

Chicago Tribune



\$5.75 | SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2026 | CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM

OPERATION MIDWAY BLITZ

Release doesn't mean freedom

While often framed as a victory, it is usually temporary, conditional and far from secure

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

Freddy Cazares arrived at his lawyer's office in Pilsen a few minutes early on a gray Thursday morning in August, ready to sign the documents that he hoped might provide some measure of security and peace. In the 11 months since

his detainment during Operation Midway Blitz, he'd learned to live without much of either.

His release early last December, he said, had been "like a miracle." It came after 80 days locked away, first in the Immigration and Customs Enforcement processing center in Broadview — where "they treated us worse than animals," he said — and then in a jail about 200 miles south, in rural Clay County, Indiana.

For most of his detainment, he waited to be flown out of the country. He'd signed deportation papers under duress, he said, and when agents drove him and other detainees from Broadview to an airport he waited for his name to be called. But then the plane filled and he never heard his name, and "they put us back in a van and took us to Indiana."

Almost three months later, a judge ordered his release. Cazares, 38, had been praying for it. He has

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Right: Freddy Cazares, who has lived in the United States for over 20 years, meets with his legal team at the Resurrection Project office in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood on Aug. 6 to sign documents related to the continuation of his work permit application. **ANTONIO PEREZ/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**



Little Big House

Northwestern's new stadium makes up for smaller capacity with premium look, feel and gives area its first architecturally distinguished playing field in over a century



Edward Keegan

Northwestern University touts its new Ryan Field as "by far the nicest stadium or arena ever built in the Chicago area."

Zachary Taylor Davis, architect of Wrigley Field and Comiskey Park, would like a word.

Hype is hype. But it's not every day that we see a new sports arena in Chicago, and the new Ryan Field is the most architecturally distinguished sports facility since those two predecessors of more than a century ago.

The new Ryan Field replaces old Ryan Field, originally called Dyche Stadium, that stood on the same Evanston site from 1926 until its demolition in 2024.

Its final cost of \$875 million is a bit more than the Obama Presidential Center, although it's considerably less than the \$2 to \$3 billion forecast for the new Bears Stadium, wherever that may eventually be built.

Pat Ryan Jr., whose family name is on five buildings at the school, including the new stadium, acted as pro-bono developer on the project. His family contributed more than half of the funds for the facility.

The complex was designed by local stalwarts Perkins&Will with Kansas City-based HNTB. New

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Top: Pat Ryan Jr., CEO of Ryan Sports Development, who is leading the development of the stadium, stands on the 50-yard line at Northwestern University's new Ryan Field on Monday in Evanston. It is still under construction and officially opens Oct. 2.

Above: Northwestern University's nearly finished Ryan Field is shown on Monday in Evanston. The 35,000-seat stadium cost \$875 million to build.

STACEY WESCOTT/CHICAGO TRIBUNE PHOTOS

COOK COUNTY

\$191M awarded in bridge loans

Effort was meant to dull the impact of fall's property tax delay

By A.D. Quig, Claire Murphy, Evy Lewis and Christopher Placek
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle's office awarded stopgap loans to 32 villages, library and school districts worth \$191 million, an effort to dull the impact of this fall's property tax delay that nonetheless left many suburban agencies already in dire financial straits with less money than they asked for to help make ends meet.

Several officials praised Preckwinkle's efforts, and the payouts also left \$109 million in the loan pot, according to data received through a Tribune open records request.

The Cook County Board initially excluded Chicago Public Schools from the loan program but then pledged to work with the cash-strapped district if there were funds remaining after suburban applicants received their payments.

But Preckwinkle's administration suggested last week that the window has now closed, and the school district will not be able to avail itself of the unearmarked \$109

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INSIDE

High-octane offense



Are the Bears showing shades of the "Greatest Show on Turf"? A look at Mike Martz's influence on Ben Johnson's offense. Plus, the Bears face Brian Flores, the Vikings' boogeyman of the blitz. **Sports**

Fall books for 2026

Autumn is the Super Bowl of reading, a time for the big books, award-hungry novels and the Christmas-friendly celeb memoirs. **Arts & Entertainment**

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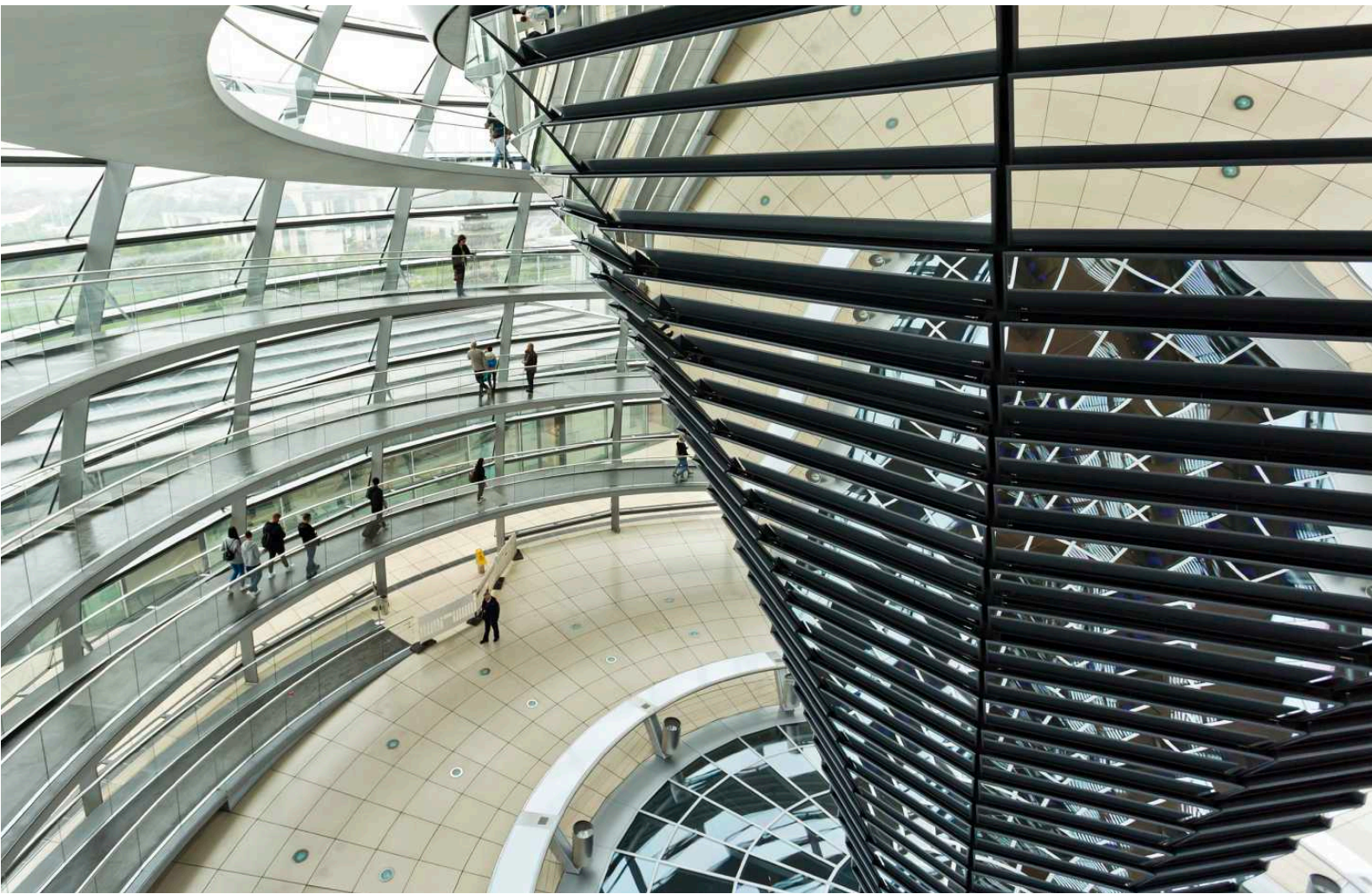
From church domes to bell towers and fanciful rooftops to sky-piercing monuments, Europe is full of climbable structures. While most lead to impressive views, the best also offer insights into the historical, artistic and religious thinking of their times. These are some of my favorites.

In Milan, a highlight is strolling the rooftop of the Duomo — the city’s cathedral and the third-largest church in Europe. After taking the stairs or elevator to the top, visitors can climb up and down the roof’s multiple terraces, wandering among gargoyles, statues and spires.

The roof features 135 decorated spires that are similar, yet different. Walking among them, it’s inspiring to think that every detail — each flower, saint’s face and so on — is an individual work of art carved out of pink marble centuries ago by artists who believed that few would ever see it. Their art was a gift for God to enjoy from the heavens.

Another worthwhile climb is to the top of the dome at Florence’s Duomo. Though it was built when Gothic style dominated Europe, the Florentines decided not to cap their cathedral with a spire — but left it instead with a gaping hole. (They bet that technology would soon catch up with the city’s vision, and the Duomo could be completed with a dome instead.) In 1420, Filippo Brunelleschi won the job and built the dome that kicked off the architectural Renaissance.

Brunelleschi’s dome, which inspired the likes of the U.S. Capitol and St. Peter’s Basilica in the Vatican, showed how art and



While climbing the Reichstag’s dome in Berlin, guests circle mirrors that direct their vision toward where legislators meet. **DOMINIC ARIZONA BONUCCELLI**

science could be combined to make beauty. Today, it rewards those who ascend the 463 narrow steps with glorious views. Along the way, climbers are treated to a close-up of the dome’s Last Judgment ceiling painting, a grand view of the cathedral’s interior and a look at Brunelleschi’s “dome-within-a-dome” construction.

A thoroughly different — but equally spectacular — dome climb is the hike to the top of the Reichstag in Berlin. Completed in the late 19th century, the German parliament building was gutted by a fire and World War II bombs, then stood like a ghost, barely repaired, through the Cold War. But after German reunification, this historic ruin was rebuilt with a

modern element: a striking glass dome.

A walkway winds all the way to the top, providing 360-degree views. Climbers see forests of skyscrapers interspersed with historic sights, such as the nearby Brandenburg Gate and the Berlin Cathedral’s massive dome. But for Germans, mindful of their dark 20th-century history, the view that matters most is inside, where a cone of mirrors points down, directing your vision toward where legislators gather. The architecture comes with a message: The people are determined to keep a wary eye on their government.

Ascending the Eiffel Tower is one of Europe’s great travel thrills, period. Built for the 1889 World’s

Fair, the project celebrated the 100th anniversary of the French Revolution and demonstrated that France had the wealth, knowledge and can-do spirit to erect a structure taller than anything the world had ever seen.

Even with a reservation, many visitors stand in long lines to take the elevators up and down. For hardy visitors, it’s cheaper and less crowded to climb the stairs. It’s 720 steps to the second level (the top level is only accessible via elevator). But as you ascend, you get an up-close look at Gustave Eiffel’s amazing engineering.

Perhaps the most memorable climb I’ve done in Europe was just 28 steps — on my knees — up Rome’s Scala Santa (Holy Stairs)

next to the Church of San Giovanni in Laterano. In AD 326, Emperor Constantine’s mother brought home what was reputed to be the marble steps of Pontius Pilate’s residence in Jerusalem. Jesus is said to have climbed these steps on the day he was sentenced to death. Today the steps are covered with wooden slats to protect the marble, but they’re spotted with glass-covered holes to show stains from Jesus’ blood on the original stairs.

For centuries, pilgrims have ascended the Scala Santa on their knees while reciting a litany of prayers. For decades, I watched from a staircase on the side. But finally, a voice inside me said “Do it!” and I tried the climb. With my knees screaming, weathered faith-

ful struggling up the staircase beside me, and a fresco of a Christ high above, I climbed each step, learning about both the bone structure of my legs and the value of pain when praying.

Because they’re so popular, many of these sights require reservations in advance. But for the savvy traveler who’s up for going up, these climbs are worth it. From ascending the first Renaissance dome to climbing steps on your knees, a little exertion can mean a big payoff in your travels.

Rick Steves (www.ricksteves.com) writes European travel guidebooks and hosts travel shows on public television and public radio. Email him at rick@ricksteves.com and follow his blog on Facebook.

CELEBRITY TRAVEL

Lin gains wisdom from stops of all sizes

By Jae-Ha Kim
TRIBUNE CONTENT AGENCY

As the showrunner and co-creator of “Crew Girl” — now streaming on Netflix — Vivian Lin knew she wanted the show’s protagonist to be Asian American.

“When you get into casting, the search generally broadens out, but it was important to me that we considered actors of Asian descent for the role, just to see if I would find the (lead character) Teagan in my mind,” Lin said in an interview from Toronto.

“Luckily for all of us, Miku (Martineau) walked into the room. I think she said two lines, and I realized she was who I’d been picturing. When I was writing the character, I wanted her to be a strong ... leader, yet stay feminine and to have a softness to her (and) still be a normal teenage girl. That’s Miku, who is elegant and petite, but also fiercely capable of anything you throw at her.”

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

Q: Where in British Columbia was this series filmed?
A: The rowing was filmed at two locations, Elk Lake and the Gorge Waterway, both stunning places. The Crab Shack, where Ella works, is Seahorses Café in Brentwood Bay. Probably the most recognizable is Hatley Castle, which was in “X-Men” as Professor Xavier’s School, and I like to imagine a version of the show where all the rowers are also mutants.

Q: If Teagan Tao could go on her ultimate vacation, where would it be and why?



“Crew Girl” showrunner Vivian Lin says she looks forward to visiting Turks & Caicos. **ANDREW GORDON MACPHERSON**

A: Teagan is both a rower and an explorer. First, it would be Tokyo, so she can check out Tokyo Bay where the 2020 Olympics were held, as well as connect with her heritage. Harajuku and Nezu Museum would also be on the agenda. Next would be Lucerne, Switzerland, to enjoy the stunning mountains but it is basically the Mecca for rowers. The nickname for the regatta that is held there is the “Regatta of Death” because it’s the last chance to qualify for the Worlds or the Olympics. And obviously, another spot on the list, without question, she’d go to Henley-on-Thames in England.

Q: Do you have any upcoming trips planned?
A: Turks & Caicos at the halfway point in winter, to gather stamina to survive the rest of winter.

Q: What is your favorite vacation destination?
A: Oh, either New York City or Montreal. Culture, style, food, energy, joie de vivre, bagels — there is always so much to see and explore. Also, Montreal has the hidden gem Jeans Jeans Jeans, which provides the best jean-purchasing experience in the world. The salespeople will look at you, immediately find you the jeans that fit you perfectly and have it hemmed before you get to the cash register.

Q: What was a special trip you took as a child that

stands out?
A: Los Angeles, when I was 8. I remember thinking it was just a completely magical place. The sunlight is golden, there are palm trees, you’re right near the beach and the ocean. Add Universal Studios and Disneyland on top of it, and my mind was blown.

Q: What’s the most important thing you’ve learned from your travels?
A: I love that every place you visit, from small town to metropolis, has its own unique way of living and point of view on life. There’s always a local wisdom that I’ve never thought about that changes some part of my life for the better.

Q: Where are your favorite weekend getaways?
A: Prince Edward County, for a little wine tasting, lake staring and maybe a campfire.

Q: Where would you like to go that you have never been to before?
A: Paris. For all the nerdy classic tourist reasons.

Q: What is your best vacation memory?
A: I went whale watching in Tofino, and being around the whales (and) in their home is such a humbling experience. It’s a reminder about how awe-inspiring nature is.

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

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER

Dollar charges renters extra for vehicle already returned to site

By Christopher Elliott | KING FEATURES SYNDICATE

My wife and I recently reserved a Jeep Compass from Dollar to be picked up in Phoenix and returned at Albuquerque International Sunport. When we arrived in Phoenix, we verbally declined the extra insurance and roadside assistance because we already have coverage through our own insurance.

But the car had issues. We had to fill a tire with air daily, and the “check oil” lights flashed a warning while we were driving. We returned the car a few hours later in Albuquerque. An employee checked the car; we unloaded our bags and told him about the leaky tire and engine light. He took the keys and told us we were good to go. He didn’t give us a receipt.

When we looked at our paperwork, we saw we’d been charged for the insurance we declined. We tried to fix it at the desk, but they told us to call customer service. We flew home to Texas that afternoon. A few weeks later, we got a text saying the car was overdue.

We called and explained we’d returned it. Then we got a letter threatening repossession. We called again and were told the matter was “under review.” Eventually, Dollar claimed we returned the car “in person” a few days after we returned home.

Our credit card company eventually posted a charge of \$3,656. We disputed it, and for a while, it seemed resolved. But now Dollar has sent us a new invoice for \$1,858. It won’t acknowledge our airline tickets or any proof that we were home in Texas. Can you help us stop this bill?
— *Dennis Drake, in Carrollton, Texas*

A: Dollar should’ve closed your contract the second you handed over the keys in Albuquerque. When a car rental company accepts a vehicle, its internal systems ought to reflect this return immediately. If a car needs maintenance — like yours did with that leaky tire — it’s the company’s job to track its movement to the repair shop without blaming the customer.

You made several errors that I’ll tell you how to correct. First, you should never drive a rental car with mechanical problems. Pull over and call the rental company. If it’s a minor issue, they’ll ask you to drive it to the nearest location. But if it’s serious, you might have to get the car towed.

Also, you left the lot without a printed or emailed receipt. Always wait for this piece of paper or an email confirmation. If the handheld scanner isn’t working, go to the counter for

your paperwork. A receipt is your “get out of jail free” card.

You were also charged for insurance that you didn’t want. Rental agents often bury these charges in the digital signature pad. In a follow-up email, you admitted that you signed the rental contract without reading it carefully, which is why your initial credit card dispute likely failed.

But you also did a few things right. You did a great job of keeping your paperwork once you were charged extra. You had your flight itineraries and Southwest Airlines documents, proving you were in the air while Dollar claimed you were still joyriding in its Jeep. When a company ignores your logic, you can find executive contacts (for Hertz, which owns Dollar) on my advocacy site, Elliott.org. A brief, polite email to one of them might’ve turned this around for you.

I reached out to Hertz on

your behalf. “Our internal review found that the customer’s contract was not properly closed and processed when it was returned,” a Hertz spokeswoman told me.

The vehicle went to a maintenance lot for service and sat there for days. Because it didn’t have tracking technology enabled, the system assumed that you still had it.

Hertz has apologized and issued a full refund for the rental and the insurance that you didn’t want. It also dropped the \$1,858 “overdue” bill. Next time, please don’t leave the lot until the computer says you’re home free, even if you have a plane to catch.

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.