

After spotlight dims

Mr. T is the subject of the most recent in Netflix’s “Untold” documentary series. He doesn’t like it, but maybe you will.



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“I am scared. But if I can help, I will do it. Even if it’s just saving a single person from being deported.”

ELVIRA ARZETA, who patrols hot spots frequented by federal agents targeting immigrants



A city on guard

By Andrew Carter, Caroline Kubzansky, Gregory Royal Pratt and Laura Rodríguez Presa CHICAGO TRIBUNE

In warmer months, Elvira Arzeta’s homemade popsicles sell with little trouble. She makes them from strawberries and mangoes, coconuts and limes. At \$2 each, she earns enough to keep her gas tank full while she remains on constant lookout for the threat of federal agents.

Soon, though, she knows it’ll get cooler, then cold. She worries about how she’ll pay for her gas when she sells fewer popsicles. She worries about a lot of things. When federal agents shot and killed two people earlier this year in Minneapolis, Arzeta, who lives just outside of Chicago, couldn’t sleep. That could’ve been her, she thought.

“I am scared,” Arzeta said, who still wears a whistle around her neck. “But if I can help, I will do it. Even if it’s just saving a single person from being deported.”

What the raids left behind after Operation Midway Blitz

Above: Elvira Arzeta patrols the western suburbs before dawn on Thursday. For over a year, Arzeta has headed out of her home at 5 a.m. to patrol hot spots frequented by federal agents targeting immigrants. STACEY WESCOTT/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

It has been a year this month since the Trump administration’s Operation Midway Blitz began. What it left behind can be measured in the number of neighborhood patrollers, like Arzeta, who are still making their daily rounds. It can be measured in places still coming back to life, where people keep a wary eye from apartment balconies and from behind cracks in window curtains.

By 5 a.m. most days, Arzeta is on the streets of Bensenville, a northwest suburb in the shadow of planes near O’Hare International Airport. Bensenville is a place, in some parts, of million-dollar homes and pristine lawns. Arzeta often drives to the other parts.

“Little Guatemala,” as locals know it, is one of those parts. It’s tucked between a pair of dead-end roads, near car dealerships and modest strip malls. Locals say that federal agents detained 35 people in a day there last year. Now Arzeta arrives to let those who remain know it’s safe for them to go to work. That, for now, there’s no sign of Immigra-

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How was COVID money used?

Illinois, Chicago, Cook County got \$11B in pandemic aid, but there were gaps in oversight and transparency

By Dan Petrella and A.D. Quig CHICAGO TRIBUNE

As the delta variant of COVID-19 surged in late summer 2021, Gov. JB Pritzker announced in Chicago’s East Garfield Park that the state was awarding \$250 million to help small businesses across Illinois battered by the pandemic.

Five years later, Pritzker is still touting the program, marking National Black Business Month in August with a campaign news release that cited the “Back to Business” grants as evidence of the reelection-seeking Democrat’s “support for Black-owned businesses.” In neither case did Pritzker identify where the state got the money for the grants — President Joe Biden’s American Rescue Plan Act, or ARPA.

The \$1.9 trillion pandemic relief package signed in March 2021 doled out \$350 billion in “State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds” to governments nationwide. In Illinois, the state government received \$8.1 billion, Chicago got nearly \$1.9 billion and Cook County another \$1 billion. That cash came with largely flexible spending rules but rigid deadlines: It had to be allocated by the end of 2024 and spent by the end of this year.

In an attempt to figure out how the money was being spent and whether it helped the city, county and state recover from the pandemic, the Tribune and the University of Chicago’s Mansueto Institute for Urban Innovation launched a first-of-its-kind analysis of local data by scraping and collating thousands of pages of reports that the Democratic administrations of Pritzker, Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, and Chicago mayors Lori Lightfoot and Brandon Johnson were required to submit to the federal government.

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INSIDE



PAUL VALADE/DAILY HERALD

Use of Flock cameras sparking discussions

Police say the tool is invaluable. But as misuse mounts, many wonder how to rein in the system. Chicagoland, Page A3

Trump hits nerve in visit to Ireland

The president waded into a complex situation, saying a unified Ireland would be “fantastic.” Nation & World, Page B5

Summer of Caleb is over. Things are about to get real

A pivotal season begins as Bears try to find a way to sustain success

By Sean Hammond CHICAGO TRIBUNE

The viral video was a Chicago sports fan’s dream.

Caleb Williams, with his beard freshly shaved, mustache remaining, looked into the TV camera and pointed. The camera panned from Williams in his front-row seat behind the Cubs dugout to the dugout itself, where Cubs star Pete Crow-Armstrong waved to his fan club before coolly turning back toward the action on the field.

When the camera panned back, Williams and Bulls forwards Caleb Wilson and Matas Buzelis pounded on the roof of the dugout as the Cubs faithful cheered behind them. With help from the two Calebs and Buzelis, the Wrigley Field crowd started chanting,

“P-C-A! P-C-A!”

It was Sept. 3, just hours after the Bears wrapped up their final practice of the summer. Coach Ben Johnson had given the players three days off over the Labor Day break, their last free weekend for a while.

Williams took advantage of the free time by heading to the ballpark to support his buddy Crow-Armstrong, who clubbed his 39th home run that night — and last week hit his 40th and 41st and is the odds-on favorite to win the National League MVP award.

“I like being out with the people supporting one of my friends, Cubbie Pete, and so it was just kind of spur of the moment,” Williams said. “(I) wanted to sit out there.”

It was, perhaps, the last great hurrah for the summer of Caleb.

Labor Day has come and gone. Kids are back in school. The hype has been a runaway train since the



Bears quarterback Caleb Williams flashes a smile from the first row behind the Cubs dugout in the eighth inning of a game against the Brewers on Sept. 3 at Wrigley Field. CHRIS SWEDA/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

BEARS OPENER

Bears at Panthers Noon Sunday, Fox-32

INSIDE SPORTS

How did Ben Johnson improve as a coach for Year 2 with the Bears? By digging into the details.

See BEARS on Page A2

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179th year No. 256 © Chicago Tribune



See seafaring Scandinavia in its museums



Scandinavia’s Viking days may be long gone, but its legacy of maritime exploration (and plunder) continues to capture our imagination.

Tap into the region’s seafaring heritage by visiting excellent museums in Stockholm, Oslo, and just outside Copenhagen.

Scandinavia’s entrance into civilized Europe was swift and dramatic. On June 8, 793, a fleet of pirates came ashore on the north-east coast of England and sacked the Lindisfarne monastery, slaughtering monks, burning buildings and looting sacred objects. Their victims called them Normanni, Dani, Rus — or worse — but the name they gave themselves came from the inlets and bays (vik) where they lived: the Vikings.

Strategically located along one such Danish inlet, in Roskilde (about 30 minutes from Copenhagen), is Denmark’s Viking Ship Museum. Here, you’ll see a ship like the one Leif Erikson took to America a thousand years ago, two longships, a wind-powered coastal trader, and a small row/sail hybrid that was used for whaling and hunting seals.

These ships were deliberately sunk a thousand years ago to block the entrance to this strategic and rich city, and finally raised from their salty grave in the 1960s.

Outside the museum, you can watch modern craftspeople hard at work trying to recreate Viking ships — and climb aboard replicas of the ones you saw inside.

In Norway, you’ll find multiple good maritime museums clustered in Bygdøy, a park-like peninsula just across the harbor from downtown Oslo.



The Vasa, which sank minutes into its maiden voyage, is the centerpiece of a maritime museum in Stockholm. **DOMINIC ARIZONA BONUCCELLI**

For decades, another Viking Ship Museum showed off two finely crafted, majestic oak vessels dating from the 9th and 10th centuries, and the scant remains of a third vessel — icons from those days of pillage and plunder. This museum recently closed, but is reopening in 2027 as the new-and-improved Museum of the Viking Age — specifically designed to house these precious boats and other remarkable artifacts that give insight into Viking culture.

The adjacent Fram Museum holds the 125-foot, steam- and sail-powered ship that took modern-day “Vikings” Roald Amundsen and Fridtjof Nansen deep into the Arctic and Antarctic, farther north and south than any vessel had gone before. The Fram was well equipped with instruments that enabled the explor-

ers to bring back important new data from the polar frontiers.

You’ll also see Amundsen’s Gjøa, the first ship to sail through the Northwest Passage. Together, the exhibit spins a fascinating tale of adventure, scientific exploration, and human determination ... all at subzero temperatures.

The Kon-Tiki Museum next door houses two ships built by the larger-than-life anthropologist, seafarer and adventurer Thor Heyerdahl.

In 1947, the Norwegian explorer and his crew constructed the Kon-Tiki raft out of bamboo and balsa wood. They set sail from Peru on the crude and fragile craft, surviving for 101 days on fish, coconuts and sweet potatoes.

About 5,000 miles later, they landed in Polynesia. The point of this expedi-

tion was to show that early South Americans could have settled Polynesia. (While Heyerdahl proved they could have, anthropologists doubt they actually did.) In 1970, Heyerdahl’s Ra II made a similar 4,000-mile journey from Morocco to Barbados — on a vessel made of reeds — to prove that Africans could have populated the Americas.

Also in Bygdøy, the Norwegian Maritime Museum gives a wide-ranging look at Norway’s maritime heritage through exhibits, art, and a panoramic film soaring over Norway’s long and varied coastline.

In Stockholm, the Vasa Museum is my favorite maritime museum anywhere, with the chemically petrified, ultimate warship housed in a state-of-the-art exhibit.

The Vasa sank just

minutes into her maiden voyage. It was 1628 and the Swedish king was eager to expand the reach of his domain with a formidable new vessel. Unfortunately, his demands to build the ship 170 feet tall, but narrow and laden with an extra row of cannons, made it extremely unstable.

As it sailed out, all the sailors went to one side, waved at their loved ones ... and the most expensive ship in Europe tipped over and sank to the bottom of Stockholm’s harbor, where it sat in the mud for over 300 years.

In 1961, with the help of steel cables and huge inflatable pontoons, the Vasa rose again from the deep.

The museum has turned this titanic flop into an excellent exhibit. Artifacts on display humanize naval life in the 17th century, while detailed models show

life on board — and evoke the instant when the hopes and aspirations of this mighty ship and her crew were dashed.

This awe-inspiring boat is a time capsule from an era when Sweden was a European power and was gearing up to expand its empire.

The Vasa may have been a failure, but there’s no doubt about the seafaring strength of the Scandinavians. From the Vikings to intrepid Arctic explorers and daring Heyerdahl and his Kon-Tiki, don’t miss the opportunity to delve into the fascinating maritime history as you visit Scandinavia’s great cities.

CELEBRITY TRAVEL

Comedian stays extra to explore tour stops

By Jae-Ha Kim
TRIBUNE CONTENT AGENCY

When comedian Atsuko Okatsuka was 8 years old, she thought her family was taking a two-month vacation to the United States.

“It was never supposed to be longer than that,” Okatsuka, now 38, said in an interview from her Los Angeles home. “I wanted to go back (to Japan). When I realized I wasn’t going back, (I started fixating) on little things I disliked. I remember just going off in elementary school suddenly and refusing to use the (pencil) erasers. My classmates and the teacher must have thought I was just this insane eraser police.”

Okatsuka is kicking off the fall leg of her international Big Bowl tour.

This interview with Okatsuka has been edited for clarity and length.

Q: Was it challenging to make friends as a young immigrant?
A: Oh, yes. On the playground, there were these two girls I was playing with, and then two more people came and said, “Do you mind if we play with you?” and I said, “Sure, you can play with we,” instead of “us.” And then the people I was with laughed at me and made fun of me for getting it wrong. That made me go quiet for a long time, afraid to speak English again. I was still new to the language and had to learn these words I never wanted to learn. But it all worked out.

Q: Do you and your husband seek out warm vacation destinations or cold spots where you can go skiing?



Atsuko Okatsuka called throwing out the first pitch at a Chicago Cubs game a surprising experience. **LEE JAMESON**

A: You are very kind to think we are that physically active that we would even know how to put on ski shoes. I’ve seen people do it. My friends do it on Instagram. I watch them ski, but I’ve never actually done skiing myself. So we go where our tours take us. I live in Los Angeles, and I’ve been here since I was 8 years old. I am a weak person. My body is spoiled. I think it should be in 70-degree weather all the time, so I do prefer warm.

Q: Have you done anything that surprised even you?
A: I threw the first pitch or whatever at the Chicago Cubs game (in 2024). Can you believe it? Me? I have a dance background, so I can do some athletic stuff. I can aim and get it to the vicinity, so I got it to the plate, and they caught it.

Q: Where did you film the movie “Outcome”?
A: That was in Los Angeles. We filmed part of it at the El Capitan Theatre, which is very historic. I had been there previously and was the first female stand-up comedian to perform on that stage.

Q: What do you like to do when you have a little free time on tours?
A: We love city vibes, so it’s not necessarily about

the weather. For example, on our European tour, we stayed a few more days in Paris, because that was our last stop, and we wanted to see more. Or with Barcelona, we tried to do a couple more days instead of skipping over to the next city. We really love walkable cities where we can really be among the locals there.

Q: Is there a restaurant where you ate something so delicious that you would go back right now if you could?
A: There is this place called Mukai in Shibuya (Tokyo) that I can’t wait to go back to and eat there with Ryan, my husband. For some reason, it’s really difficult to find good kaisendon in Los Angeles. It’s kind of like chirashi with finely chopped raw seafood and roe piled on top of rice.

Q: How difficult is it to maintain the shape of your hair on the road?
A: I feel like it does have a life of its own. It grows back in different lengths every time. I have a particular friend who comes and cuts it every three weeks to a month. If I have to find someone new, sometimes stylists are intimidated about messing it up.

For more from the reporter, visit www.jaehakim.com.

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER

Avis repossesses rental car after bank blocks recurring charge for program

By Christopher Elliott | KING FEATURES SYNDICATE

I was renting a car through the Avis-Uber partner program so that I could drive for Uber. It cost \$349 a week, which was supposed to be deducted from my bank account. But things went south when Avis started charging my card for different amounts several times a day. My bank assumed that this was fraudulent activity, blocked Avis, and locked my account for security.

This created a major problem. I had to wait for a new card to be issued and mailed to me, which meant that I couldn’t access my funds to make my weekly payment on time. I didn’t go silent, though; I communicated this clearly to the Avis office where I rented the vehicle through a text line that’s provided to drivers. I also spoke with a representative from the recovery team, who said that she’d note my account.

I explicitly asked an Avis representative if I should keep the vehicle until my new card arrived or if I could pay via Bill Pay. He just replied, “Text when you’re ready.” I took this to mean that I was OK to keep the car until the card arrived. A day or two later, as I was getting into the car to go pay, I saw a tow truck drive past with the car that I’d been renting. I followed the truck and waved it down at a red light. It was Avis coming to repossess the car. The company called it a repossession, even though I’d provided payment for the previous two weeks.

Now Avis has placed me on its Do Not Rent list for two years, claiming that the payment was 14 days overdue and that its Loss Prevention department had to step in. This ban effectively ends my ability to earn a living as an Uber driver. I’ve already paid the outstanding balance in full, including \$1,895 in additional charges and fees. I just want to be removed from the DNR list so that I can get back to work.

— Aaron McIntosh, in Philadelphia

A: Avis should’ve read its own notes in your records. When a customer explicitly asks, “Should I return the car?” and a staff member tells them, “Text when you’re ready,” the company shouldn’t call the repo man. (I normally handle consumer disputes in this column. But your billing issue has broader applications, so I decided to handle your case, even though you’re technically a business.)

While rental companies have a right to protect their assets, they also have an obligation to provide clear instructions to their customers. If a payment fails because of a bank’s fraud detection system (which was triggered by the company’s own erratic billing), a little human intervention would be helpful.

Unfortunately, you didn’t get any.

You established a paper trail early on by texting the office, and followed up with the Avis recovery team. However, “Text when you’re ready” is dangerously vague. When you’re dealing with a rental company, if you can’t pay, return the car immediately to the lot, get a bill, then wait for your new card.

If you ever find yourself blacklisted, you can appeal the decision to the executives at Avis. I publish their contact information on my advocacy site, Elliott.org. I contacted Avis on your behalf to see if it could take a second look at your case. The company’s security team performed a manual review of your account.

“Our records indicate that we’ve received a

response from our security team confirming that all outstanding fees had been paid and that his removal from the DNR list was authorized,” a representative from Avis told me.

You’re now off the DNR list and free to rent again. Just two tips for the future: First, let your bank know about your arrangement with Avis so that it can “whitelist” the transactions. And if your bank still flags your car rental payment as a crime spree, it might be time to switch to a credit card — or a different bank.

Christopher Elliott is the chief advocacy officer of Elliott Advocacy, a nonprofit organization that helps consumers resolve their problems. Contact him at elliott.org/help or chris@elliott.org.