



Spencer Grant

WEAPONS OF MASS CREATION performs at an OC Protests Juneteenth Rally at La Palma Park in Anaheim last weekend.

A band blows up

Anaheim-based Weapons of Mass Creation continues to grow. Its members released a new single and music video this month.

BY VERA CASTANEDA

Weapons of Mass Creation performed June 19 for the first time in more than a year to small clusters of people spread across a grassy corner of Anaheim's La Palma Park. It was golden hour and the first weekend after California lifted most of its COVID-19 restrictions. It was a homecoming of sorts too.

Before diving into a snippet of new music, emcee Josh Quiñonez, who performs as Solitude, said he remembers practicing soccer in the park. Saxophonist Silas Franco said he used to play in marching band at the park's auditorium. Vocalist Julia Franco, or Joules, chimed in remembering one of the band's first shows in the same location with only three people showing up to see them live.

"We've come a long way," Julia said to the audience at the Juneteenth event.

The band, whose members were all born and raised in Anaheim, started out as Franco Funktion composed exclusively of Franco brothers. Guitarist Luis Franco first learned how to strum chords at church as a pre-teen. Then, his siblings followed suit.

"Franco Funktion was really about learning how to be on stage and trying to rock out as hard as possible," Luis said.

After returning from colleges spread out throughout California around 2014, they be-



Courtesy of William Camarg

THE BAND Weapons of Mass Creation continues to grow in popularity.

"We think about how we can use our wealth of resources that we've been able to put together as a collective to amplify different voices within Anaheim and in Orange County."

— Luis Franco

came Weapons of Mass Creation, adding a hip-hop influence to their sound among other genres like cumbia. The band, now eight members ranging from 19 to 31 years old, is composed of six Franco siblings (Luis, Jacob Franco, Joseph Franco, Julia, Moses Franco and Silas) and a set of Quiñonez brothers (Josh and Enrique Quiñonez, or EQ).

"WOMC is expanding as we speak even more than just these immediate members," Luis said. "We think about how we can use our wealth of resources that we've been able to put together as a collective to amplify different voices within Anaheim and in Orange County."

The band members consider their collaborators — photographers, artists and filmmakers — as a part of WOMC.

Over the years, they've cultivated an audience that resonates with lyrics focusing on issues like sexism and police brutality.

For Julia, the song "Hard to Admit" was the first time she received a significant response from listeners.

"[The song] was about my personal experience with patriarchal violence, like sexual assault. Things that you don't hear in music, especially in rap or hip-hop," Julia said. "When we released the video, a lot of people messaged

See **Band**, page R4

Mental health calls to get new answer

Several O.C. cities look to send medical and social workers to free up police and reduce violent conflicts.

BY BEN BRAZIL

In an effort to free up police and decrease violent confrontations between law enforcement and people with mental health issues, several Orange County cities are aiming to use teams of medical workers to respond to mental health-related calls for service.

Many have criticized police responses to mental health calls because officers may lack the expertise to deescalate tense situations. Often, the sight of a law enforcement officer can aggravate a person suffering with mental health issues.

This hit close to home last year when Kurt Reinhold, a homeless Black man with mental health is-

"The professionals hailing these calls have extensive training and professional experience, supporting those in crisis and their families. They know the resources that are available and are best equipped to help those in crisis. This should lead to better outcomes."

— Irvine police Lt. Dave Klug

sues, was shot and killed during a confrontation with Orange County sheriff's deputies in San Clemente. The incident provoked outrage similar to the highly publicized Fullerton police killing of Kelly Thomas, a schizophrenic man who was beaten to death a decade ago.

"Kurt is not the first homeless individual who has been killed in Orange County by law enforcement," said Brooke Weitzman, an Orange County-based attorney who represents the homeless. "There are a handful of really public ones — I think it first got public with Kelly Thomas, but it happens every year or so, sometimes twice a year."

Orange County isn't alone contending with the issue. Since the killing of George Floyd more than a year ago, many have called for

See **Mental**, page R2

Climate change blamed for 'striking loss' of plants in SoCal

BY BEN BRAZIL

Climate change is causing plants to die off in massive numbers in Southern California's deserts and mountains, UC Irvine researchers have found.

With rising temperatures and varying rainfall, a recently published study found that between 1984 and 2017 vegetation has decreased by 35% in the region's deserts and has declined by 13% in the mountains.

Over the years, scientists have hoped that desert plants were better equipped to withstand climatic shifts because they have drought-tolerant features.

Stijn Hantson, lead author of the study, said that desert plants already exist in an extreme climate, so any shift could be dramatic.

"The plants are really at the border in the desert, and it's easy to push them over," Hantson said in a phone interview. "It's really hard for plants to live there, so they're already really stressed

out. So if you stress them out a bit more, you can push them over their limit that they can tolerate."

Researchers found that the vegetation loss in the region's mountains are less extreme due to more rain — the Santa Rosa Mountains on average receive about 770 millimeters of precipitation each year, while deserts have as little as 73 millimeters, according to UC Irvine.

The plant die-offs also affect animals that rely on the vegetation for food and habitation.

"There are pretty big changes taking place, which will have cascading impacts on other animals," Hantson said.

For the study, researchers examined data from a Landsat satellite mission of about 5,000 square miles of the Sonoran Desert, including Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. The satellite mission is part of a long-standing NASA program to monitor changes in Earth's landforms.

The study was funded by Anza Borrego Desert State Park, the



CLIMATE CHANGE is being blamed for causing plant die-offs in Southern California, according to a study funded by Anza Borrego Desert State Park, the California Strategic Growth Council and the UC National Laboratory Fees Research Program.

Photo courtesy Siccó Rood

California Strategic Growth Council and the UC National Laboratory Fees Research Program.

Researchers will continue to monitor vegetation loss at Anza-Borrego.

Climate change's impact on deserts is also being documented at Joshua Tree National Park, where ecologist Jim Cornett is studying the decline of the Joshua tree. Earlier this month Cornett told L.A. Times col-

umnist Steve Lopez that the national park will lose many of its titular trees due to climate change.

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Allen J. Schaben | Los Angeles Times

A DECEMBER photo of the Orange County Jail in Santa Ana.

Former O.C. deputies plead guilty in plot to receive paid leave

BY MELISSA HERNANDEZ

Two former Orange County sheriff's deputies have pleaded guilty to falsifying military orders they used to take paid time off from the Sheriff's Department, authorities said.

Prosecutors say twin brothers Taylor Morgan and Tyler Morgan, both of whom served in the Marine Corps Reserve, submitted dozens of fraudulent military leave orders to the Sheriff's Department claiming they were on active duty when they were not.

In one instance, Tyler Morgan submitted documents showing he had been called up for active duty for a week in July 2019.

Instead, he took a vacation to Las Vegas and spent one day at home playing the "Call of Duty" video game, the U.S. attorney's office said.

The 26-year-old brothers, of Long Beach, pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court Tuesday to one federal misdemeanor count each of unlawful possession of an authentication feature. In separate cases, they admitted to committing wire fraud by submitting falsified documents altered to look like legitimate military orders, federal authorities said.

The fraud, which prosecutors said cost taxpayers more than \$45,000, was uncovered by a colleague, Orange County Sheriff Don Barnes said in a statement. "These former deputies took advantage of military service for their own personal gain. Their egregious misconduct was brought forward by a member of our department, investigated, and they have been terminated," Barnes said.

The Morgans were both correctional service assistants at the Theo Lacy Jail in Orange County. As depu-

ties, they received 30 days of annual paid vacation time and were eligible for an additional 30 days a year of paid military leave.

Federal prosecutors say that Tyler Morgan submitted 25 fraudulent military leave orders to the department from May 2017 to January 2020, and Taylor Morgan submitted 24 fraudulent orders from June 2017 to November 2019. During that time, the U.S. attorney's office said, neither had been ordered to report to their Camp Pendleton units.

In total, Taylor Morgan received 64 days of fraudulent military leave, and Tyler Morgan received 48 days, authorities said.

Following their guilty pleas, Taylor Morgan was sentenced to six months of house arrest, and Tyler Morgan was sentenced to eight months of house arrest.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Autumn D. Spaeth also ordered the brothers to pay back the money they claimed during their falsified leaves.

Taylor Morgan will be required to pay \$14,000 in restitution, and Tyler Morgan must pay \$32,400 in restitution.

Other deputies have been investigated for similar schemes, sheriff's officials said. In September, a U.S. Army reservist was caught submitting false military orders with a time-off request, prompting an internal investigation.

A review uncovered six other deputies suspected of submitting fraudulent military orders. Among those, one deputy, who was on probation, was fired, two have resigned and four cases are pending.

MELISSA HERNANDEZ is a Metro intern for the Los Angeles Times.

Is Delta variant of coronavirus a threat to Orange County?

BY BEN BRAZIL

It isn't yet clear how a contagious variant of the coronavirus will impact Orange County, but health officials are currently working to determine the threat level.

The Delta variant was first found in India, but now has California officials worried after it grew from 1.8% of analyzed coronavirus samples in April to 4.8% in May.

When asked whether the county is concerned with the new Delta variant, Dr. Regina Chinsio-Kwong, Orange County deputy health officer, said the county is still assessing the issue and is waiting on more data, including from hospitals. She said the county has seen an increase in the presence of the variant, with 15 cases being identified so far.

Chinsio-Kwong said data from the United Kingdom and other countries shows that the Delta variant is highly transmissible and can lead to more severe illness.

"But we're still trying to determine how it's affecting our population," she said. "Unfortunately, that will take some time."

Unsurprisingly, Chinsio-Kwong recommended people get vaccinated to fortify themselves against the new variant. She said that studies from the United Kingdom show that a single dose of an mRNA vaccine has at least 33% efficacy against the variant and up to 88% efficacy with two doses.

Chinsio-Kwong said the county doesn't know whether the 15 residents who contracted the Delta variant were vaccinated.

"The best thing that everybody can do right now is, if they haven't been fully vaccinated, to try to get fully vaccinated, especially with the county and the state wide open with no masking outdoors," she said.

Dr. Margaret Bredehoff, deputy agency director for the county's public health services, said probably less than 5% of the vaccines that have been distributed are the single-dose Johnson and Johnson.

While the J&J vaccine is not as effective as the two-dose vaccines, health officials say it offers considerably better protection than no vaccine at all.

Andrew Noymer, a UC Irvine professor of popu-



Hugo Martin | Los Angeles Times

HEAVY CROWDS are returning to Disneyland as the county reopens. However, a new variant of COVID-19 may be a problem later this year if the virus surges again in fall and winter.

lation health and disease prevention, said he's not currently worried about the variant because transmission of the virus is low, which he attributes partly to the seasonal nature of the virus.

"Delta is becoming a larger percentage, but it's becoming a larger percentage of a very small pie," Noymer said.

However, Noymer is concerned about Delta's and other variant's capacities to spread once fall and winter roll around.

"When COVID inevitably becomes worse, Delta, it seems to be more transmissible, and therefore it will kind of seek out and destroy ... the people who are not vaccinated," Noymer said.

Chinsio-Kwong said she doesn't think the variant will affect the county's reopening, but health officials will need to monitor the situation closely.

She said the county is hoping to get at least 70% of the population vaccinated with at least one dose by July 4.

Part of that effort is the county's new mobile vaccine service. People can apply to have a vaccine service come to their neighborhoods on the Othena website and on the smartphone app. The program prefers at least 50 people be present for the vaccination.

Bredehoff said the new program is part of an effort to provide a convenient way for people in underserved communities to get vaccinated.

Much has been written about the deficiencies of the county and state in serving the Latino community during the pandemic. The county's push with super PODs at Disneyland and other high-traffic areas was a way to increase the volume of vaccines that were distributed, but for many, the sites could be intimidating and difficult to travel to.

"What we're really trying to do is make it more of a community-led initiative, and we want to meet the community where they needed to meet us, instead of just having fixed super PODs," Bredehoff said, pointing out that the mobile program will continue past July 4.

The 70% vaccination rate has long been touted during the pandemic as the necessary threshold for herd immunity. But, Bredehoff said the county will continue to push vaccinations after it reaches 70%.

"Some counties in California are already at 85%," Bredehoff said. "So I think that we keep going until there's no demand for it."

Bredehoff also mentioned that it still isn't known whether people will need a booster vaccine shot.

"Just around the corner is the potential of a booster," Bredehoff said. "We don't want to shut everything down too quickly and then have to restart up again."

Noymer said that the county "can exhale" once an 85% vaccination rate of

people over age 12 is reached.

"I think 70 is a very low-ball estimate of herd immunity," Noymer said. "Seventy is like the best-case scenario for herd immunity. Just hoping for the best-case scenario, and saying 'we'll figure it all out later,' hasn't served us very well."

Noymer said there is a potential for another surge, though how substantial is unknown.

"I think there will be another wave of the pandemic in the fall or the winter, or both, and that is, by definition, another surge," Noymer said, pointing out that he doesn't think it will be as bad as the winter surge because of vaccinations.

"I think there's a lot of different groups trying to predict what's going to happen in the winter or the fall," Chinsio-Kwong said. "These are all just predictions ... we really don't know. It all depends on what variant is present. What we do know in the fall season is that more people go indoors, and when people go indoors there's more risk of transmission of an aerosolized illness. That's where the risk lies."

"Right now I think the assumption is that if our county gets beyond the 70% of eligible population being more closer to fully vaccinated, then we have a lower likelihood of experiencing a surge in the fall."

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MENTAL

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police to refrain from engaging in mental health calls. Los Angeles has been working on using trained specialists to respond to calls instead of law enforcement.

Cities are pursuing these teams in a few different ways. Fullerton and Buena Park are partnering together in an effort known as Project HOPE, which is expected to start next month.

Another method being considered by some cities is the use of mobile response teams provided by Be Well OC, which provides mental health support to county residents.

It runs the first mental health and wellness campus in Orange County.

Huntington Beach and Garden Grove have chosen to partner with Be Well OC to implement the response teams. Several other Orange County cities are considering the teams.

"The idea is to free up police officers," said Tony Delgado, the director of the response teams. "For a long time they've had responsibility to respond to every call that comes from 911, many of them not requiring police presence."

Delgado said limiting the chances of violent confrontations is a "byproduct" of the team.

"Sometimes police presence can escalate those situations, in others they are needed," Delgado said.

On Tuesday, the Irvine City Council voted unanimously to spend the next year exploring the program

and figuring out how best to integrate it into the city's current health response system. City staff was also directed to explore funding for the program.

"I applaud all the efforts of IPD and all the work that you do, but many of you know how I feel about jailing and policing our way through what is essentially a public health crisis," Irvine Vice Mayor Tammy Kim said at the council meeting. "I think this is a great step, and I love this partnership."

The Be Well OC mobile response teams are based on a nationally recognized CAHOOTS mobile-crisis intervention program created in 1989 in Oregon. The model is now used by cities around the country, including Oakland, Portland and Denver, among others.

The Be Well OC teams, which are comprised of mental health workers and medical personnel, will be dispatched to calls for service in a way similar to police or firefighters. However, the team will only respond to nonemergency calls related to mental health, addiction and homelessness.

Police dispatchers will screen calls to ensure that they meet safety criteria before they are handed off to a crisis team. Irvine police Lt. Dave Klug said during a presentation at the council meeting that the team will respond to calls that fall into four categories — mental illness, substance abuse, homelessness and family support issues, which includes requests for counseling assistance for teens.

Crisis team members will

wear regular attire and drive nonpolice vans, which may encourage a more positive response from the person struggling with mental health issues.

An Irvine city staff report says that the team "reduces [the] likelihood of escalation, violence and resulting use of force that can occur when a police officer is present."

Weitzman expressed concern that the mobile response teams may work too closely with police. Delgado said that dispatchers will have the power to decide whether police should be present at a scene, including whether an officer should accompany the response team at a scene.

"It's all about safety of the people we're responding to, safety of the teams," Delgado said. "So we certainly want to make sure that everybody is safe first and most of all."

Delgado said that mobile response teams will provide referrals to homeless shelters when possible. Be Well OC is also working toward providing response team members the ability to connect homeless people with housing.

Law enforcement has also acknowledged the need for mental health professionals in responding to calls.

"Arguably, the most important benefit of this model is that it is simply better at supporting members of our community suffering from mental illness," Klug said.

"The professionals hailing these calls have extensive training and professional experience, support-



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

A HOMELESS woman sits on the sidewalk in Laguna Beach. The Irvine Police Department anticipates responding to more than 2,000 calls this year that involve homeless people.

ing those in crisis and their families. They know the resources that are available and are best equipped to help those in crisis. This should lead to better outcomes."

As referenced by Delgado, police departments also see this as a way to be more efficient, allowing their officers to focus on other public safety issues that they are trained for.

"A significant benefit of this model is that it relieves our officers from handling nonpolice-related calls, so they can focus their time on things like proactive policing, crime prevention community outreach and being available for emergency calls for service," Klug said.

The Irvine Police Department responds to about 2,400 calls a year that involve people suffering from

mental health issues. The department also anticipates responding to more than 2,000 calls this year that involve homeless people.

According to a city staff report, officers will spend more than 11,000 hours responding to mental health- and homeless-related calls this year.

"As a result, our police officers are spending a significant amount of time solving problems and dealing with challenges when others may be better equipped to successfully resolve them," Klug said.

Weitzman said the mobile response teams could be a step in the right direction, but she is skeptical of the new program.

"Obviously, these healthcare workers responding is better than having armed

police officers responding," Weitzman said. "It's not going to compound trauma, it's more likely to lead to social workers engaging for social services. It's more likely to have response folks who are adequately trained to deal with both mental health crisis and substance abuse disorder and basic social needs, like employment. But, it's not going to magically create housing or shelter."

"... If the expectation is less people dying in the street, well, having a different response team isn't going to create new solutions. If the expectation is less wasted police money and better outcomes, I'm hopeful that it will do that, it's kind of yet to be seen."

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Recovered pelicans take flight at Crystal Cove

BY MATT SZABO

The young brown pelicans did not immediately fly away Tuesday morning at Crystal Cove State Beach. Instead, they came out of their cages slowly, before cruising to an area a stone's throw north.

This was not cause for concern for Debbie McGuire, executive director of the Huntington Beach-based Wetlands and Wildlife Care Center.

"They'll eventually find their buddies," McGuire said with a smile, noting that both birds had been caged up for several weeks.

Smiles seemed to be the theme of the day and for good reason.

The Wetlands and Wildlife Care Center officials were there to release the two pelicans into the wild after each had recovered from injuries.

One of the birds had been found at Crystal Cove beach on April 26, with a low body temperature, broken and bloody feathers on its left wing and a slight wing droop. The pelican had a wound on its shoulder, believed to be an injury caused by a fishing hook.

The other pelican was found nearby on May 13 suffering from severe dehydration and hypothermia.

On Tuesday, they were



Kevin Chang | Staff Photographer

VISITORS WATCH as two rescued pelicans are released at Crystal Cove State Beach in Newport Beach on Tuesday.

ready to head back into the wild. Dozens of people gathered at the beach for the release. Laure McCubbin of Las Vegas, who happened to be visiting her parents' Crystal Cove home, brought her 9-year-old son

Mark to the beach to watch. "I would say it was a once-in-a-lifetime experience for us, especially since pelicans are my favorite birds," McCubbin said. "We wanted to come and see them."

The center takes in basically any animal that will fit through the door, from birds to mammals to reptiles. McGuire said about 75% of them are eventually released back into the wild. "Our favorite days are re-

lease days," said Wetlands and Wildlife Care Center board member Kelly Kveton. "It's the day that you see after all of that hard work, they finally get to go back [into the wild]. It's wonderful."

The center's development director, Matthew Gula, said the facility handled 149 different species of animals last year and nearly 6,000 animals total.

Currently, two snakes are being cared for there, he said.

"We're seeing a lot of reptiles like that because of those electric bikes that are everywhere," Gula said. "People are moving so fast, they can't see what they pass."

Releasing two brown pelicans back into the wild is significant, especially given the current concern for the species. The Wetlands and Wildlife Care Center reported recently that it had received 22 pelicans since October with severe wing fractures that broke the skin. None of them survived.

McGuire did not want to speculate on whether one of the pelicans released Tuesday was intentionally harmed, though she said it's a possibility.

"We can't assume that these [two birds] were involved," McGuire said. "They could have been. A fishing line entanglement is a serious problem, for more things than just pelicans. [It affects] all marine life."

"It's abusive. It's atrocious."

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Stephen Dunn | Getty Images

THE ANGELS currently play their home games at Angel Stadium in Anaheim.

State agency to Anaheim: Angel Stadium sale might violate California law

BY BILL SHAIKIN

The agreement in which the city of Anaheim sold Angel Stadium and the surrounding parking lots to a company affiliated with Angels owner Arte Moreno "may be in violation" of state law, a state agency has warned the city.

No violation has been determined, and any such violation would not necessarily kill the deal. However, Anaheim could be subject to financial penalties steep enough that the city might make less than \$2 for every \$10 of fair-market value on the 150-acre property.

In an April 28 letter to the

city obtained by The Los Angeles Times, the California Department of Housing and Community Development indicated Anaheim failed to comply with a state law requiring the city to solicit bids from affordable housing developers before offering a property to other parties.

In a June 14 reply, also obtained by The Times, the city said the law had not taken effect before the city entered into exclusive negotiations with Moreno's company. HCD said any exclusive negotiating agreement was neither written nor binding by the required date.

In any case, the city said, the intent of the law — that 15% of housing units in any affected development be classified as affordable — is met under the development agreement between Anaheim and Moreno's company. The city asked HCD to "make a final and formal determination" that the sale is in compliance with the law.

Jose Moreno, one of two council members who voted against the sale, said he was "upset" that the city manager first informed the entire council of the news in an email after The Times

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Swarm of bees sends 3 to hospital in F.V.

BY CHRIS KUO

A swarm of bees went on the attack in a restaurant parking lot in Fountain Valley, leaving three people hospitalized.

John Madrid was among the people engulfed by the swarm Tuesday afternoon.

His girlfriend had stingers in her neck and about 15 bees in her hair, he said. His friend, whom he describes as a large man, was "crying like a baby."

"We parked. I got out, there's a few bees," Madrid told a videographer for OnScene. "I swiped a couple. There's 15. I started running like crazy, and they attacked my best friend and girlfriend."

Firefighters from the Orange County Fire Authority arrived at the Sizzler restaurant on Harbor Boulevard just after 3 p.m.

They sprayed the bees with firefighting foam and separated them from Madrid and his friends, said Bill McQuaid, division chief of the Fountain Valley Fire Department.

The swarm had spread throughout the parking lot, so the firefighters called for



OnScene.TV

FIREFIGHTERS FROM the Orange County Fire Authority stand by as beekeepers search for a hive after a swarm of bees went on the attack in a strip mall parking lot in Fountain Valley Tuesday afternoon, leaving three people hospitalized.

backup.

It took six fire engines and five ambulances to deal with the situation. A professional bee company contained and relocated the bees, McQuaid said.

Three people sustained multiple injuries and were transported to a hospital, McQuaid said. Some people sheltered in place to avoid the swarm.

It was unclear whether Madrid and his friends were the three people who

went to the hospital.

Three firefighters and a police officer were stung but did not need medical treatment.

By about 5:30 p.m., the bees were gone.

Bee attacks aren't common in the area, McQuaid said. Bees are transitory, he added, so this type of attack could happen anywhere.

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Photos by Spencer Grant

TAUHEEDAH SHAKUR and Sara Silewski chat before making their speeches at an OC Protests Juneteenth Rally at La Palma Park in Anaheim on June 19.

Juneteenth event marks holiday with music, art and a chance to give back

BY TIMESOC STAFF

This year's Juneteenth at La Palma Park in Anaheim marked a moment of Black joy but also pulled focus on mutual aid work.

OC Protests, a grassroots organization, hosted the event which included a musical performance by Weapons of Mass Creation, spoken word, poetry readings, a mobile art installation and a candlelight vigil.

One of the guest speakers included Katrina Eisinger, the mother of Christopher Eisinger who died during an encounter with Anaheim police in 2018. In April 2020, a jury found police used excessive force and awarded his parents nearly \$2.3 million in damages.

The event ended with a screening of the film "I Am Not Your Negro" by Raoul Peck.

Josh Quiñonez, a Weapons of Mass Creation rapper who helped plan the event and spoke about his Afro-Latino identity to the audience, said "Juneteenth is one of the few days of the year that the Black community can really feel that Black joy while honoring all of our fallen brothers and sisters. I'm just really excited to be able to share that community space in Anaheim, where I was born



GRACE AND BOBBY PRZYBYLSKI listen as Sarah Silewski speaks about police brutality at a Juneteenth rally sponsored by OC Protests at La Palma Park in Anaheim.

and raised, and to be able to see that engagement specifically with Black and brown solidarity."

Sam Herring, 27, said it's the first time he's celebrated Juneteenth with other people.

"Every time I'm around my people, it's for something negative," Herring said. "I wanted to be around for something positive."

Milat Getu, 22, said, "Today was a day that I wanted to be in community with people. I just finished going to school in Irvine and it's not a very diverse place so I felt like I could come here and celebrate with people who are like me or have the same worldview as me and have a joyous time."

Mayra Lopez, 26, said she found out about the event through social media and

drove from Los Angeles to donate wipes, diapers and socks.

Recently, OC Protests, UCI4COLA and Anaheim Autonomous Coalition joined a larger organization, Orange County Mutual Aid Collective, to centralize their pool of resources related to mutual aid. About 40 community mem-

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DURING A EULOGY for victims of police violence, visitors hold a candlelight vigil at La Palma Park in Anaheim.



THE JUNETEENTH event at La Palma Park included free food for the homeless. At center, Epinenio Abela.

BAND

Continued from page R1

me on Facebook and Instagram ... People said even stuff like this song saved my life. My writing isn't just for my own healing. It's for so many people who don't necessarily have the words to name their pain."

The public reaction to "Rest In Paint (Asmek)" was another standout moment. The track was written as a tribute to their friend, Gustavo Najera, a 22-year-old who was shot in the head by Anaheim police in 2016. They describe it as a song written from a purely emotional standpoint without political rhetoric.

"I remember being in the studio just crying together," Joseph said.

Donna Acevedo-Nelson, the mother of Joel Acevedo who was shot and killed by an Anaheim police officer in 2012, connected with the song and asked WOMC to perform at a benefit concert while she was running for the Anaheim City Council.

"To know that [Joel's] mother reached out because her son had been murdered still makes me feel like a knot is in my throat," Luis said. "At the



THE WEAPONS of Mass Creation band, including, from left, Julia Franco, Moses Franco, Josh Quinonez and Joseph Franco, performs at an OC Protests Juneteenth Rally at La Palma Park in Anaheim June 19.

same time, the fact that a song can make that kind of impact so quickly and locally was mind blowing. I didn't know music could do that."

The song also unlocked a

new level of lyricism and production for WOMC. It showed later on in their 2019 EP "Labor of Love" that they showcased in performances across O.C. and Los Angeles venues

until the coronavirus pandemic put a stop to their plans.

The band members dispersed in separate homes in Anaheim, Fullerton and Long Beach during

the state's pandemic lockdown. They postponed the music video release of "Neighborhood Watch" from the EP until the fall. Even though live music stopped, each WOMC

member still maintained their creativity.

"We're all artists, and that separation allowed us to reconnect with our individual artistry," Josh said. "When we came back, everyone was at a creative peak because we had all been really experimenting with what we wanted."

The latest single, "All I Do," released in June and produced by Moses, is a departure from their usual sound. It's an upbeat, feel-good love song.

"We wanted to express love in a very healthy manner and also just make a cool song that's bouncy," Josh said.

The band celebrated the release of the accompanying music video with a performance at a Long Beach event on Friday.

Julia said WOMC feels like they need to reinvent themselves because the pandemic didn't allow them to retain some of their fans.

They are adding on releasing additional singles and eventually putting out another EP.

"We're creating at a superspeed," Julia said. "There's a lot going on and we have a lot to say."

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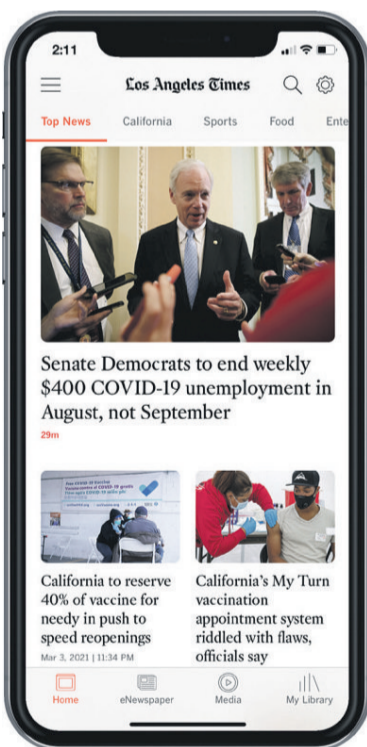
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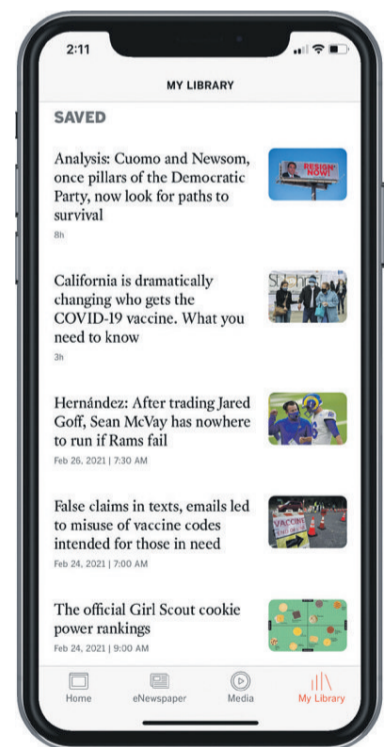
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The state of what's next. **Los Angeles Times**



Kevin Chang | Staff Photographer

ONE OF the birds released on Tuesday was found at Crystal Cove beach on April 26 and the other was discovered nearby on May 13.

PELICANS

Continued from page R3

scious, actually ... People are more aware, and we're still pushing out that we still need the public's help." The organization is urg-

ing those who see suspicious acts against wildlife to call the CalTIP hotline at (888) 334-2258.

Kveton, a science teacher at Edison High School, said that awareness is definitely key.

The brown pelican was

removed from the federal endangered species list in 2009, but remains protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

"We live here and we see pelicans every day," Kveton said. "For us, they're totally normal. You forget that it's

more than just our city and this population. They're birds that move. We need to remind people that they are declining and we've got to be careful."

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Spencer Grant

WEAPONS OF MASS CREATION performs for an appreciative audience on June 19 in La Palma Park.

BACK

Continued from page R4

bers who aren't affiliated with any of the three organizations also volunteer during food distributions and helping unhoused people relocate after encampment sweeps.

At the Saturday event, they received nearly \$500 in donations and 200 pounds of hygiene and essential supplies like toothpaste, toilet paper, pantry food items and more.

"We really wanted to highlight the connection between mutual aid and Black liberation and why it is of the utmost importance that we start by giving care to Black and brown community mem-

bers," said Zoe-Raven Wianeci, one of the founders of OC Protests.

Quiñonez, who also assists with mutual aid work, said they've collected about 1,500 to 1,800 pounds of produce a week. OCMAC and volunteers sort through the produce and package it for unhoused residents or families in need of food assistance in Santa Ana and Anaheim.

Although the exact food distribution locations are undisclosed, those who are interested in picking up meals and essential items can contact the organization through ocprotestsblm@gmail.com or social media.

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STADIUM

Continued from page R3

broke the story Thursday.

He said he hoped the council would discuss the issue publicly and consider seeking accelerated construction of affordable housing units within the project and/or units beyond the 466 currently stipulated in the sale agreement.

Lauren Gold, an Anaheim spokeswoman, said the project as currently planned would represent "the largest expansion of affordable housing in our city's history."

She added: "This preliminary response [to HCD] is a

chance for us to share why this project is unique and how it prioritizes affordable housing. A positive conversation with our state partners is underway, and we look forward to addressing concerns and moving forward."

Said Marie Garvey, a spokeswoman for Arte Moreno's company: "From the beginning, the city made it clear that no sale would happen without a significant commitment to affordable housing and parkland."

Sasha Wisostky Kergan, the HCD official who signed the warning letter to the city, said Thursday that her agency is "reviewing the city's response and has not

yet determined whether the information provided is sufficient to resolve the concerns."

In 2019, the city agreed to sell the property to Arte Moreno's development company for a price later finalized at \$320 million. Under the deal, the Angels would play in Anaheim through at least 2050, with Moreno's company building a neighborhood around a new or renovated stadium.

In 2020, the city agreed to lower the cash price to \$150 million, with the remaining \$170 million credited toward the inclusion of affordable housing and parkland within the development.

Under state law, Kergan said Anaheim could be assessed a penalty of 30% of the sale price. Based on the \$150-million cash figure, Anaheim would be left with \$105 million.

Based on the \$320-million total figure, Anaheim would be left with \$54 million in cash.

Gold declined to say whether the city could afford to proceed with the project if a penalty were assessed.

The property could have been worth as much as \$500 million on the open market, according to a city-commissioned appraisal, with the stadium demolished and the land vacant.

The City Council pri-

oritized keeping the Angels over an open bidding process, and in so doing reinstated a lease that allowed the Angels to control development on the property through 2038.

With the stadium in place and the Angels holding veto power over certain uses of the property, according to the appraisal, \$320 million represented a reasonable market value.

The city of San Diego received a similar letter from HCD with regard to a development proposal for a site now occupied by a sports arena, and that city last week chose to start a new bidding process for the property to ensure compliance with the law.

However, when a community group alleged the city of Inglewood violated the law by negotiating with the Clippers for a new arena instead of first considering affordable housing developers, the group lost in court.

The city of Anaheim also has been sued over the Angel Stadium deal by a community group, which seeks to nullify the deal on the grounds the city failed to comply with public transparency laws during negotiations.

A trial is scheduled to start Sept. 10 in Orange County Superior Court.

BILL SHAIKIN writes for the Los Angeles Times.



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