid to make some noise and get in good trouble, necessary trouble.”