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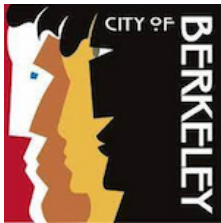


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BERKELEY SEEKS COVID-19 MESSAGING

Berkeley is looking for a firm to develop COVID-19 communications strategies and messaging to prevent the spread of the virus among the city's most vulnerable communities.



The \$300K push to increase vaccination rates is targeted at "African American/Black, Hispanic/Latinx residents, as well as those living in neighborhoods where the average household income is significantly less than the average for the city," according to the RFP.

The effort will include engagement with key community messengers (e.g., faith leaders, educators, healthcare workers, radio personalities, local shop owners and barbers) via traditional and social media and "other creative channels."

Proposals are due Sept. 2. They are to be emailed with "COVID-19 Public Health Messaging" and "Specification No. 21-11464-C" in the subject line to purchasing@cityof-berkeley.info.

[Read the RFP \(PDF\)](#).

KELLOGG FOUNDATION ADDS B-M VET MURPHY

The WK Kellogg Foundation has hired Michael Murphy as VP-communications to handle US and international outreach and provide counsel to CEO La June Montgomery Tabron.

He joins the Battle Creek, MI, organization from the Cleveland Foundation, where he was chief marketing officer in charge of its brand strategy and reputation management.



Michael Murphy

Murphy, who joined CF in 2013, worked with city, county, public and private sector officials to promote equity and equality for people living in Greater Cleveland.

At Burson-Marsteller, he was managing director in its corporate and financial practice.

Murphy held the senior VP post at FleishmanHillard, handling reputation campaigns and organizing coalitions and community partnerships for grassroots campaigns. He also managed the Omnicom unit's FH Out Front practice to connect clients in the LGBTQ+ community.

Murphy, who also did a stint as spokesperson for Fox News' DC bureau, began his career at Ketchum.

Founded by cereal entrepreneur Will Keith Kellogg, the Foundation works to create opportunities for vulnerable children.

MMC HIRES GOODFUSE CEO FLEMING

Marina Maher Communications has recruited Olga Fleming as president of its healthcare and corporate businesses. Fleming was most recently CEO of Goodfuse, a boutique communications agency within the BCW Group of companies. Before that, she was an executive vice president at Cohn & Wolfe. Fleming will oversee healthcare across MMC and specialist agency RXMosaic, in addition to leading MMC's corporate practice.



Olga Fleming

MMC also appointed Courtney Walker as managing director to lead RXMosaic and spearhead healthcare new business. Walker was managing director of Goodfuse.

MALAYSIAN PALM OIL COUNCIL TAPS DCI

The Malaysian Palm Oil Council has hired DCI Group for a public affairs push to support its efforts to improve the labor and human rights policies and practices in Malaysia.

Human Rights Watch reports that the coalition that came to power in Malaysia in March 2020 launched a crackdown on media freedom, free speech, refugees and migrants.

Malaysia accounted for 25.8 percent of the world's palm oil production and 34.3 percent of exports in 2020.

DCI also will enhance the market expansion of Malaysian palm oil by creating better acceptance of it through awareness of various "techno-economic" advantages and environmental sustainability, according to its Justice Dept. filing.

FGH'S ALLEN GOES TO STATE DEPT.

President Biden has named Finsbury Glover Hering partner Elizabeth Allen assistant secretary of state for global public affairs at the U.S. Department of State.

During the 2020 campaign, Allen took a leave of absence from Finsbury, where she specializes in message and campaign strategy, crisis management, and leadership communications, to serve as communications director for VP candidate Kamala Harris.

She was previously a managing director at Glover Park Group. Before that, she held several senior communications positions in the Obama administration.



Elizabeth Allen

TENEO SNAGS SCHOENAUER

Teneo has recruited Felix Schoenauer, who was a partner at Hering Schuppener Consulting, to open an outpost in Germany.



Felix Schonhauer

During a 10-year run at HSC, he handled corporate positioning, capital market transactions, activist threats, internal communications and media training.

Earlier he was engagement manager at Dell Technologies' Emc2 unit and UK correspondent for Germany's *Handelsblatt*, the business and financial daily.

At Teneo, Schoenauer will report to Phillippe Blanchard, president of continental Europe. Schoenauer will be based in Frankfurt.

PETCO CMO HASSAN SHIFTS TO MCDONALD'S

Petco chief marketing officer Tariq Hassan is heading to McDonald's, where he will take on the role of chief marketing and digital customer experience officer for McDonald's US.

Hassan had led marketing for Petco since 2018, leading a team of over 200. He was previously a senior VP at Bank of America Merrill Lynch; served as an executive VP for Omincom, based in Dubai; and was VP, worldwide marketing and communication at HP.



Tariq Hassan

Hassan will focus on improving the company's customer experience, according to a memo from McDonald's USA president Joe Erlinger.

He succeeds Morgan Flatley, who has been promoted to global CMO. Alistair Macrow, who previously held the global CMO position, will now serve as CEO for the United Kingdom & Ireland.

MARKETERS CLUELESS ABOUT GAUGING ROI

While eight out of 10 marketers say that they are under pressure to prove marketing ROI, almost half (47 percent) admit they don't have the skills or ability necessary to calculate it, according to [a new study conducted by Propeller Insights](#) for marketing performance management company Allocadia.

One big problem cited is that marketers often do not trust their own data. A majority (61 percent) of those surveyed said that they are not confident in that data, and as a result, they don't incorporate ROI into their decision making.

That may account for why many marketers only measure ROI infrequently. Just 42 percent of respondents said they measure ROI monthly, and over 20 percent said they let at least six months go by between measurements.

Communicating the importance of ROI across all departments of a company is also seen as a challenge. More than four in 10 respondents (43 percent) say that marketing leaders are not aligned with finance and sales when it comes to ROI.

In addition, some respondents also said they didn't have access to the budgets or budget decisions that they need to calculate the return on any of their marketing activities.

However, those surveyed said that ROI remains the most critical measurement of assessing the effectiveness of marketing efforts, with 96 percent indicating that they use it.

MIKE LINDELL: MASTER PUBLICIST

The ex-President Trump sycophant Mike Lindell is a PR marvel. There is no media coverage about him that doesn't first identify Lindell as the "My Pillow Guy," and in case you've missed his ads appearing across all media platforms, he makes and sells pillows he claims promote better sleep.

Lindell has figured out how to keep himself and his product in front of the public by proclaiming himself the ayatollah of non-existent voting fraud. According to Lindell, he has iron clad "proof" the Chinese government stole the 2020 election on behalf of President Joe Biden. The only problem is, he has yet to produce that proof.



Mike Foley

Unfazed by that failure, Lindell has repeatedly said Trump will be reinstated as president. The first date was August 13, the day after his bogus "cyber symposium" closed, where he and a parade of delusional Trump dead-enders staged a kabuki theater in South Dakota that received wall-to-wall coverage on the Trump propaganda outlet One America News.

Facing eroding support among the Orange Man's true believers, however, Lindell moved the goalposts again, declaring Trump will triumphantly return to the White House by New Year's Day, 2022.

Lindell cannot possibly believe his own sheepdip. He was smart enough to build a small fortune selling pillows on television. What he has managed to do is keep the media spotlight on himself and by extension, his pillow business, garnering sustained earned media coverage most publicists can only dream about.

A cynical strategy? Of course, but the sideshow must go on, and pillows must be sold... and they'd better keep selling because Lindell is facing lawsuits for defaming Dominion Voting Systems and Smartmatic that could end up with Mike using one of his pillows to sleep on a park bench.

Kevin Foley owns [KEF Media](#) in Atlanta.

MEDIA MANEUVERS

Nexstar Media acquires **The Hill** for \$130M. Nexstar, which became the largest owner of local TV stations in the country following its 2018 acquisition of Tribune Media, says the deal will allow the company to expand its digital reach and political coverage. It also says that the combination of The Hill and Nexstar are used by a third of all US digital media viewers, with the transaction making Nexstar the fourth-largest digital news property in the country, ahead of Fox, ABC, CBS, the *New York Times* and BuzzFeed. According to Comscore, The Hill had 48 million average monthly users and 2.2 billion total pageviews in 2020.



The Washington Post is bolstering its TikTok team. The company is looking for an associate producer and community editor to expedite the growth of the channel. The Post says the TikTok channel is its most popular, with more than one million followers. It currently produces 10 TikToks per week, addressing topics covered by the paper. "When we launched our TikTok channel two years ago, we saw an opportunity to deliver the news in a unique way and reach new audiences," said director of editorial video Micah Gelman.

AUTHENTICITY REQUIRES COLLABORATION

As brand-builders, we are all by now familiar with the importance of purpose-driven branding. But seemingly on a daily basis, companies are still getting it wrong: in too many cases, social impact marketing falls flat, is ignored or, in the worst cases, generates backlash.



Marie de Foucaud

A lack of authenticity is a typical diagnosis when an effort doesn't land, but there is so much more to a company's purpose than whether or not a corporate social responsibility (CSR) effort seems on-brand or not. Even if a jewelry house establishes transparent sourcing practices or a fashion house reduces material waste, the effort must

go beyond making sense on paper—it must resonate with the human audience we seek to inform. To get it right, we must look outside a brand's doors.

Marketing is a field of value creation. To position brands in the marketplace, we must not only identify the value in the brand's product or service, we must imbue it with merit. Influencing sales is no longer enough in our field, impact must be synonymous with the brand, and this is where purpose comes in.

But it isn't possible for most brands to execute on purpose based on their own inherent knowledge. To create value beyond a product or service, win-win collaborations between companies and stakeholders are key.

If we take our hypothetical jewelry house as an example, how can that organization begin to map out a supplier program that truly impacts at-risk communities? The answer is with external partnerships. Trusted NGOs, local community leaders, and even multilateral organizations are eager to weigh in with their geopolitical and development expertise about the best way to engage, and their expertise is not a resource we can afford to let go to waste.

By bringing stakeholders to the table in the beginning phases of a project, companies can ensure a better understanding of the issue landscape and set themselves up for success. Outside expertise can illuminate blindspots, uncover landmines and be the shortcut on the path to impact.

In addition to win-win solutions, developing stakeholder relationships from the outset helps garner the kind of buy-in that will ultimately feed the success of a brand initiative. This is another opportunity for brand-building to do its magic.

Assuming our hypothetical jewelry house has met with relevant NGOs and identified a partner who can bring expertise to the table, the opportunities for win-win collaborations are seemingly endless. From a marketing perspective, the NGO's seal of approval has tremendous value, as do jointly-developed materials such as opinion pieces and social media. Now, beyond a pet project, the jewelry house has a valuable, purpose-driven effort that goes beyond lip-service, it has an impactful partnership that plays to its strengths.

And at the end of the day, isn't that what true brand authenticity is all about?

Marie de Foucaud is a brand-building expert with decades of experience leading efforts to improve the reputation and brand identity of discerning and globally-recognized clients. She has served as vice president, global communications at Richard Attias & Associates and headed up worldwide communications for Boucheron-Kering Group.

UN AGENCY SEEKS PR HELP IN SAUDI ARABIA

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, a non-political humanitarian organization, is looking for a PR firm to help it increase its visibility and brand awareness in Saudi Arabia.

Established in 1950, UNHCR has a staff of 10,966 people in 128 countries that help 65.6M stateless people.

UNHCR's success is contingent upon "engaging people and communities to create positive sentiment and behavior towards refugees," according to the RFP.

A UNHCR survey in Saudi Arabia found that only 52 percent of its people are "somewhat familiar" with the agency's work.

Since the Government of Saudi Arabia is a strategic partner of UNHCR—donating more than \$300M during the past decades—the agency wants to "increase familiarity, awareness and ultimately trust in the UNHCR brand" in the Kingdom.

UNHCR plans to hire a firm for a three-year run. The pact may be extended for another two years.

There's a possibility that UNHCR may appoint two firms—one primary and one backup.

Responses are due Sept. 7 at <http://etenderbox.unhcr.org>.
[Read the RFP \(PDF\)](#).

HART SAILS TO HUNTINGTON INGALLS PR POST

Huntington Ingalls Industries, shipbuilder for the US Navy, has named Brooke Hart executive VP-communications, effective Sept. 27.

She succeeds Jerri Dickeski, who is retiring after more than 30 years of service.

Hart will assume media relations, executive communications, crisis management, special events, social media, branding and corporate image work.

She joins the Newport News, VA-based operation from aerospace/defense contractor Sierra Nevada. She also worked at Pew Charitable Trusts and as a journalist for NBC News.

Based in DC, Hart will report to Mike Petters, CEO.

HII has built more than 70 percent of the Navy's surface fleet and is the sole supplier of aircraft carriers.



Brooke Hart

FTI LAUNCHES ROCKET LAB'S SPAC MISSION

[FTI Consulting](#) is handling Rocket Lab USA's \$777M merger with Vector Acquisition Corp. blank check company led by technology investor Alex Slusky, a former McKinsey consultant and Microsoft executive.

Founded in 2006, Rocket Lab provides end-to-end mission services for civil, defense and commercial markets.

The Long Beach, CA-based company has launch facilities in Virginia and New Zealand.

On Aug 23, it announced that NASA had given the green light for the Escapade science mission to Mars that will feature two of Rocket Lab's Photon spacecraft.

Rocket Lab CEO Peter Beck said the deal with Vector will "accelerate the ability to unlock the full potential of space through our launch and spacecraft platforms" with the support of public shareholders.

FTI Consulting's Antonia Gray handles Rocket Labs, while Gasthalter & Co's Nathaniel Garnick and Grace Cartwright work for Vector.

FEW USERS SEE NEWS ON FACEBOOK

Facebook has long been considered a top news resource for many Americans. However, the content created by news publishers comprises only a small fraction of what Facebook users actually see in their news feeds, according to Facebook's [Widely Viewed Content Report](#).

The report, created to provide a complete picture regarding what content Facebook users see in their news feeds, found that the majority (57 percent) of the content people see on Facebook are posts from friends and people they follow. Less than a quarter (19.3 percent) of the content people see comes from posts belonging to groups that the user has joined, 14.3 percent comes from posts belonging to pages that user follows and eight percent comes from unconnected posts.

In total, only about a tenth (9.5 percent) of all news feed content views in the U.S. involved content that wasn't shared by friends, joined groups or followed pages. And as it turns out, news publishers' content accounts for only a tiny fraction of that share: The top 20 domains to appear in Facebook users' news feed accounted for about 1.9 percent of all news feed content views in the U.S. during 2021's first quarter. And while news publishers are well represented among the top websites commonly seen by Facebook users, the news outlets in that list—cnn.com, nbcnews.com, dailymail.co.uk and cbsnews.com, among others—accounted for only about



0.3 percent of all news feed content views in the U.S. during that period.

In other words, even though these top domains get a lot of page views, there are so many pages and so much content on Facebook's news feed that these sites still account for only a small fraction of what people see in their news feeds.

According to Facebook's report, the top news publisher content views went to ABC News (88.1 million), The Daily Mail (86.5 million), NBC News (83.1 million), CNN (82.8 million) and CBS News (77.1 million).

No news site appeared in the list of top ten domains. Sites that received the most news feed views among Facebook users included YouTube (181.3 million), Amazon (134.6 million), Unicef (134.4 million), GoFundMe (124.8 million), Twitter (116.1 million), TikTok (110.7 million) and Spotify (93 million).

Facebook Widely Viewed Content Report analyzed News Feed of public content views among U.S. Facebook users between April 1 and June 30 (referred to as "Q2 2021").

SOLEBURY TROUT BETS ON SPORTRADAR IPO

Solebury Trout is handling the initial public offering of Sportradar Group, a global sports betting company. The IPO will follow the collapse of Sportradar's SPAC deal.

Based in St. Gallen, Switzerland, Sportradar has partnerships with the NBA, MLB, HNL, NASCAR, FIFA and UEFA.

In May, Sportradar announced a partnership with the New York Jets and Baltimore Ravens National Football League teams to help them raise the value of their brands to unlock opportunities in the legal sports betting category.

Sportradar, which will trade on the NASDAQ, posted a 41.6 jump in first-half revenues to \$326M. Profit slipped 10 percent to \$21.6M. It has 2,300 staffers in 19 countries.

Solebury Trout has Ed Yuen and Ankit Hira representing Sportradar.

NC HEALTH & WELLNESS CENTER NEEDS PR

The NC Center for Health & Wellness, which is located at the University of North Carolina at Asheville, wants to hire a firm to handle its marketing communications efforts.

The NCCHW's "Culture of Results" empowerment program and "Healthy Aging NC" initiative seek to impact policy, build capacity and ignite community efforts to build healthier places throughout the Tar Heel State.

The Center serves "historically marginalized populations statewide and builds systems to support the inclusivity and decision-making abilities of these underserved populations long-term," according to the RFP.

Its PR partner will handle branding activities, conduct social media outreach and manage website/e-newsletter messaging to help achieve the organization's long-term sustainable marketing goals.

Proposals are due Sept. 7. They go to mwestererg@unca.edu.

[Read the RFP \(PDF\)](#).



NEWS OF FIRMS

MikeWorldWide launches NIL Fieldhouse, a specialty Name, Image, and Likeness practice area. The practice will counsel brands, athletes and colleges navigating NIL monetization for the first time. It will also work with technology and service providers leading innovation within the industry. A June Supreme Court ruling opened the door for athletes to monetize their name, image and likeness through activities such as autograph signings, endorsements, personal appearances and their social media platforms. MWW has already been retained by the leading NIL marketing platform, OpenDorse. "The lifting of NIL restrictions has created a brand-new category overnight with incredible demand," said MWW president Bret Werner. "Maximizing return in the NIL market requires authentic connections that transcend just the sports world."

BCW Group's boutique agency Goodfuse is becoming part of the company's GCI family of agencies, which includes GCI Health, uncapped, and Curation. GCI global CEO Kristin Cahill and global chief growth officer Eleanor Petigrow will work with Goodfuse EVPs Michael Myers and Holly Hitchen to direct the agency. BCW global CEO Donna Imperato said "the recent leadership transition at Goodfuse presented an exciting opportunity to bring Goodfuse, its outstanding talent and its complementary offerings into the GCI agency family."

KQ Communications of Memphis is partnering with the Public Relations Society of America, Society of Professional Journalists and Black Public Relations Society of Atlanta to launch Sources of Color, an initiative focused on connecting journalists, public relations professionals and sources to secure reputable and diverse voices for news stories. Sources of Color offers such features as chat, video or call functions and the ability to share multimedia resources. A portion of the proceeds from platform memberships will go toward scholarships for students from under-represented backgrounds within PRSA's student organization, PRSSA.



DERRIS FOCUSES WARBY PARKER'S IPO

Derris is handling media for the public listing of Warby Parker Inc., which on Aug. 24 filed a Form S-1 with the Securities and Exchange Commission for the public listing of stock.

Following completion of the SEC review and approval, Warby Parker will trade on the New York Stock Exchange.

Launched in 2010 as a direct-to-consumer marketer of high-quality prescription eyeglasses, the New York-based company now has 145 retailer outlets.

Warby Parker, which is organized as a public benefit corporation, recorded a 52.9 percent jump in first-half revenues to \$270.5M. Net loss narrowed to \$7.3M from \$10M.

Lena Griffin, managing director of Derris, represents Warby Parker.

Derris, which has offices in New York and London, fashions itself as a brand consultancy. It has worked with Harry's, Everlane, Oscar, Reformation, Glossier and Hudson Yards.

GILBERT (AZ) WANTS TOURISM PITCHES

Gilbert, a fast-growing town of 250K people in the metro Phoenix area, wants to book a firm to handle tourism PR.

More than 4M people visited Gilbert and spent \$362M there during the pre-pandemic year of 2019.

Gilbert wants a PR firm to help up those visitor numbers by highlighting its Historic District, which features 30-plus restaurants, entertainment venues, community theater and Cactus Yards (eight ballfields modeled after Major League Baseball parks).

Gilbert's Office of Economic Development plans to issue a one-year contract with work beginning Oct. 19. The agreement may be renewed for two additional one-year terms.

Proposals are due Sept. 10. They go to terry.kelley@gilbertaz.gov.

[Read the RFP \(PDF\).](#)

CANNABIS VET KRANE JOINS KCSA

Kris Krane, founder/president of 4Front Ventures, which cultivates, processes and distributes cannabis in five states, has joined KCSA Strategic Communications.

He will serve as director of cannabis development and open a Chicago office for the New York-based shop, which was the first integrated PR/IR firm to launch a weed practice about eight years ago.



Joan Vollero

Krane will also play an active role on KCSA's "The Green Rush" podcast, which focuses on cannabis and psychedelic businesses.

Prior to setting up 4Front Ventures, a former KCSA client, Krane was director of client services at CannBe, developer of best practices for the medical cannabis sector; associate director at NORML advocacy group; and executive director at Students for Sensible Drug Policy. Currently, he is a board member at the National Cannabis Industry Association.

Lewis Goldberg, KCSA principal/managing director, said Krane "knows everyone in the cannabis industry and has unparalleled access and insight into the players in the space."

ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT

Zapwater Communications books travel apparel brand **NxTSTOP**. The agency will oversee media relations, influencer marketing, strategic partnerships, events and affiliate marketing strategy. It will also work to drive focused awareness around NxTSTOP's product launches and partnerships with global brands. NxTSTOP offers face masks, hats, tops, socks, and travel pants that the company says are designed to meet the versatile needs of travelers while reducing waste in the environment. As part of this mission, it will incorporate sustainable practices into 100 percent of its supply chain and product offering over the next three years.



SourceCode Communications is named agency of record by **Accern**, a no-code, artificial intelligence FinTech company. The agency has kicked off a media relations and thought leadership program for the company. Accern's natural language processing and predictive modeling solution helps financial services professionals analyze millions of structured and unstructured data points more quickly, seamlessly and in real time. "We've been impressed so far with how SourceCode thinks about our story both from the lens of our platform's capabilities as well as how no-code is leveling the playing field for countless professionals and organizations," said Accern vice president of marketing Emma Borochoff.

Rachel Harrison Communications lands **Dream Hollywood** in Los Angeles. RHC launched the partnership by supporting the unveiling of an exhibition of NFT art work in the property's lobby, which was converted into an immersive gallery curated by Crypt Gallery. The west coast flagship of the Dream Hotels chain, Dream Hollywood opened in July 2017 and features 178 guest rooms and suites.

Xhibition wins lifestyle management company **In Residence by Pieter Brundyn**. Xhibition will oversee the launch of new destinations within the company's portfolio and publicize the company's offerings in the luxury villa space. In Residence by Pieter Brundyn is a Cape Town, South Africa-based company that operates an international portfolio of villas that are supported by premier in-house concierge services.



Powerhouse Communications lands **Merchant Centric** to lead its national media relations efforts. Powerhouse's efforts will focus on Merchant Centric's data-driven foodservice insights, and will also include customer engagement and reputation management solutions. Based in Westlake Village, CA, Merchant Centric uses proprietary, industry-specific artificial intelligence to analyze and understand customer feedback and competitive data for clients in the restaurant, automotive, healthcare and veterinary sectors.

SIMBOL Communications, which focuses on clients in the outdoor, cycling and fitness industries, has been engaged to provide PR and communications services for **Enduro Bearings**, which produces bearings, components, seals and tools for the cycling industry. SIMBOL will work with the company to build marketplace awareness and appreciation for its products. Enduro president Matt Harvey said that the agency's "strong relationships with media, brands and athletes seemed like the perfect fit."

COMMENTARY



Quinnipiac University is better known nationally for its political polls rather than its academic excellence.

That's why one must assume it had its finger on the public's pulse when it decided against reopening its "Ireland's Great Hunger Museum," located in Hamden, CT.

The COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing lockdown forced the Museum to shut down last year. The University's board of trustees have voted to keep the Museum's doors locked, which is a slap in the face to 35M Irish-Americans.

The Museum honors the memory of the 1M Irish men, women and children who starved to death from 1845 to 1852 due to the failure of the potato crop and genocidal policies of the ruling English. Another 1M emigrated from Ireland.

Opened in 2012, the Museum says its works, by Irish and Irish-American artists over the last 170 years, represents the "world's largest collection of Great Hunger-related art."

Leo Varadkar, Ireland's former taoiseach (prime minister) and then transport minister, officiated at the opening.

Ireland's government helped fund a Museum exhibition that toured Ireland in 2019. The collection also was on display at Ireland's New York consulate.

The University is tossing overboard the goodwill generated by the Museum.

John Lahey, former president of Quinnipiac, was the driving force behind the Museum. He retired in 2019. He told the *New Haven Register* the Museum provides an "international brand and identity" for Quinnipiac and that its themes "of a people's encounter with bigotry and hatred are universal."

The University says it is looking for a new home for the Irish collection.

"Quinnipiac is in active conversations with potential partners with the goal of placing the collection on display at an organization that will increase access to national and international audiences about Ireland's Great Hunger," said a statement provided to O'Dwyer's by John Morgan, associate VP for PR.

The Irish Voice fears that Quinnipiac may unload the collection to an entity that may break up or sell its contents.

The University is blundering into an unnecessary PR crisis. Reopen the Museum.

What was Spike Lee thinking? The Brooklyn filmmaker had featured 9/11 conspiracy theorists in the final installment of his four-part "NYC Epicenters 9/11-2021" series to be aired next month on HBO.

He interviewed members of the nut job "Architects and Engineers for 9/11 Truth" group, which spread the garbage that the World Trade Center was destroyed by controlled demolition and not by aircraft.

In giving them facetime, Lee justified the group. He then set up a false equivalency situation by including interviews with scientists who trashed the notion that 9/11 was an insider job. The Architects and scientists shouldn't be on the same set,

The filmmaker defended his work, telling the *New York Times* on Aug. 23 that he survived past criticism of his films.

He said it was up to viewers to make up their minds about 9/11. After reviewers hammered Lee for showcasing the 9/11 debunkers, Lee caved and is re-editing the last episode.

His endorsement of the 9/11 conspiracy spreaders is a boost to those who deny the results of the 2020 election and safety of the COVID-19 vaccines.

Does Lee want to be a leader in the army of truth-deniers ripping the nation apart? One wonders if Lee has gotten his COVID-19 shot, or will that be part of his next documentary?

HBO also doesn't emerge from the Epicenters mess smelling like a rose.

Really, Sony? Are you going to replay that charade of picking a successor to late Jeopardy host Alex Trebek?

After auditioning 16 actors, broadcast journalists, TV personalities and Green Bay quarterback Aaron Rogers over seven months, a process that generated positive PR for Sony Pictures Entertainment, the company crowned executive producer Mike Richards as the show's new host. Was the fix in?

As a consolation prize, it picked neuroscientist and Big Bang actress Mayim Bialik to host Jeopardy prime-time specials and spin-offs.

Sony snubbed fan favorites: actor LaVar Burton, who has long expressed a desire to host the show; Jeopardy champions Ken Jennings and Buzzy Cohen; former "CBS Evening News" and "Today" anchor Katie Couric; and Bialik.

Richards, on Aug. 20, withdrew from any hosting duties after it was revealed that he made sexist and offensive comments on a podcast several years ago.

That gave Sony an opportunity to redeem itself by awarding Bialik permanent hosting duties and putting the whole mess behind it. Instead, Sony decided to plod on. It announced Bialik will host the next 15 episodes of the week-night show, while it resumes the search for a new host.

Note to Sony: though the sainted Trebek was loved by millions of fans, you are not searching for a successor to the Pope. It's a game show. Make Bialik the new host and move on.

Who's got the toughest job in PR? My pick is John DeFries, president/CEO of the Hawaii Tourism Authority, as the Aloha State is warning people not to visit through October due to a surge in COVID-19 that is overburdening the health-care system.

Hawaii governor David Inge said on Aug. 23: "Our hospitals are reaching capacity, and our ICUs are filling up. Now is not a good time to travel to Hawaii."

Hawaii tourism was showing a sharp rebound from 2020. The state reported a 121.7 percent jump to \$368 in average daily rate and a 60.1 percent jump in occupancy rates to 82.4 percent from July 2020, when a quarantine order for travelers was in effect.

In releasing those upbeat numbers, DeFries warned that tourism during the fall shoulder season could suffer due to the rise in the Delta variant.

He was right on target.

—Kevin McCauley