

# The New York Times Race/Related

December 5, 2020



The Capital Area Food Bank in Washington in late August.

## Hunger in the Washington Metropolitan Area

Photographs and Text by **Cheriss May**

WASHINGTON — Before the pandemic, Black and Hispanic households across America were already experiencing food insecurity at a significantly higher rate than the national average of 10.5 percent. The coronavirus pandemic has only exacerbated hunger worldwide, and in the United States, nearly one in eight households doesn't have enough to eat.

Since March, when the economy began to collapse and millions lost their jobs, families have turned to food banks and food organizations in record numbers.

Over the course of a few months, I spent time with the Capital Area Food Bank, Kingdom Fellowship A.M.E. Church, Rainbow Family Christian Center, Urban Outreach Inc., the Humane Rescue Alliance and the numerous volunteers who have been working to help address food insecurity in the Washington metropolitan area.

"We feel very humbled to be able to serve our brothers and sisters in this community who are dealing with food insecurity at a level that we've never seen before," said the Rev. Matthew L. Watley, senior pastor of Kingdom Fellowship A.M.E. Church. "To see entire families on the brink and vulnerable really gave us a call to stretch out and to try to serve. We're here until we believe we can make an impact for those who are really in need, and we're hoping to increase our capacity even further."

Because of the pandemic, the Capital Area Food Bank has lost 50 percent of its partner organizations, such as shuttered restaurants, and donations are down.

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Valerie Hartridge, left, treasurer of the Rainbow Community Development Center board of directors, with Vernicka Irving, center, and Elizabeth Stevenson. The group was preparing groceries for distribution in Silver Spring, Md., in late November.

According to the 2020 hunger report by the Capital Area Food Bank, the group provided 30 million meals a year before the pandemic, directly from and through a network of more than 450 nonprofit organizations, to nearly 415,000 people in the Washington metropolitan region.

But this year, according to the report, the need is expected to more than double, with a surge of 48 percent to 60 percent in food insecurity.

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Andy Burness, president of the Burness communications firm, is a co-founder of Business Leaders Fighting Hunger, a corporate coalition whose goal is to improve food security in Montgomery County, Md.

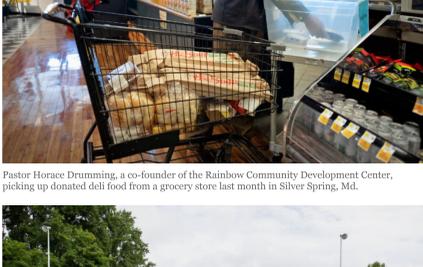
A volunteer at the Rainbow Community Development Center, he believes all residents should show up for the community.

"Every county in every city should have businesses coming together to do whatever needs to be done for equity in that county, or that city, and food security is the most basic things we can do," Mr. Burness said. "I just want every place in America to have the business community involved. If we're going to solve hunger it's not just the government, it's not just the food banks and other nonprofits, it's not just the businesses, it's the three working together that can make a difference. We really need public-private partnerships working together to fight hunger and everything else that's needed to give people a chance at life."

During the months I spent with the groups, I saw so many people in need. Many were seeking help from food banks for the first time in their lives.

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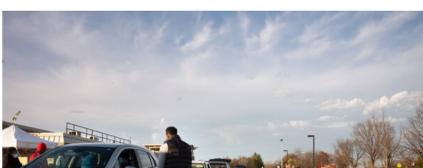
I also saw resilience and faith-based organizations and groups offering resources without judgment. It made me think of the saying "He's not heavy, he's my brother." They give me hope that when communities come together, there's nothing we can't do.



Pastor Horace Drumming, a co-founder of the Rainbow Community Development Center, picking up donated deli food from a grocery store last month in Silver Spring, Md.



From left, Patricia Louthison, Shantel Thompson Davis, Rhonda Vann and Kimberly Wiggins, site leaders for Kingdom Fellowship A.M.E. Church's food distribution service, prayed last month at a recreation center in Silver Spring. The quotation from the late Rep. John Lewis was painted by young people who couldn't attend protests in Washington but wanted to express their views on social justice.



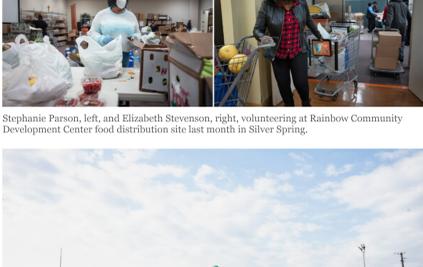
Dagah, left, with his dogs Betty and Balloon, and KK, right, with his owners. They were visiting a pet food distribution site hosted by the Humane Rescue Alliance in September in Washington.



Marcus Jean, a food distribution site leader at Kingdom Fellowship A.M.E. Church, with visitors at a drive-up distribution site last month in Silver Spring.



A family picking up food at a distribution site hosted by Kingdom Fellowship A.M.E. Church in August in Silver Spring.



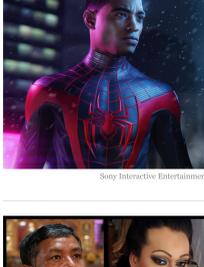
A Kingdom Fellowship A.M.E. Church distribution site in August in Silver Spring.



Drivers lined up at a Kingdom Fellowship A.M.E. Church food distribution site last month in Beltsville, Md., late November.

### EDITOR'S PICKS

We publish many articles that touch on race. Here are several you shouldn't miss.

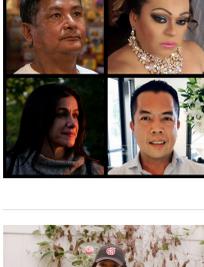


Audra Melton for The New York Times

#### Georgia Was a Big Win for Democrats. Black Women Did the Groundwork.

Before the Democratic Party invested in Georgia, or President Trump and Joe Biden saw it as a battleground, Black political organizers devoted years of hard work to turning out voters.

By **Astead W. Herndon**

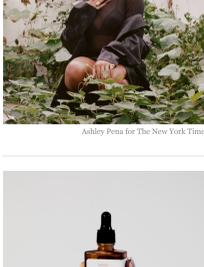


Sony Interactive Entertainment

#### In 'Spider-Man: Miles Morales,' Harlem Is More Than a Backdrop

Evan Narcisse, a writer for the new Spider-Man game for PlayStation 4 and 5, worked to make the hero's connections to his Afro-Latino neighborhood feel as authentic as possible.

By **Kwame Opam**



#### The Epicenter

Thousands were sick. Hundreds were lost. This is how the coronavirus ravaged a vibrant corner of New York.

By **Dan Barry, Annie Correal and Todd Heisler**

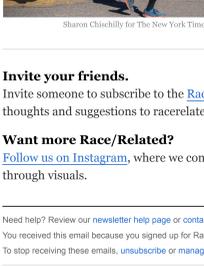


Ashley Pina for The New York Times

#### Living and Performing 'Femme Queen Joy'

Rosa Isabel Rayos, a rapper who goes by Ms. Boogie, wants her work to expand the narrative about Black trans women.

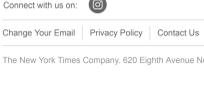
By **Sandra E. Garcia**



#### A Gift Guide Featuring Black-Owned Businesses, for Those Who Like to Pamper

Do you want to be a conscientious shopper? Right this way.

By **Sandra E. Garcia**



Sharon Chouchly for The New York Times

#### Native Arizona. Can They Mobilize in Georgia?

Very few of Georgia's more than 100,000 voting-age Native Americans cast ballots in November. Even a small increase could make a difference in the Senate runoff.

By **Maggie Astor**

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