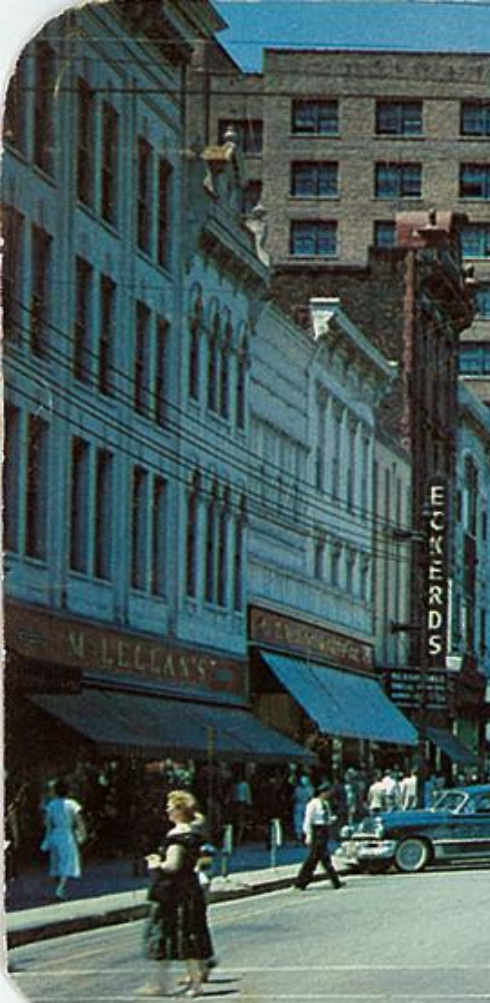


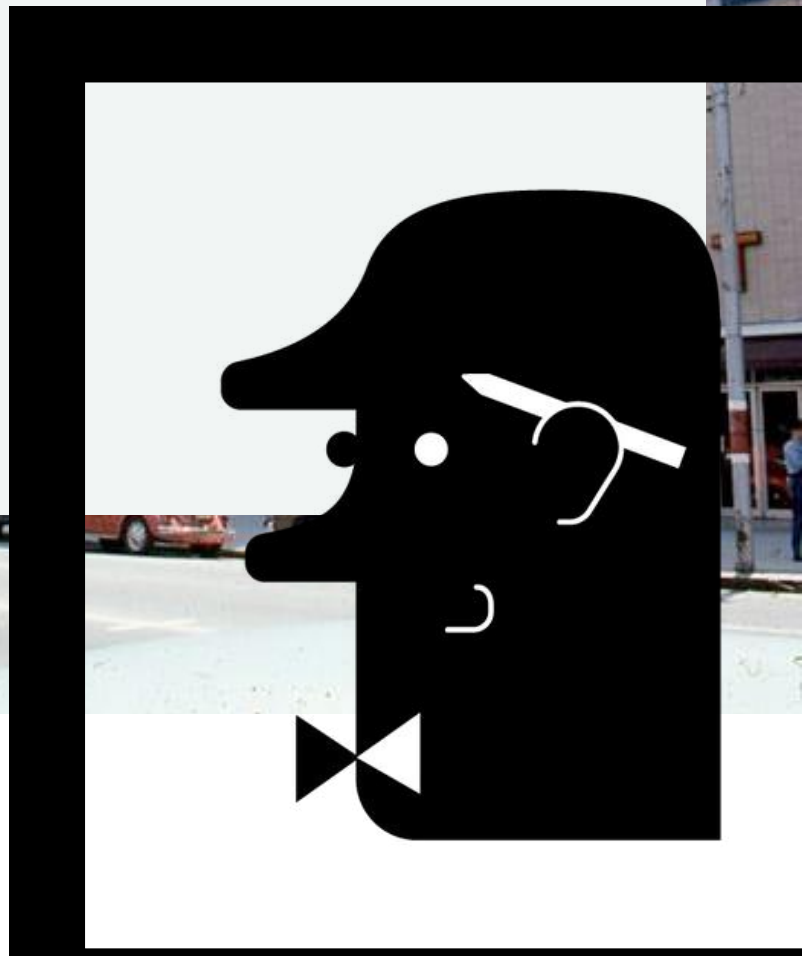
no. 1 | oct. '24

The News paper





He's the anti-gatekeeper
He's the anti-algorithm
He's the lever of culture
He's the fulcrum of community
He's the one you ask
He's the one you tell
He's the champion of access
He's the purveyor of time
He's the guardian of common good
He's the keeper of shared wisdom
He's the elephant in the room
He's the Jack in the box
He's the ace up your sleeve
He's your man in shirtsleeves
He's your neighbor
He's your friend
He's your Newsagent



THE
Newsagents

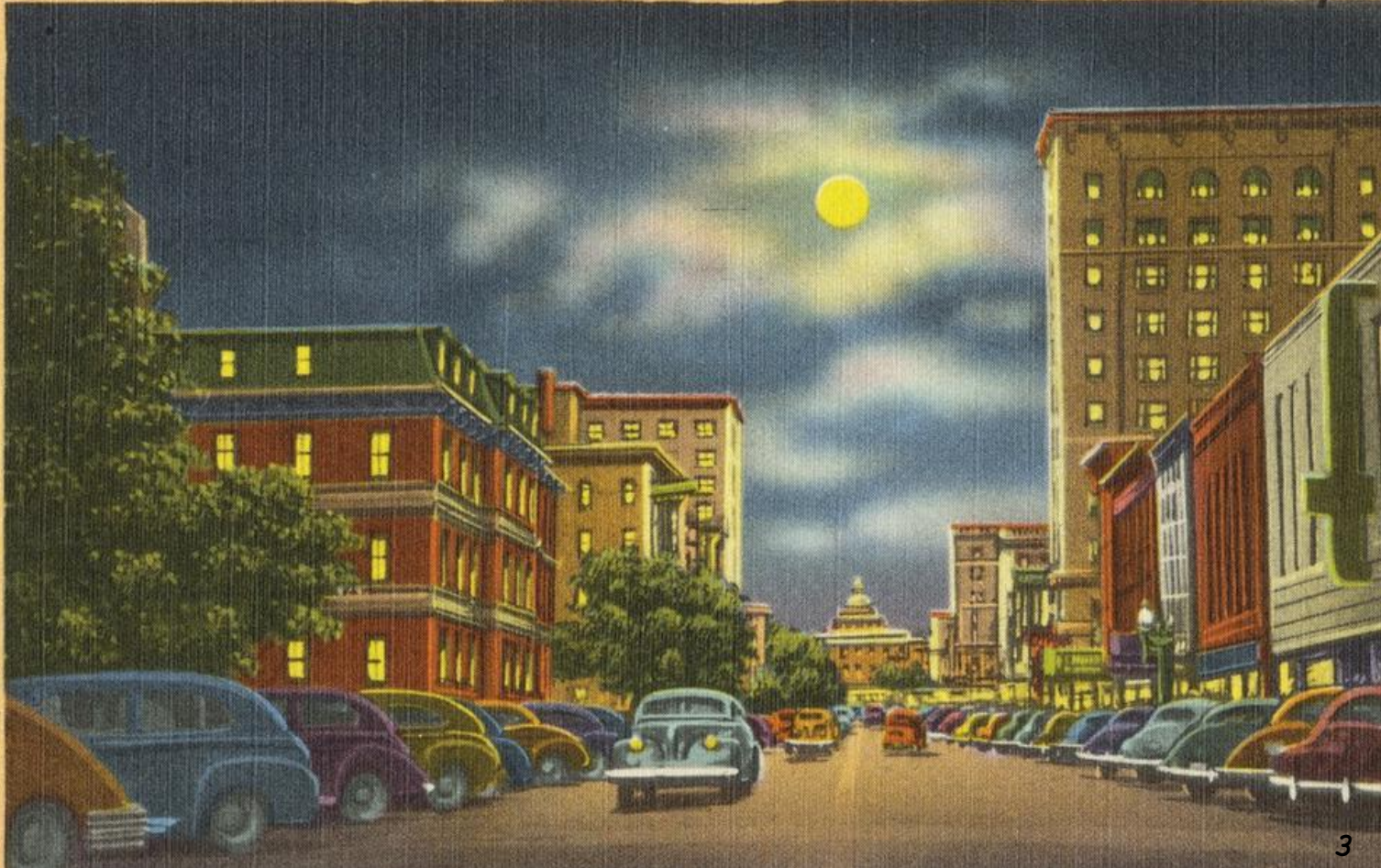
FAYETTEVILLE STREET, RALEIGH, N. C.—47



YOU ARE HERE.

Fayetteville Street looking towards State Capitol at night, Raleigh, N. C.

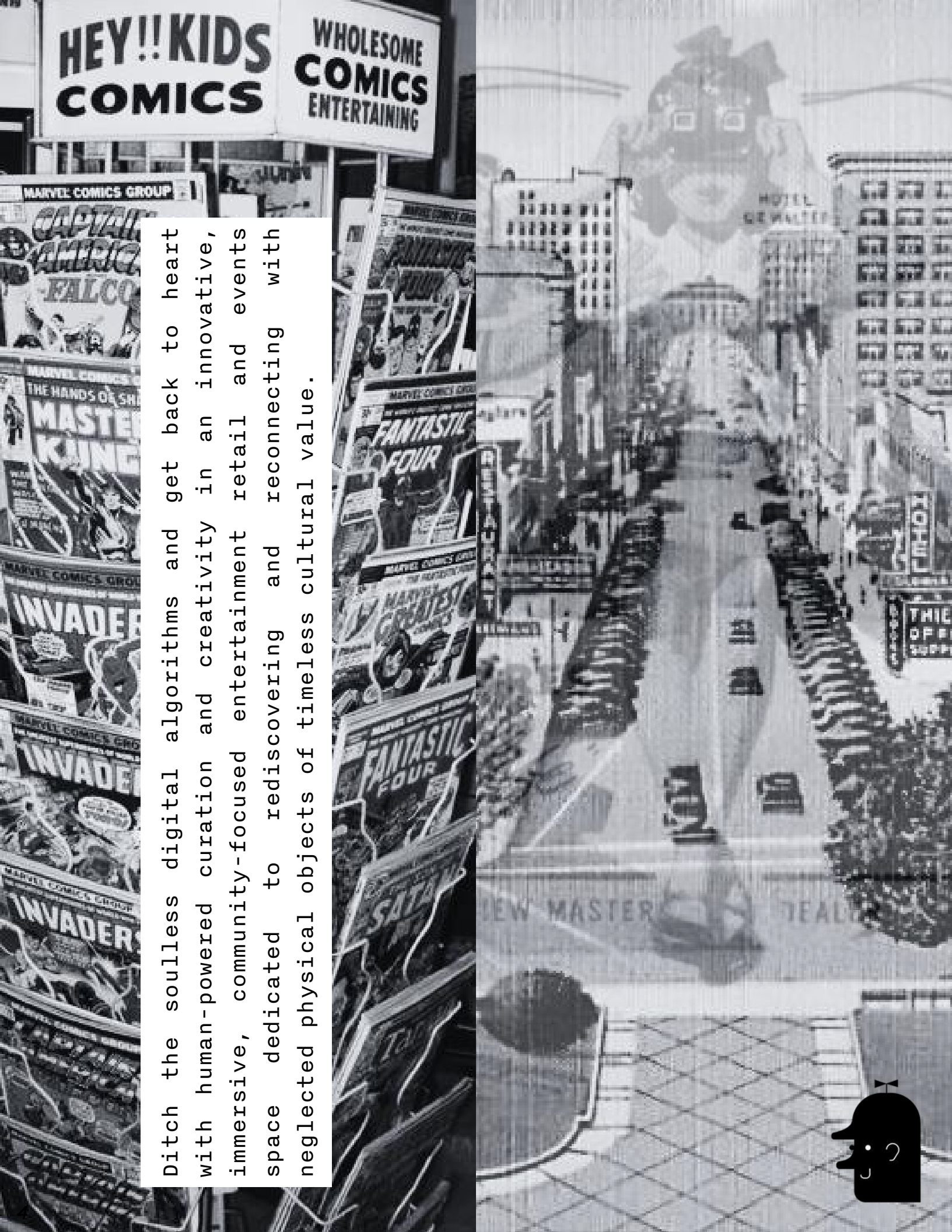
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**HEY!! KIDS
COMICS**

**WHOLESALE
COMICS
ENTERTAINING**

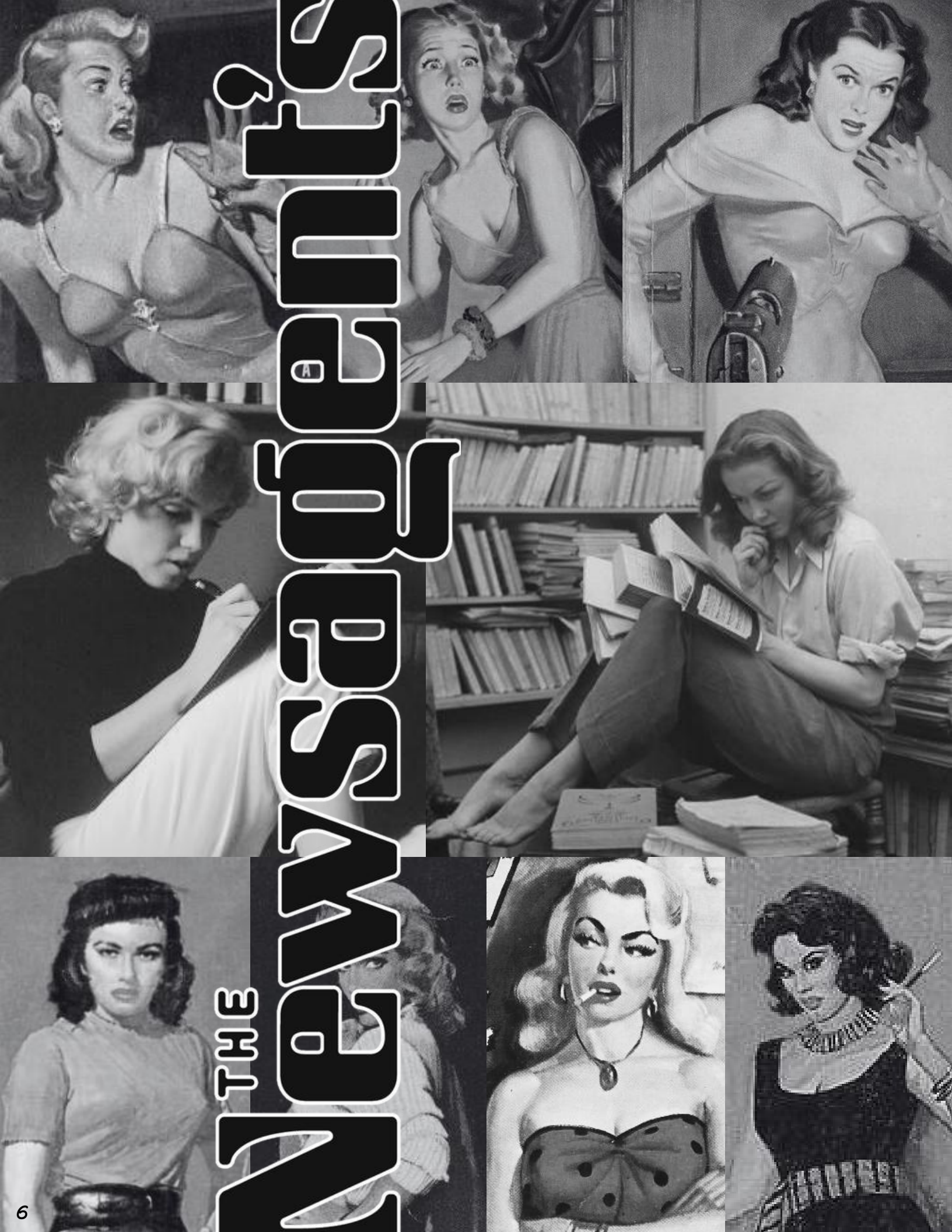
Ditch the soulless digital algorithms and get back to heart with human-powered curation and creativity in an innovative, immersive, community-focused entertainment retail and events space dedicated to rediscovering and reconnecting with neglected physical objects of timeless cultural value.

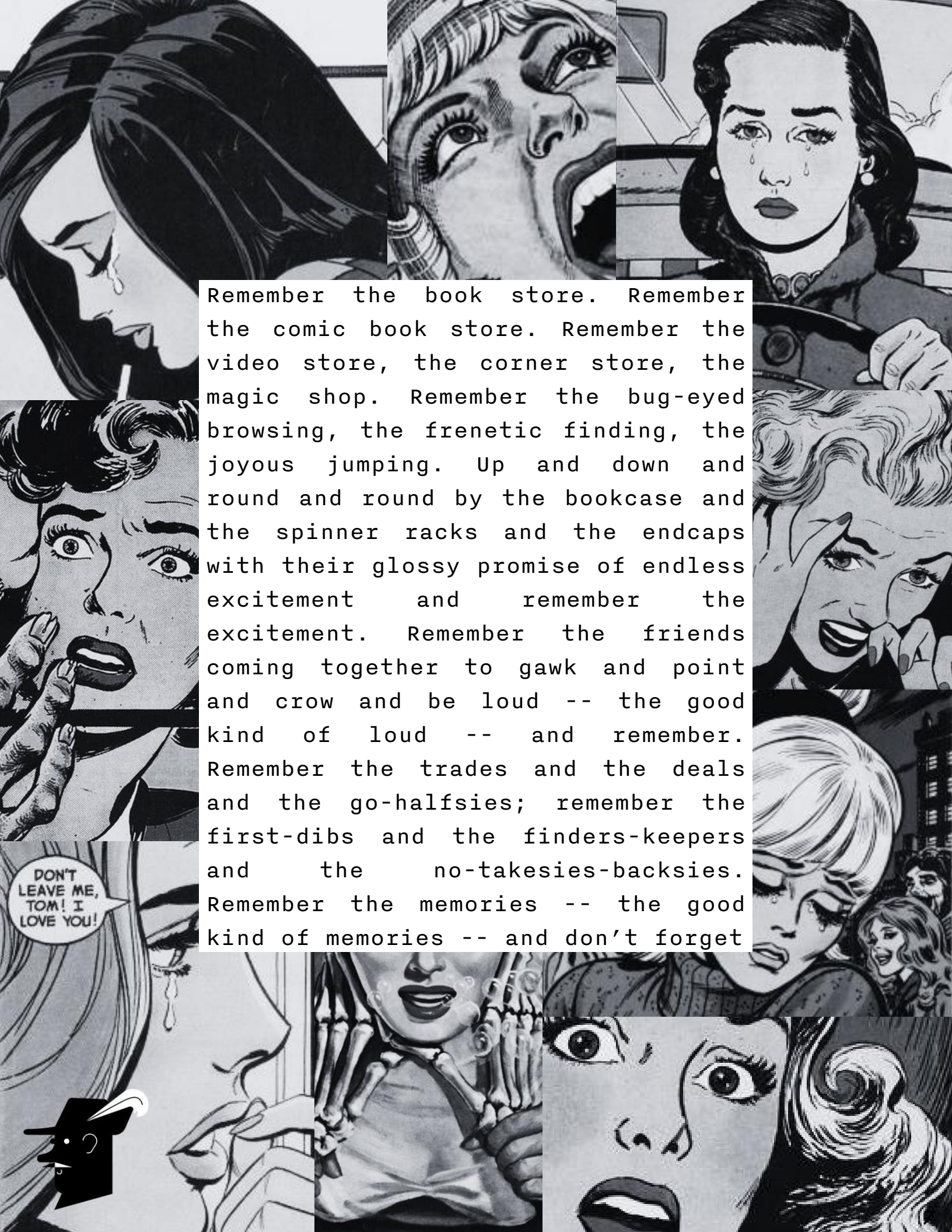




Newsagents

BRING BACK THE MAGICAL IMAGINATION-SPARKING EPHEMERA OF PAST YOUTH. A TIME WHEN CEREAL BOXES HAD FREE MISSHAPEN TOYS INSIDE; KIDS MAGAZINES CAME WITH SCIENCE EXPERIMENTS; RANDOM TACTILE OBJECTS WOULD SOMEHOW FIND THEIR WAY INTO HOMES AND DRAWERS AND CHESTS AND BECOME THE WHIMSICAL STUFF OF INSPIRATION AND PLAY FOR THE CHILDREN WHO WOULD GO ON TO BECOME CREATIVE, THOUGHTFUL ADULTS, THE ENGINEERS OF A FUTURE FULL OF POSSIBILITY, IMPERVIOUS TO (OR AT LEAST WARY AND SUSPICIOUS OF) THE CULTURE-FLATTENING EFFECTS OF ALGORITHMS AND THE DOOM OF INFINITE SCROLLING.





Remember the book store. Remember the comic book store. Remember the video store, the corner store, the magic shop. Remember the bug-eyed browsing, the frenetic finding, the joyous jumping. Up and down and round and round by the bookcase and the spinner racks and the endcaps with their glossy promise of endless excitement and remember the excitement. Remember the friends coming together to gawk and point and crow and be loud -- the good kind of loud -- and remember. Remember the trades and the deals and the go-halfsies; remember the first-dibs and the finders-keepers and the no-takesies-backsies. Remember the memories -- the good kind of memories -- and don't forget

DON'T LEAVE ME, TOM! I LOVE YOU!



THE NEWSAGENT'S

A DOORWAY TO GOOD THINGS OPENS IN DOWNTOWN RALEIGH

RALEIGH—A shared love brought people together for the first time today, reviving in them the ethereal ties that physically bind us to one another across space and time. This serendipitous union of kindred spirits unlocked a glowing cosmic portal to the boundless Earthly delights of empathy, patience, compassion, kindness, and joy.

Continued on 228



The Newsagent's Manifesto

Some of this will seem obvious, but it bears saying anyway. There are nearly 200 million items stored at the Library of Congress. The internet, by last count, contains approximately 250 TRILLION gigabytes of data - a number which doubles every year (and that's before factoring in AI). And TikTok reports that an estimated 34,000,000 new videos (of deeply questionable merit) are uploaded each and every day. The bottom line is that there is a lot of /stuff/ out there, and there will be lots more stuff by the time you're done reading this sentence. By contrast, content companies are constantly trying to limit our access to the good stuff. There are merely 4,000 film titles in the Netflix app, and many of them are cursed "Netflix Originals." Compare that to the 100,000 titles boasted by Netflix's now-defunct DVD-by-mail service at its peak. Amazon's Prime Video -- the undisputed champion of streaming content (by volume) -- has a mere 12,000 titles available to stream, which has dwindled down from nearly 15,000 just 3 years ago. So on the one hand there are too many things. That's a problem. But the things you want -- or, more correctly, the things you need -- are not necessarily the things you're getting. That's another problem. And the things you are getting are most often 1) self-serving, 2) soul-sucking, and 3) stress-inducing. That might be the most harmful problem of all, as recent APA-backed studies suggest social ties are rapidly dissolving under the weight of internet-provoked stress, resulting in an unprecedented epidemic of loneliness.

1) **Problem: Inundation.** Over 500 hours of video content are uploaded to YouTube every single minute. Back-of-the-envelope math suggests it would take over 400 average human lifespans to watch a SINGLE YEAR of YouTube content end to end. That's a lot. And that's just YouTube. Add in the rest of social media, livestreams, on-demand, broadcast, and the entire catalog of cinematic creativity dating back to the Lumière brothers, and you'll be staring at your phone for quite some time. Oh, and don't forget about music, literature, paintings, theater, journalism, fashion, dance, travel, group texts, photography, shower thoughts, food, gaming, and sleep. Actually, forget sleep. Who has time for sleep? Another 500 hours of video content were just uploaded to YouTube. **Solution: Curation.** "So many books, so little time" is a quote attributed by the internet to Frank Zappa, though given the source, it is just as likely to have been uttered by Abraham Lincoln or Albert Einstein or Marilyn Monroe. Still, the sentiment remains valid. There are indeed too many things to read or watch or listen to or scroll through, and far too little time to consume it all, let alone digest it. But here's the good news: You don't need to consume it all. In fact, you barely need to consume the overwhelming majority of it. "Information is not knowledge," is one thing Zappa definitely did say (though the internet would have you believe it was Einstein). Enter: Curation. Incidentally, the origin of the word -- from the Latin "curare," meaning "to take care" -- survives in the Italian word "curato," or parish priest. In other words, the godly servant tasked with taking care of his parishioners' souls, as pointed out by writer Kyle Chayka in his instructive anti-algorithm tome "Filterworld." Ah, the dreaded Algo. The mortal arch-enemy of our hero, The Curator. Where the curator takes care to weave the strands of culture into a colorful yet coherent tapestry of diverse and meaningful threads, carefully connecting the dots with context and concern for the impact of his influence, the algorithm happily discards history on a whim and flagrantly ignores the best interests of its digital prey in service of its sole (evil) mission: To inundate and disorient. Why? Because an inundated and disoriented mind has no time to stop and think. An inundated and disoriented mind has no time to stop and dream. "Imagination is more important than knowledge," Albert Einstein once (actually) said. The Algorithm detests imagination. Imagination is unpredictable. Imagination is unprogrammable. Imagination is far too serendipitous, far too human for the algorithm. "But the algorithm knows me," you say. "It knows what I like." Sure. It knows what you've told it you like. But what about all the things you don't yet know you'll like? All the things you have yet to discover you like? What about all the things you are too busy being inundated in likes to imagine liking? Like, for instance, Frank Zappa.

2) **Problem: Distraction.** "But I don't want to sit around analyzing complex time signatures," you push back. "I just want to mindlessly scroll through endless iterations of the same viral trend until I nod off and let the phone gently slip out of my hand and onto my face." See, but that's a problem. Neil Postman first published "Amusing Ourselves to Death," his iconic dissertation on the creeping threat of modern man's insatiable appetite for entertainment a full two generations before TikTok. In the book, Postman praises a warning shot fired by Aldous Huxley in "Brave New World" nearly three generations before the public unveiling of the World Wide Web. "What Huxley feared was that there would be no reason to ban a book, for there would be no one who wanted to read one." Huxley himself, expanding on his own ominous prediction some 30 years later in "Brave New World Revisited," amplified his alarm for what he deemed "man's almost infinite appetite for distractions," festering in the lengthening shadow of "a vast mass communications industry, concerned in the main neither with the true nor the false, but with the unreal, the more or less totally irrelevant." He goes on: "In 'Brave New World' non-stop distractions of the most fascinating nature are deliberately used as instruments of policy, for the purpose of preventing people from paying too much attention to the realities of the social and political situation."

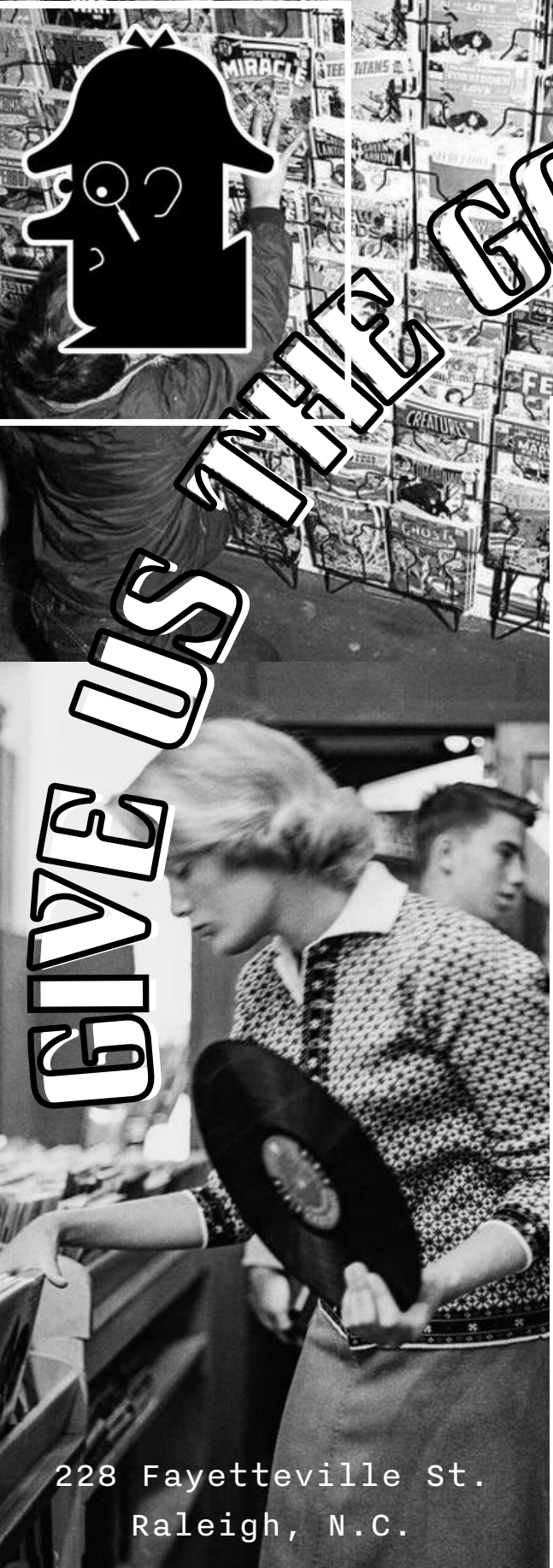
Solution: Deliberation. "Only the vigilant can maintain their liberties," Huxley asserts. Now, granted, the man clearly hated fun, as his extended lament for "the irrelevant other worlds of sport and soap opera, of mythology and metaphysical fantasy" make clear, but he was nonetheless on to something. Distraction is too easy to come by these days, and whether or not distraction is the soma-addled harbinger of our certain doom, it certainly doesn't help. Huxley and Thomas Jefferson (maybe) prescribed vigilance as the antidote to the venom of distraction, but despite their approximation neither could have fully predicted the rise of the Bravest of All New Worlds: Social Media -- where "man's almost infinite appetite for distractions" meets the algorithm's completely infinite feed for distracting man. The War on Attention being waged online will not be won through vigilance alone. After all: Paying attention is quite challenging when you have none to spare. Remember imagination? Now think of poor ol' Proust, too busy mindlessly scrolling to analyze complex time signatures, unable to pause long enough to partake of wistful cookies and consider their taste. A truly tragic loss.

Enter: Deliberation. Defined as "slow and careful movement or thought," deliberation is imbued with a sense of mindfulness, a state of intentional agency that acts as a natural levee against the hurried stream of social media's disenfranchising distractions. Deliberation may at first appear old fashioned with its emphasis on slowing down and making time but make no mistake: This is a quiet revolution. "The quest for slowness," says Slow Food Movement founder Carlo Petrini, "which begins as a simple rebellion against the impoverishment of taste in our lives, makes it possible to rediscover taste." Proust regained.

3) **Problem: Isolation.** Unfortunately Proust is, quite ironically, not alone in holding the past up to the present with modernist melancholy. A recent American Psychological Association survey found that "74% of those ages 18 to 34 and 70% of those ages 35 to 44 say it's harder to connect with people today than in the past." Furthermore, "70% of 18--34-year-olds and 65% of 35--44-year-olds say they wish someone would check in with them more frequently." That's what I (and the Surgeon General of the United States) would call a real Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation. "The mortality impact of being socially disconnected is similar to that caused by smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day, and even greater than that associated with obesity and physical inactivity," says Dr. Vivek H. Murthy in his terrifying 2023 report entitled Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation. "Loneliness and social isolation increase the risk for premature death by 26% and 29% respectively." That can't be good. **Solution: Congregation.** Dr. Murthy's call to action concludes by drawing a straight line between letting loneliness continue to spiral out of control, and letting the nation do the same. "We will continue to splinter and divide," he warns, "until we can no longer stand as a community or a country." There is no doubt the pandemic did a number on us, but as the Surgeon General points out in his report, the problem of loneliness, though certainly exacerbated by Covid, started long before. The internet promised to bring us closer together, but instead it merely hastened our separation. "The internet is a reflection of our society and that mirror is going to be reflecting what we see," said Vint Cerf in 2004. "If we do not like what we see in that mirror the problem is not to fix the mirror, we have to fix society." A month after the so-called "Father of the Internet" gave that quote to the BBC, a Harvard student named Mark Zuckerberg launched a website called TheFacebook. Is the internet to blame for everything that has transpired since? Is society? Either way, how do we fix it? Enter: Congregation. When Cerf tested positive for the novel coronavirus in 2020, he immediately hopped on social media and linked to a YouTube video criticizing then-President Donald Trump for his handling of the pandemic. Step 1: Log off. "By 2027, less than 15% of the population will actively participate in the digital world unless it's for work," predicts cultural futurist Rachel Haywire. Bold? Yes. Too bold? Perhaps. A New Consumer survey found that Gen Z respondents still "feel most like themselves" online versus offline, but the gap is narrower than you might expect (just 5 percent). And interest in "dumb" internet-free technology is exploding among young adults (42 percent of Gen Z and millennials say they're into it, compared to 26% of Boomers). Step 2: Join in. "The promise of social media uniting humanity is broken," say a full two-thirds of Gen Z according to a recent Tumblr poll. Sorry, Mr. Cerf. An overwhelming majority of Gen Z -- 84% to be exact -- say that being part of a community is more important to them "than standing out as 'popular.'" Most Gen Z define community as a "sense of belonging" (66%) and demand that online communities offer offline activities (62%). Step 3: Hold on. There's still plenty of work to be done to break the virtual pain box of social media. In a survey of 2,000 Gen Z Americans sponsored by phone-maker LG, three-quarters reported feeling miserable while spending time on social media. Over half said their feed "doesn't match what they want to see." And the most common response to "why do you use social media" was "boredom." Still, a 2024 Pew Research Center study revealed that more Americans than ever are on social media, with every social network reporting at least modest growth in user numbers. Well over 5 billion social media accounts are said to be currently active -- up more than double from 10 years ago. Still, can you blame the internet? Or society? For one thing, where are people supposed to go? "The unfortunate, ongoing disappearance of 'third places'" -- those all-too-critical neighborhood haunts that are neither work, nor school, nor home -- is hiding in the marginalia of Murthy's report, responsible for "increasing loneliness, especially among youth," says The Week. "Do Yourself a Favor and Go Find a 'Third Place'," beseeches The Atlantic, which points out that the number of Americans who report having a "favorite local place" dropped by double digits in the first two years of the pandemic. This is a decline hastened by Covid, but years in the making. "Today people frequently spend their leisure time in solitude with their personal screens." The physical, mental, and social benefits of third places are too numerous to mention ("essential for wellbeing, productivity and happiness" declared the BBC), but can be simply summed up in three familiar boons: 1) Curation: Clear your mind of disorienting digital clutter to free up space for serendipity, 2) Deliberation: Intentionally slow you down so you can focus on savoring the moment, and 3) Congregation: Provide you with a real space for the real you to meet real people and get real.

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