

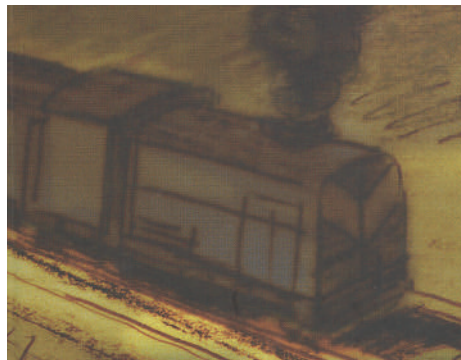
# bridges



LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

\$6

**September 2020**



3 The Commemoration of the Baltic Way

7 Talking About Race

Interview with Andreja Siliūnas, Audrė Budrys Nakas, Marija Čyvas, Aušra Norušis, and Nida Vidutis.

13 UNEXPECTED JOURNEY

Memoir of a Siberian Deportee  
By Juzė Avižienytė-Žukauskienė

2 from the editor

By Karilė Vaitkutė

5 LAC purpose and position

By Arvydas Urbonavičius

19 current events

By Alan Stankus

20 our community

**Front Cover:** On August 23, 2020, commemorating the anniversary of the Baltic Way, Lithuanians expressed solidarity with Belarus. Photo courtesy: Facebook.

**Back Cover:** Lithuanian Americans of the Chicago area commemorated the Baltic Way in the premises of the World Lithuanian Center in Lemont, Illinois by the monuments to the Mother of Freedom Fighters and Adolfas Ramanauskas Vanagas. Photo by Karilė Vaitkutė.

# bridges

Vol. 44 No. 7 / September 2020

Bridges is the English-language publication of the  
**Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.**  
[lithuanian-american.org/bridges](http://lithuanian-american.org/bridges)

EDITOR  
Karilė Vaitkutė

ART DIRECTOR  
Daniel P. Craig, Jr.

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR, CURRENT EVENTS  
Alan J. Stankus, P.E. (ret)

ADVERTISING & SUBSCRIPTION MANAGER  
Marius Naris

**Editorial Office**  
139 Willow Blvd., Willow Springs, IL 60480  
[kariledalia@yahoo.com](mailto:kariledalia@yahoo.com)

**Subscriber Services and Advertising**  
[spauda@javlb.org](mailto:spauda@javlb.org)

**Facebook**  
[facebook.com/BridgesLithuanianAmericanMagazine](https://facebook.com/BridgesLithuanianAmericanMagazine)



Our thanks to  
**LITHUANIAN FOUNDATION**  
for its support of this magazine.  
[www.lithuanianfoundation.org](http://www.lithuanianfoundation.org)

LAC, INC. NATIONAL EXECUTIVE BOARD  
621 Field Street, Naugatuck, CT, 06770  
Phone: 402-203-1119  
[finansai@javlb.org](mailto:finansai@javlb.org)

All statements and opinions, including product claims, are those of the organization/advertiser making those statements or claims. The publisher does not adopt, or put forth, any such statement or claim as his own, and any such statement or claim does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the publisher.

BRIDGES (ISSN: 87508028) is published 10 times per year (Jan/Feb and Jul/Aug combined) by Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. The periodicals postage is sent from Lithuanian American Community, Inc. Headquarters in Naugatuck, CT to United States Post Office, Supervisor Window Services, 433 W. Harrison Street, 2nd Floor, Chicago, IL 60607-9998, and additional locations. Vol. 44, No. 7. POSTMASTER: Send address corrections and changes to LAC, Inc./Bridges, 621 Field Street, Naugatuck, CT, 06770. SUBSCRIPTIONS: For subscription questions or address changes, write to [spauda@javlb.org](mailto:spauda@javlb.org). Subscription rates are: US: \$40 per year or \$75 for two years.; International: \$55 per year payable in advance in US funds. COPYRIGHT: ©2019 by Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of the publication may be reproduced without written permission of the publisher. PRINTING: Printed in Chicago, USA by Lithuanian American Community, Inc.

## from the editor

Dear readers,

Rugsėjis – September – literally means “sowing rye.” It is called this way because, at this time, rye is being sowed for the upcoming year. Other names for this month were rudenio, vėsulinis, paukštlėkis, šilų, rujos, strazdinis, rudugys, viržių, sėjos, veselinis, and vesulis. September is a beautiful month in Lithuania and the United States. The weather is perfect. It’s not too cold, it’s not too hot. The trees are changing colors, and in places, woods and parks look like paradise on earth. In fact, in our troubled times, it seems that nature has become our only healing sanctuary. The world is dealing with huge crises. The United States is in the midst of two huge ones, one has to do with coronavirus, another – with race. We need to spend a lot of time trying to figure out what is true and what is false in any sphere of our lives, be it related to science, politics, social structure, economy... Spending more time in nature might offer needed relief. As far as I know, Lithuanians love to travel. They always seek to find new beautiful places to admire, new interesting facts to learn and understand. September is a perfect month for that. It is a nice month to calm down, to meditate, to contemplate. The world is hurting because of never-ending conflicts. Let us try to do our part in calming down and trying to understand one another, to show empathy and love to one another. In this issue of Bridges, you will find stories that are seemingly unrelated to one another but if you look closely, they are about the same thing - human pain, misery, and suffering.

Karilė Vaitkutė  
Editor



Consul General of the Republic of Lithuania Mantvydas Bekešius with Chicago Lithuanians commemorating the Baltic Way on August 23, 2020. Photo by the event organizers.

On August 23, 2020, Lithuanians in Lithuania, the United States of America, and around the world commemorated an important historical date for our country, the Baltic Way Day. This year marks the 31st anniversary of the Baltic States holding hands and forming a 400-mile-long chain, thus expressing their desire to be free and independent.

This year, while commemorating the Baltic Way anniversary, Lithuanians expressed solidarity with the people of Belarus, who united in the peaceful struggle for democracy in their homeland. The Baltic Way was named the Freedom Way, and the flag of free Belarus was flown among the flags of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. Lithuanians stood in a human chain stretching 20 miles from Vilnius to the border with Belarus in a show of support for protesters in their neighboring country who are calling for the end of President Alyaksandr Lukashenka's rule. Organizers estimated that up to 50,000 people participated, many of them dressed in white and wearing face masks to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

At the beginning of the commemoration at the World Lithuanian Center in Lemont, Mantvydas Bekešius, the Consul General of the Republic of Lithuania in Chicago, addressed the audience and emphasized the importance of independence and the need to support Belarus in its fight for freedom. Robertas Vitas, the head of the Lithuanian Studies Research Center, presented a historical account on the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, which led to decades of occupation of Lithuania. Violetta Nikitik, a representative of the Belarusian community, congratulated the participants and thanked Lithuania for its support. Yuriy Makar, a member of the Ukrainian community, also gave a welcome speech. Julius Butkus, the head of the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union in Diaspora, Regina Butkus, the head of the Baltic Road Committee, Violeta Valaitytė, the chairwoman of the LAC Lemont Chapter, and other honorable members of the community spoke. During the commemoration, the LSSI Commander presented special Baltic Way awards to Lithuanian deserving representatives of community organizations.



Documentary filmmaker Arvydas Reneckis was one of the hosts of the Baltic Way commemoration program and concert that was broadcasted through Facebook. Photo by Karilė Vaitkutė.

Following the official part of the commemoration, a virtual concert "Let's Join Our Hands and Hearts" was held. It was the first virtual bridge-concert that united Lithuanians living on both sides of the Atlantic. The event was hosted by the documentary filmmaker and former host of the Lithuanian American Television, Arvydas Reneckis from Chicago, and musicologist Darius Užkuraitis from Lithuania. Lithuanian Americans from Chicago, Cleveland, Portland, Atlanta, Los Angeles, New York, Connecticut, New Jersey, Minnesota, and elsewhere participated in the event and introduced their communities.

Arvydas Reneckis chose to show some of the unique footage: an excerpt from a documentary film created by the Lithuanian Film Studio in 1988 showing a conversation with the foreign minister of independent Lithuania Juozas Urbšys about his historic meeting with Stalin in 1939; an excerpt from a conversation with Hollywood actress Rūta Lee who recounted of her family sending parcels to Lithuanians exiles in Siberia; and an excerpt from a conversation with President Valdas Adamkus about the activities of the Santara organization's work towards Lithuania's independence. All three excerpts were filmed by Arvydas Reneckis.



Singer Nida Grigalavičiūtė of Lemont, Illinois participated in the virtual concert held in commemoration of the Baltic Way. Photo by Karilė Vaitkutė.



Organizers of the event, the Lithuanian American Community Culture Council. From left: Žygis Janus, Daina Miežlaiškis, and Giedrė Elekšytė Knieža. Photo by event organizers.

The audience and participants of the concert were greeted by LAC President Arvydas Urbonavičius, Lithuania's consuls in the US, and representatives of the Lithuanian American communities. Viewers were treated to many patriotic songs performed by Nida Grigalavičiūtė of Lemont, Illinois and Povilas Meškėla, Česlovas Gabalis, and Jeronimas Milius of Lithuania. The virtual concert was watched by over 5,000 viewers from around the world.

To commemorate this important date, members of the Chicago Runners' Club "wrote" the words "Baltic Way" while running in the Lemont area during the event.

The event was organized by the Baltic Road Committee, the LAC Culture Council, and the LAC Lemont Chapter.



## LITHUANIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY, INC.

### NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

---

Arydas Urbonavičius  
President

Austėja Sruoga Executive  
Vice President

Janina Udrienė  
VP, Organizational Affairs

Rasa Dooling  
VP, Financial Affairs

Stacey Mirinavičienė  
Accountant

Inga Klimašauskienė  
VP, Business Affairs

Valdas Buožys  
VP, Archives

Marija Čyvaitė  
VP, Youth Affairs

Svajūnas Masilionis  
VP, Sports Affairs

Krista Bard  
Chair, Public Affairs

Auksė Motto  
Chair, Educational Affairs

Juozas Polikaitis  
Chair, Social Services

Jaunius Kelpšas  
Chair, Religious Affairs

Giedrė Knieža  
Chair, Cultural Affairs

Estera Sunelaitė  
Treasurer

Sigita Barysienė  
Secretary

Marius Naris  
Press

Juozas Kazlauskas  
IT Specialist

Dear colleagues,

As the duality of our name conveys, the purpose of the Lithuanian-American Community is to build bridges and unify people. Our by-laws stress inclusivity, and our programs and committees stress outreach to and cooperative projects with other nationalities and organizations.

Given the deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and others, and the ensuing social unrest, it is ever more important to acknowledge and express the values we espouse. The protests may have started in the US, but the whole world has joined in, recognizing that every country in the world still experiences some form of prejudice and has room to grow and be more understanding of diversity.

Our Lithuanian brothers and sisters suffered under Soviet oppression and Nazi occupation. Lithuania, recognizing its own need for healing with the Jewish community after the horrors of WWII, established tolerance educational centers around the country. They have worked constructively to listen to and address the needs of the Polish minority. They have raised their standing not only in ease of doing business indices, but in social justice and humanitarian indices as well. Progress has been made, and there is always more that can be done.

In our support of diversity, we, the Executive Committee of the Lithuanian-American Community offer these words of solidarity:

The Lithuanian American Community unequivocally condemns all acts of violence. We support freedom of speech and the right to peacefully protest. We stand together against racism and prejudice in all its forms, and we stand for equality. We are committed to creating a safe space for dialogue that fosters greater understanding among all people.

We suggest that we follow Socrates' famous dictum, "The unexamined life is not worth living," and take this time to reflect, and deepen our own understanding.

If you have other suggestions for our community, please know your ideas are welcomed.

Thank you for being the change you want to see in the world.

Arydas Urbonavičius  
Lithuanian American Community Executive Committee President  
07-03-2020

---

14911 127th St, Lemont, IL 60439 | [www.lithuanian-american.org](http://www.lithuanian-american.org)  
Tel.: (402) 203-1119 | e-mail: [informacija@javlb.org](mailto:informacija@javlb.org)



## LITHUANIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY, INC.

### NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

---

Arvydas Urbonavičius  
President

Austėja Sruoga Executive  
Vice President

Janina Udrienė  
VP, Organizational Affairs

Rasa Dooling  
VP, Financial Affairs

Stacey Mirinavičienė  
Accountant

Inga Klimašauskienė  
VP, Business Affairs

Valdas Buožys  
VP, Archives

Marija Čyvaitė  
VP, Youth Affairs

Svajūnas Masilionis  
VP, Sports Affairs

Krista Bard  
Chair, Public Affairs

Auksė Motto  
Chair, Educational Affairs

Juozas Polikaitis  
Chair, Social Services

Jaunius Kelpšas  
Chair, Religious Affairs

Giedrė Knieža  
Chair, Cultural Affairs

Estera Sunelaitė  
Treasurer

Sigita Barysienė  
Secretary

Marius Naris  
Press

Juozas Kazlauskas  
IT Specialist

Dear colleagues,

We have received several questions regarding the upcoming US presidential elections and would like to clarify the position of the Lithuanian-American Community.

Our organization holds the status of a nonprofit charitable 501(c)3, and we must limit our political activities to those that are educational and informational only, and only a small portion of our resources can be used to that end. As an organization, we are not allowed to endorse any specific candidates or a specific political party. Chapters of the Lithuanian-American Community are also required to follow these guidelines.

We do encourage all members of the Lithuanian-American Community who hold US citizenship to register to vote, and to exercise their right to vote. We encourage individuals to get actively involved in the political party of their choosing, as individuals.

We respectfully request that your chapters do not post events supporting, or officially support a specific candidate, as this is in direct violation of our charitable status, and could hold serious consequences.

We have recently received a grant from Lietuvių Fondas in order to present an advocacy training event this fall, and hope to send more information about this soon.

In the meantime, if you have questions regarding political activity, please contact our LAC Executive Committee Public Affairs Council President Krista Bard [kbard@kristabard.com](mailto:kbard@kristabard.com) and you may also refer to IRS guidelines <http://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/charitable-organizations/political-and-lobbying-activities>.

Best regards,

Arvydas Urbonavičius  
Lithuanian American Community Executive Committee President  
07-03-2020

# Talking About Race



Participating in Black Lives Matter protest in Chicago. Photo by Audrė Budrys Nakas.

Every year we see several important events in many spheres of our lives. However, in 2020 we encountered especially many world-changing developments, including the coronavirus pandemic with its impact on the economy as well as social change that involved racial crisis and social unrest. Judging from social media posts, Lithuanian Americans have been divided on the issues of racism. I am grateful that several members of the Lithuanian American community agreed to share their thoughts and insights on this matter.



Karilė Vaitkutė: Did you take part in protests sparked by the death of George Floyd? If you did, why?

**Audrė Budrys Nakas:** I participated in protests that were sparked by the death of George Floyd because I believe it is my responsibility to stand up for the rights of African Americans in the U.S. That is how I was brought up – as a Lithuanian-American child of war refugees, a Catholic school student from first through twelfth grade, and as a member of the Lithuanian Catholic youth organization, “Ateitininkai.” I was taught to love others and to speak out against injustice. I grew up in Chicago’s Gage Park community and attended primary school in the largely Lithuanian Marquette Park area. I was a student at Nativity B.V.M, a Lithuanian Catholic parish school. I loved coming to the neighborhood of Marquette Park each day, loved my school, and loved the beautiful park itself, with its vast green spaces, and room to play, think, and dream. Little did I know as a child that Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. had marched through Marquette Park when I was just a month-old baby and had had a brick thrown at him by angry white rioters who were there to “defend” their neighborhood. Today that makes me unbelievably sad, and angry. And so I must do what I can to make sure things like that never happen again.

**Nida Vidutis:** I grew up in Maryland, just outside of Washington, DC. The youngest photos of my brother and I are from when my parents brought us--still in strollers--to protests in the Nation’s Capital for Lithuania’s independence. We had signs that read “My cousins in Lithuania want to be free.” My mom worked in the Lithuanian Embassy at the time, and I remember the symbolic protest that the United States participated in by keeping the U.S. Lithuanian Embassy open and operating throughout Lithuania’s half-century-long occupation (just a short distance away from the Soviet Union embassy). I grew up learning how important solidarity was, and saw how thankful my family was that America showed solidarity with Lithuania--a tiny country that needed to rely on the openhandedness of allies for its very existence in the international sphere.

I believe that when you have walked through the doorway of freedom (as my refugee family did upon immigrating to America), you do not slam it shut behind you. Rather, you have an obligation to reach back and help others make their way through. For these reasons, my Lithuanian identity deeply animates my sense of obligation to fight injustice. George Floyd’s death--at the hands of one of many systems polluted by white supremacy in the United States--presents a clear case of injustice. I consider it my obligation to help others make their way

through, and in doing so, I rely on the same tools that so benefited our parents and grandparents: Protest and solidarity. For these reasons, I have participated in Black Lives Matter protests and will continue to do so.

**Marija Čyvas:** I, unfortunately, did not attend any protests, mainly because I recently began a new full-time job and have been very involved in that and I was also away and far from any big cities the first big weekend of protests. When talking with a friend during the peak time of protests, I expressed to her that I felt bad I wasn’t able to make it out to some of the protests. Her response to this has stuck with me since and is one I’d like to share with others as well: there are many ways to support the BLM movement that don’t include running out to the streets to join protests. Read up on this topic. There are tons of excellent resources/articles/books about race and racism in the U.S., about the experiences of black people, about systemic racism and how to end it. You can donate to BLM organizations. You can have conversations with your friends and families on these topics. There are plenty of podcasts, Netflix series, or documentary movies that are easily accessible and can be very informative. There are many ways to show support for the BLM movement, and even if you are unable to join protests, there are still many resources available to help educate yourself on this very important topic and advocate for what is right.

Could you describe what you saw when participating in the protests?

**Nida:** Prior to protesting, my fiancé and I attended a virtual training taught by my close friend who is an organizer and has been protesting in Los Angeles over the past few weeks. Los Angeles is very scary right now. My friend, who was peacefully protesting with women and children, was tear-gassed by police on her third day protesting. During her training she provided us with some tips: she encouraged us to write the number of the local National Lawyers Guild on our arm (in case we get arrested), she taught us how to wash tear gas out of our eyes, and she taught us how to brace ourselves if police begin firing rubber bullets. She also explained to us that organizers will be on the lookout for any potential rising of tempers between police and protesters, as they will want to deescalate the situation. If this happens, white protesters (especially women) are encouraged to volunteer to go to the front, because police are less likely to use violence against white women. Thankfully in San Francisco, my fiancé and I have not witnessed this level of violence at any of the protests we have attended. During one protest, we walked peacefully, along with thousands of others, across the Golden Gate Bridge and back. At one point,

we knelt on the bridge for eight minutes and 46 seconds—it was a deeply moving moment that we will never forget. Also, we were really impressed that while social distancing wasn't possible, every protester was wearing a mask.

**Audré:** There have been many protests in the last weeks across Chicago and its suburbs. I attended a marching demonstration in Hyde Park, because that is the neighborhood in which I work, and in which my teenager attends school. This was a socially-distant, family-friendly protest, so of course, there were many families, some with small children. The march was first organized in early June and will continue every Monday throughout the summer. At one point, two small boys led the march, taking turns calling into a megaphone, “Black Lives Matter,” and “No Justice, No Peace.” It was really beautiful! The demonstration had enough people to line both sides of Cottage Grove at the Midway, on the edge of the University of Chicago campus, and as we held our homemade protest signs, made noise and chanted our slogans, cars would honk as they drove by, smiling and waving at us. We walked back along the Midway, and at the end of the march, we stopped in a large field on campus and stood together in silence for eight minutes and forty-six seconds. I felt grateful to be there, and today I feel grateful that the voices of protesters from around the country (around the world, actually - there was even a protest in Vilnius) are being heard.

Some people associate all protests with riots and looting. Do you think they are inseparable parts of one another?

**Audré:** This is a complex question, and I do not think there is one simple answer. First, I feel it's important for me to state that I do not condone violence, but I do seek to understand where it comes from. Now, many people at the protests were undoubtedly feeling the weight of decades of bottled up fear, anger, and anxiety, and perhaps the deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor were the last straw. You asked about some of the lootings that happened; yes, there were some people who took advantage of a situation in which police were busy elsewhere, and participated in lootings without, perhaps, keeping the point of the protests top-of-mind. Yet the main focus of the protests at the start was to seek justice for George Floyd, and then widened to take into account the murders of other African American people, whether stemming from implicit bias or blatant racism, whether committed by police officers or vigilantes. The protesters are demanding change in a system that is still stacked against People of Color. Protesters included African American, Latinx, Asian American, Indigenous, and Euro-

pean American people. There were many young people getting their voices out, but there were also middle-aged and older folks. For the most part, protests were peaceful, and participants felt solidarity with one another and with the larger cause they were there to give voice to.

**Nida:** Black Lives Matter has been organizing for seven years. During that time, BLM organizers have organized thousands of protests, most of which have been entirely peaceful. The majority of White America responded to most of those peaceful protests like we did to Colin Kaepernick's taking a knee: We either ignored it all or openly criticized it. Rather than asking “Why do they have to loot?” I would encourage us to ask ourselves: “Why wasn't I sufficiently stirred into action on these issues by the peaceful protests that came before?” Imagine if we had listened then, if we had engaged in our own discomfort then, if we had pushed then for the types of reforms then that are so quickly gaining steam across the country now. Requiring perfection from a movement before agreeing to listen is a tool we often use to escape confronting issues that make us feel uncomfortable. In this vein, Martin Luther King Jr. expressed his “grave disappointment” with the “white moderate, who is more devoted to ‘order’ than justice.” General disagreement with looting does not excuse you from caring about and acting on these issues. Many are using their opinion on looting as a shield to guard against having to engage or care at all. Please break down that shield. And if you are deterred from protesting, what form of solidarity can I depend on you for? Will you write a letter? Will you sign a petition? Will you donate to a charity? When can I follow up with you?

What is racism? What are the roots of racism? Can there be many ‘degrees’ or ‘shades’ of racism?

**Nida:** It can be helpful to think about racism as consisting of four types [via *The Slow Factory*]. The first, “Interpersonal racism,” is what we typically think of as racism: Racist acts and microaggressions carried out from one person to another, where a person may have intended to be racist. But, like an iceberg, these are just 10% of racism we can plainly see. The other 90% of racism includes (2) Internalized racism (the subtle and overt messages that reinforce negative beliefs and self-hatred in individuals), (3) Institutional racism (policies and practices that reinforce racist standards within a workplace or organization), and (4) structural racism (multiple institutions collectively upholding racist policies and practices—i.e., society). That 90% of the iceberg is particularly insidious because it consists of the policies and societal structures that were built over hundreds of years, trapping in rac-

ism along the way. We all participate in these systems, and they perpetuate racist outcomes regardless of any one participant's intent. We have an obligation to search within ourselves and within the systems in which we participate, in order to eradicate enmeshed racism. This process is laborious and requires a lot of unlearning, tenacity, and humility. It also requires us to step back and center the voices of Black individuals and people of color, as that is the only way to reimagine and rebuild our institutions in a more just way. (By the way, centering Black voices is not about "silencing" White voices. Remember that "When you're privileged, equality can feel like oppression." That doesn't mean it actually is.)

**Andreja Siliunas:** I would add that these different types of racism, which Nida outlined, are interconnected. As we make discretionary decisions in our roles in various institutions, we often act upon our internalized biases, and consequently, we may unintentionally reproduce institutional and structural racism. For example, when teachers invest more of their time and energy into white students because they implicitly see them as being more "talented" and "deserving"; when social workers disproportionately interpret the material conditions of poverty among black and brown mothers as child abuse or neglect; when, as citizens, we vote for candidates who uphold white supremacist beliefs and practices; and when employers hire white candidates over equally qualified black candidates because they connect more easily with the former – these everyday decisions we all make add up, create and reinforce patterns, and sometimes become formally institutionalized as practices and policies. On the other hand, the social systems and institutions which structure our lives – including schools, youth groups, workplaces, residential neighborhoods, doctors' offices, grocery stores, the places we frequent for leisure – also shape how we make sense of the world. We internalize the patterns we see in our environments. The subtle racialization of our everyday lives becomes "normal" and "common sense," and this reinforces our biases and influences our behavior. Thus, the cycle reproduces itself.

**Aušra Norušytė:** Yes, I absolutely believe that there can be "degrees" or "shades" of racism. At one extreme are people who believe that nonwhite people are inferior and engage in bad behavior based on that belief. Hopefully, we don't know many of these kinds of people in our lives. But much more common are people with less conscious racism - people who cross the street when they see a black person, who clutch their purses a little tighter, who look a little more closely when a black person is in their neighborhood. These people might not even realize that they're making judgments based on someone's

race, and almost certainly would not consider themselves "racist." But this kind of behavior is still problematic, and truly addressing racial issues must include looking within ourselves to recognize when we're making these kinds of unconscious judgments.

Additionally, as explained by Nida, we must consider structural and institutional racism, which are the ways that society is set up to provide advantages to certain racial groups over others. This can be through laws, policy preferences, or other ways, and it can have long-lasting effects. For instance, in the criminal justice system, black people are more likely to be pulled over than white people, even though white people drive more on average. Similarly, black people are more likely to be arrested, charged, and convicted of drug offenses, even though black people and white people use and sell drugs at about the same rate. Once they're in the justice system, black people are offered less generous plea deals and are sentenced more harshly. This kind of treatment ends up being a self-perpetuating cycle because someone who has been convicted of a crime has a harder time finding employment and housing and, if later arrested again, the prior conviction can affect the charges and sentence. We can also see this in the decisions about where and how to deploy police resources. A few examples from recent events: almost all arrests and citations for social distancing violations in Chicago due to the coronavirus were in majority-black and Latino neighborhoods, and the police presence during the recent protests is vastly different in white versus minority neighborhoods. We need to be concerned about this kind of racism because it is the one that makes the most difference for society as a whole. We talk about "a few bad apples" when discussing racist people, and condemn those who actively target minorities for abuse. But the problem with structural racism is that, usually, the people working within the system are not what we would consider "racist," and their decisions could have absolutely nothing to do with race. The police officer working a particular district doesn't have a choice about where he goes, and a judge facing mandatory sentencing laws doesn't have the discretion to impose a lesser sentence. The problem is the system itself - even if the people within it have the best of intentions, the system nevertheless produces a discriminatory outcome.

Have you encountered racism firsthand? Have you seen people being racist to your friends, neighbors, colleagues? Could you give examples?

**Andreja:** I constantly encounter various forms of racism – within myself, among my friends and family, and in the organizations, public spaces, and communities that I

navigate daily. I encounter racism when I go to a museum and first see floods of regal white faces upon canvases in the central exhibits, and then objects stolen from colonized lands in the museum's "non-Western" peripheral chambers. When I see only white angels, white Mary's, and white Jesus' in churches throughout the U.S. and Europe. When I go rafting in Maine on the Penobscot River, while the Native American Penobscot people, after whom the river is named, are confined to several small islands within it. When I go for a walk in the predominantly white suburb of Chicago where I grew up, and I see stark segregation along racial lines. I see the inequality of wealth, and I see the "no fishing or picnicking" signs that exist to keep neighboring people of color from hanging out on "our" side of the river. I encounter institutionalized racism when I go through 20+ years of primary, secondary, and higher education and still lack basic knowledge about the history of colonialism, slavery, Jim Crow, the genocide of the Native American peoples, and the consequences of American imperialism across the Global South. And, of course, I encounter racism when I see my Black and Latinx peers silenced, interrupted, or ignored in classes, and then asked to speak on behalf of all people of color. When I am warned to avoid Baltimore's "ghetto" during Šokių Šventė, and when I hear friends make racist jokes in private spaces or under the cover of the Lithuanian language. I have repeatedly participated in a racially charged form of "othering" when I sang, with full gusto, "O, jūs Čigonai" ("O, you Gypsies") at Dainava, my Lithuanian summer camp. Many people do not know that the word "Čigonai", or "Gypsies", is a racial slur for the Roma people, who have been marginalized, dispossessed, and brutalized across Europe for many centuries.

I encounter racism in my own instincts, my own biases, my own interpretations of things I see unfolding in the world because I am a product of a society whose notion of nationhood and belonging is built on deep-seated assumptions of white (European) supremacy. Though I encounter forms of racism constantly, I recognize them far less frequently. I can afford to go through life not seeing or thinking about racism because it doesn't oppress me. In fact, as a white person in the U.S., I have been the beneficiary of institutionalized racism in numerous ways. However, it is far easier to ignore these privileges and instead attribute all of my successes to my own talent and merit, as well as those of my parents and grandparents. To not see racism (or race, for that matter) is, particularly at this moment in history, an act of willful ignorance. All of us, not only Americans but members of a global society which was structured by a history of colonialism, are exposed to racism, whether we choose to recognize it or not. It is our responsibility to learn how to recognize various forms of racism and to understand how they affect

other people. Only then can we work together with people of color, who have been fighting racism for centuries, to dismantle it.

**Aušra:** I agree with Andreja that, in my life, as a white woman, I have not been the recipient of racist behavior, but have more often been the cause through my own unconscious instincts and biases. That's a hard thing to recognize, and a hard thing to admit, but it is important. People can get very defensive when there is a suggestion that they are acting in a racist manner or that their conduct is inappropriate - for example, I imagine that more than one reader bristled at Andreja's statement that singing about Čigonai is an example of racially problematic language. But it is our duty to look within ourselves and honestly ask if there is merit to the criticism. Ask why someone might consider your action or statement to be crossing a line, and truly examine whether they might have a point. Maya Angelou famously said, "I did then what I knew how to do. Now that I know better, I do better." Nobody expects us to be perfect. But the important thing is that when we are called out for our actions, that we make a true effort to change them.

What would you say to a person who believes that this is a social issue, a class issue rather than a racial issue?

**Andreja:** I think it is helpful to think about race and class as two separate dimensions of inequality, which correlate but not perfectly. The economic exclusion and exploitation of people of color, particularly black people, is, without doubt, a component of institutional and structural racism. In the United States, there is a remarkably large wealth gap along racial lines, which, though jarring, should not surprise us, given the recent history of discriminatory lending practices for mortgages on homes, discrimination in hiring practices, segregation and unequal funding of schools, and mass incarceration, to name a few of the many systems that perpetuate class inequality on the basis of race. Class inequalities shape the opportunities available to people in critical ways, and so I would say to this person that they are correct in recognizing a class dimension to the racial issues at hand. However, race and class also operate independently, and the recent acts of police brutality illustrate this vividly. If a highly educated black man is pulled over by the police, his degree, professional title, and income will not protect him from the police officer's implicit association between blackness and criminality, a bias which can quickly translate into fear and instinctually trigger his use of brute force, for which that police officer is later not held legally accountable due to his "qualified immunity." The black man's class back-



Black Lives Matter protest in Chicago's Hyde Park neighborhood. Photo by Audrė Budrys Nakas.

ground will not mitigate the life-threatening nature of a chokehold or gunshot, nor the humiliating experience of being accused of a crime on no real evidentiary basis. When a black woman comes to a hospital to give birth, her class background will not protect her from a physician's implicit assumption that black women feel less pain than their white counterparts and therefore need less pain medication. Class inequality matters, but it does not explain away racism (nor sexism, for that matter). A working-class white man, white woman, black man, and black woman are all likely to experience certain forms of discrimination and disadvantage on the basis of their class. However, that classicism will likely take different forms based on individuals' race and gender identities. As Patricia Hill Collins and other black feminist scholars have stressed, race, class, gender, and other dimensions of inequality intersect, shaping people's lives in diverse ways.

What is structural racism? Could you give examples? Why should we be concerned about it?

**Marija:** I am fortunate enough to have taken a few courses on race, racism, and racial relations throughout my college years. We studied and analyzed race and racism from every possible angle. One article by a highly regarded professor of sociology and African American studies, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva was the most helpful for me in understanding racism through a structural lens.

In this article, Bonilla-Silva discusses the limitations of former mainstream theoretical frameworks of racism. He first explains the limitations of some formerly but widely held ideas, for example, that racism is simply a psychological phenomenon that operates at the individual level, and that anyone who is racist is simply "irrational", "rigid", or "stupid." If this is the case, then understanding racism is "simply a matter of surveying the proportion of people in society who hold 'racist' beliefs (467)." Bonilla-Silva's response to these ideas is that racism is structural and persists in our institutions and societies. Also, to say that "racist beliefs" are irrational or dumb and that there are just a few individuals who hold these beliefs independently of any social institutions is problematic because it "misses the rational elements on which racialized systems were built" and "it neglects the possibility that contemporary racism has a rational foundation (468)." What Bonilla-Silva suggests then is a theoretical framework for racism as a structural ideology. Racism as we know it today is the product of institutions that, through racist practices, rationalized social, political, and economic practices between the races in such a way that benefited one race over others (474). Racist practices reflect the objective interests of the races within a racialized society or system (474). What Bonilla-Silva describes as racism is what comes to be known as common sense or typical everyday behavior in racialized societies when different political, economic, social and even psychological resources

and rewards are allocated to groups along (socially constructed) racial lines. This is why Bonilla-Silva proposes thinking of race and racism through a structural framework because it is racialized systems, societies, and institutions that were built on racial ideas but in the end favor and privilege one race over the others. This short summary of the work Bonilla-Silva on structural racism only begins to scratch the surface of a very complex and multi-layered topic. As many of us have mentioned already, it is so important to read up on this topic to understand the roots of racism and how/why racism persists in our institutions and society today.

Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. "Rethinking Racism: Toward a Structural Interpretation." *American Sociological Review*, vol. 62, no. 3, June 1997, pp. 465-480., doi:10.2307/2657316.

How does your background influence how you understand the BLM movement?

**Marija:** Considering the readers of this Lithuanian - American journal, I wanted to express my thoughts on the BLM movement from a couple of particular angles that I hope will resonate with these readers. Just as Audre mentioned earlier, as a long-time member of the Lithuanian Catholic Youth Group Ateitininkai, I was brought up in this organization as someone who should stand up for what is right and love others. I revisited this group's website where it is clearly stated what the mission of the Ateitininkai is and what ideals its members should strive for. One line stood out to me, "...an organization committed to fostering its youth to have kind and empathetic hearts, strong wills, and bright minds so that they may be adequately prepared to actively and creatively participate in religious, societal, cultural, intellectual, and civic engagements." And another statement (paraphrased and translated into English) from an interview with a young woman involved with the Ateitininkai and what value she finds in this group, "...Ateitininkai strive to broaden their horizons and expand their knowledge in various fields. It separates them from other youth - the constant thirst to learn about more than what is required, read up on that which is overlooked, forgotten, or unpopular." I know that many other Lithuanian organizations, the Lithuanian scouts for example, also stand for something similar and hope that their youth embody the necessary understanding and skills to take part in the fight for what is right. Given these values that are so widely held within our community, and given our fight against the injustices endured under Soviet oppression, I feel that gives us all the more reason to stand in support of the BLM movement, and do our part to educate ourselves on this topic. Let us all read up on these topics, educate ourselves so that we may know more today than we did yesterday. This

is not a requirement, and it may be difficult, but it will lead us down the path of empathy and justice.

Keeping in mind the Catholic roots many Lithuanians share and the above-mentioned values that are held by many Lithuanian youth organizations in the US, I wish to provide further reason for why we should perhaps reevaluate our priorities and find some time to learn more about racism and the BLM movement. A few weeks ago and at the peak time of protests, I happened to come across a rather lengthy document by the Pope, the "Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation - CHRISTUS VIVIT to young people and the entire people of God." As I began to read it, I couldn't believe how much relevant content was in it and how much of it could be easily applied to current events in the U.S. If there are any Lithuanians, especially those to whom the Catholic faith is a priority, who may be hesitant or uncomfortable when it comes to the topic of racism in the U.S., or perhaps they feel it's not their/our place to say or do anything to stand with the BLM movement and fight for justice, I wish to share with them the following excerpts, which I find to be very inspiring and awakening calls to action and invitations to listen to the cries of help coming from our black brothers and sisters...

" 41. Although many young people are happy to see a Church that is humble yet confident in her gifts and capable of offering fair and fraternal criticism, others want a Church that listens more, that does more than simply condemn the world. They do not want to see a Church that is silent and afraid to speak...To be credible to young people, there are times when she needs to regain her humility and simply listen..."

174. I want to encourage all of you in this effort because I know that your young hearts want to build a better world. I have been following news reports of the many young people throughout the world who have taken to the streets to express the desire for a more just and fraternal society. Young people taking to the streets! The young want to be protagonists of change. Please, do not leave it to others to be protagonists of change. You are the ones who hold the future! Through you, the future enters into the world. I ask you also to be protagonists of this transformation. You are the ones who hold the key to the future! Continue to fight apathy and to offer a Christian response to the social and political troubles emerging in different parts of the world. I ask you to build the future, to work for a better world. Dear young people, please, do not be bystanders in life. Get involved! Jesus was not a bystander. He got involved. Don't stand aloof, but immerse yourselves in the reality of life, as Jesus did". [92] Above all, in one way or another, fight for the common good..."

Stripped down to its core - a threat to black people's human rights and dignity as children of God - I ask that

all Lithuanians take another look at what is happening in our world today, and what has been happening for so many years. Let us not turn away, but embrace our responsibility to strive for justice for all. Let us stand with our brothers and sisters of color who are crying out for help for advocacy and support in the fight against racism. I absolutely feel this is our Christian calling - to acknowledge the systematic racism of our society, engage in dialogue on it, and participate in the fight against racism - and I hope you all feel it too.

Aušra: I grew up in an almost entirely white environment, with little interaction with any people of color until I began college. I'm sure this kind of upbringing has affected how I relate to racial issues. However, I think my profession has had the biggest impact on my understanding of racial issues and the disparities that are so often overlooked by those who have the privilege of not being affected by them. As an attorney working within the judicial system, I often see the impacts of racism - whether intentional, subconscious, or institutional. I also see the challenges in fighting racism and racial disparities. For instance, one major area in which institutional racism can be seen is in the overcrowding of prisons, with nonviolent offenders being subjected to the same imprisonment as dangerous offenders. This disproportionately affects people of color, for many of the same reasons I discussed earlier. However, if the State's Attorney implements policies in an attempt to address that issue, she is immediately met with resistance, being accused of "not following the law" or "letting criminals go free." Similarly, with a cash bond system, many people are kept in jail simply because they cannot afford to pay bail, not because they are a flight risk or a danger to the population. Again, this disproportionately impacts people of color. But again, attempts to address the issue are met with claims of "letting criminals out of jail." I could go on and on. Certainly, there are pros and cons to any specific policy that may be implemented, and debate on such issues is appropriate. However, the unfortunate reflex always seems to be to "lock them up," ignoring the fact that the issues are much more complex than that. Seeing this same reaction over and over - even against people in positions of authority who are attempting to work to make changes to the system - gives me much more sympathy towards people who do not have the leverage to make changes to the system themselves but are crying out to have their voices heard.



Black Lives Matter protest in San Francisco, California. Photo by Nida Vidutis.

Andreja Siliunas was born and raised in Chicago, IL, and is currently completing her PhD in sociology and social policy at Harvard University. Her dissertation explores debates surrounding memory and national identity in Vilnius, Lithuania.

Audrė Budrys Nakas - her hometown is Chicago and she lives there now. She has been active in the Lithuanian American community since childhood. She is a drama teacher at the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools. After college, Audrė lived in Lithuania for several years, and spent a season as an actor at Šiauliai Drama Theatre. Audrė is a founding member (March 2020) of L-DARA: Lithuanian Diaspora Anti-Racism Advocates. She is also the proud mother of a teenager.

Aušra Norušytė is a second-generation Lithuanian-American from the Chicagoland area. She currently works as an attorney with the Illinois Appellate Court in Chicago.

Nida Vidutis is an attorney practicing in San Francisco, CA, with a focus on corporate government investigations and criminal justice reform. She is originally from Takoma Park, Maryland, and is an alumna of Camp Dainava.

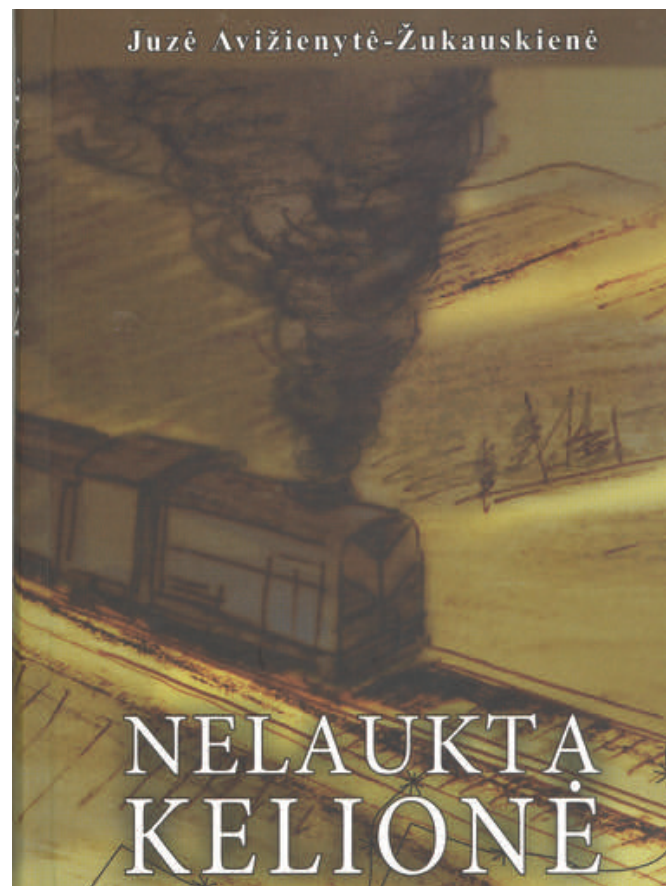
Marija Čyvaitė grew up in the Chicago suburbs and has always been very involved in the Lithuanian community. She graduated from the College of Wooster in 2019 with degrees in both Sociology and Russian Studies. She is currently working full time for an industrial supply company and hopes to eventually pursue a higher degree in education.

# UNEXPECTED JOURNEY

## Memoir of a Siberian Deportee

By Juzė Avižienytė-Žukauskienė

Translated from the Lithuanian by Giedrė Kumpikas, Ph.D., niece of the author



### 5. THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR

At night we felt that our car was being tossed from side to side. We were rolling one on top of the other. Our train was moving at an incredible speed, not even slowing down at the crossings and not stopping at the small stations.

On the morning of June 23, we arrived at a station called Velikiye Luki.

We stopped rather far away on some sidetracks. Echelons of soldiers, cannons and heavy guns were moving west past us. The windowpanes of houses were covered with strips of old newspapers.

“What is this? Are these some sort of maneuvers that the army is moving and the windows are covered as if against a bombardment?” was the question asked by all, but to which no one had an answer.

It was incredibly stuffy in the car. To this was added the odor of unwashed bodies and feet, not to mention the

smell of the “toilet”...

And to use this toilet was torture, quite another story in comparison to the toilet in a prison cell, where there are only men or only women. But here?

Men, women, children... From dry food and the bashfulness to use this “toilet,” many people became constipated; I developed an inflammation of the bladder. I suffered from acute pain. But how could I, in the sight of everyone, sit on the “toilet?” I began to search among our things for some sort of “drapery” for our “toilet.”

And how grateful I was to those young soldiers, who, taking such risks, driving us from our home, put in some bedspreads and sheets, which I would not have taken because of the weight (it was only permitted to take 50 kilograms).

Another young woman, Jakienė, suggested that we enclose our “toilet” with sheets. I gave them to her but how to attach them? We all pooled our safety pins. The men somehow attached our drapery to the ceiling. We were all very pleased, but not for long. An eighteen-year-old Jewish boy, Gerbergas, was the first to go into our toilet. He wrapped himself clumsily into the sheet, ripped it off and even soiled it.

Everyone was appalled that, being already so big, he did not know how to behave. And the poor boy, helped by his brother and father, was wiping the sheet with whatever he had and tried to re-attach the curtain.

Being without water was the most difficult, - we would stop seldom and we had a limited amount of receptacles. There was only enough water to drink very little at a time. There was not even a question of washing ourselves. We could only dream of dashing to the water and washing away the constant and abundant sweat. And the heat was scorching. In the car, we were thirsting to the most extreme limit. It was easier when the train was moving; once stopped, we were baking as if we were in an oven.

As we went deeper into the direction of the Urals, our echelon would be diverted onto the auxiliary tracks, because it was necessary to allow the westward-bound army echelons to pass.

Finally, we stopped at Katelnice, across from a stationed echelon of soldiers, since the more distant tracks were occupied by other echelons, similar to ours, with the same type of deportees as we were. By the way, in Katelnice, for the first time since our deportation, we were given some soup. That was the first distribution of food, the tenth day after our arrest.

The door of the soldiers' car was opened more widely. The soldiers looked at us with curiosity. They were smoking self-made rolled cigarettes and were reading a newspaper. Taking advantage of the opportunity that the guards had marched off a little, summoning my courage, I shouted:



“Guys, give me the paper!”

Immediately, one of the young men jumped out of the car and, running up to the slit in the door, shoved in the paper. Gerbergas grabbed it.

Glancing at it, he shouted:

“Oh, war!”

“Give it to me, I’ll read it,” I said aloud, using my right as the leader and since I had asked for the paper...

It was good that I didn’t have time to take it: on the spot, a furious guard jumped up, opened the door more widely and shouted angrily:

“Did someone give you a paper? Give it here!”

Disconcerted, I would certainly have given it up, but Gerbergas quickly slipped it under his clothes and most quietly and politely said:

“No, you’re wrong. Perhaps to the other car. Look for it there!”

“Don’t talk so much and don’t try to pull the wool over my eyes. I’ll take care of you yet!”, shouted the CHEKist. At this point, we all shouted in a chorus that no one had given a paper to our car. Then the CHEKist ran up to the soldiers, demanding to know into which car they had given the newspaper. The soldiers going to the Front were brave: the CHEKist was not their superior, they risked nothing. And they started insulting our CHEKist! What words weren’t thrown in his face!...

Oh, you creep, you snake, you son-of-a-bitch! You people oppressor! You won’t even give them a paper! A newspaper isn’t a letter: it’s published so that everyone can read it, and so on. The CHEKist skulked away having achieved nothing, and we learned that the Germans had occupied Kaunas, Šiauliai and, that the avant-garde of the Soviet army was rolling eastward...

The war boded us no good, but we were glad anyway that the Russians were being driven out of Lithuania. The mood was jubilant: we hoped we would be returned to Lithuania...

That was only a sweet dream, but in reality, the echelon was continually gliding further east.

## 6. PAST THE URALS - WORLD'S END

We passed Jeroslavl, Perm, Sverdlovsk... One morning, upon awakening, I caught sight of the incredible beauty of the tree-covered Ural Mountains illuminated by the sunrise. Yes! We were already leaving Europe and entering into “terrifying” Siberia... “Terrifying!” From books I had read and accounts I had heard, I had created a picture, that Siberia was hard labor camps, the land of injustices and suffering. And here? The Mountain range of the Urals was without gloomy, bare cliffs, without mountains propping up the sky, only sloping green hills of incredible beauty blazing in the rays of the rising sun. The mountains were covered with trees, mostly evergreens. On the evergreens

and the grass were sparkling diamonds of dew...

The railroad line had been led through the southern sloping area of the mountain range.

The vast expanse of Siberia is tree-covered, sparsely settled.

We stopped more frequently here.

The guards were not as angry.

They allowed women to approach the cars who would bring boiled, non-fat milk to sell. For we had been on the road for three weeks now and had only once gotten soup at Katelnice. We were eating only what we had taken from home.

Our food reserves were dwindling, and where was the end of our journey?!...

We asked the local women if they had any bread, butter or anything else to eat.

“What do you mean! The government takes everything away from us. They only give us skimmed milk back and not even all of it.”

And they looked around fearfully if there were any guards around.

One old man was holding a little bundle with bottles of milk in his hands and some kind of buns. We asked immediately if he was selling them.

“No, good people. I’m waiting for my son. He’s being sent to the Front. The train will be here soon.”

We asked him from where his son was coming.

“Oh, they’re being taken straight from the fields, as they stand. They are not even allowed to go home,” answered the old man, wiping away his tears.

“He grows bread, he’s a tractor driver, and I can’t even give him any bread for his journey. His mother baked only some potato buns.”

“I can’t believe that you, field workers, don’t even have any bread?”

“Oh, my dears, you have not yet experienced what the Soviet government is like. Here, they’re taking even you to the hungriest place.

You will all die of hunger there,”

the old man nodded his head.

Such talk, obviously, did not improve our mood, but nonetheless, we did not lose hope: it seemed impossible that we would not be able to earn a piece of bread for ourselves. After all, we were Lithuanians, we were not afraid of any kind of work.

Finally, the long-awaited train appeared. We had to let it pass.

In the cars, young men, crowded at the door by the crossbar, were looking around at those waiting. They were smeared with grease, dirty, with chapped hands. On the platforms, were piled up their dirty tractors with earth-covered caterpillars.

The people, screaming, ran to them.

Our echelon started to move. We rolled along and rolled along over the boundless Siberian expanse. The stations were far from each other. At some stations, we would get some warm soup. It was fortunate, that we had two pails. Otherwise, having picked up that meager “whitened” slop of mashed potatoes, we would not have had anything with which to bring back water.

As the car elder, I would hurriedly pour out half a liter to everyone and, as quickly as possible, would run again to bring back a pail of water. We were watched less here, they knew that we would not escape anywhere. For about two days and two nights, we traveled over a very wide, uninhabited expanse called the Barabinskaya Steppe. The sight was very desolate: no houses, no trees, no lakes, no rivers, only tall dry grass was undulating over boundless prairies, driven by the wind.

## 7. MEDICAL “HELP”

Before we reached Novosibirsk, my husband suffered an acute heart attack. His hands and feet were cold, stiff, his lips were blue as if colored by a blue pencil, no pulse was evident...

Stifling heat, humidity, and not a drop of water. Our fellow travelers fell into a panic. Each one was advising whatever he knew, but nothing helped. The most important was fresh air. We placed him on the floor near the crack in the door so that he would get some fresher air. But the sick man did not move.

Finally, we arrived at Novosibirsk. The train stopped at a distance from the station. Not far off was a shallow puddle... Water was so close, but...unreachable. Everyone who was able crowded up to two small lattice windows, I, near the crack in the door. We all began to shut in unison:

“Water! Water! A man is dying!”

Gerbergas was quick-thinking, tied a piece of string around the neck of a bottle, let it down through the bars and shouted:

“Water! A man is dying” Give us a glass of water. Here's 10 rubles!”

Two women in white robes were walking past our car. This was our accompanying “Medical Staff.”

“We don't trade in water,” coldly answered our “Medical Staff,” and kept on walking. From the car could be heard a loud “Oh! oh!” and quite a few bitter words from the lips of our angry people. But the tireless Gerbergas kept on shouting:

“A man is dying! At least a glass of water!”

A bit further from the railroad tracks, a rather large group of curious women and adolescents were crowding together. A little girl about eight years old came out of the crowd, and having run up to our car quickly, grabbed the bottle.

“Don't let go of the string!” somebody shouted to Ger-

bergas. He reacted quickly: how could he pull the bottle back up, the little window was quite high:

“Little girl, untie the string!”

The little girl with trembling hands tried to untie the string and kept constantly looking around if the guards were near. Finally, the bottle was free and the little girl, like a doe, ran to the water. After a few minutes, she ran back with a full bottle. I reached my hand down as far as I could through the crack in the door.

The little girl stretched up on her toes and lifted the bottle up.

Finally, a drop of the life-saving “balsam” – water was in my hands.

Gerbergas threw a ten-ruble bill down to the little girl, but she only shook her little head and added almost in a whisper:

“There's no need, dear uncle, I won't take it.” and again, like a deer, leaped back into the crowd.

And Gerbergas' ten-ruble bill was being blown along the tracks by the wind.

We immediately moistened the face of the unconscious man, we even succeeded in pouring a drop into his mouth. Having wet the end of a towel, we put it on his heart. I started again to administer artificial respiration.

We poured more water into his mouth, a part of which was trickling from the corners of his lips onto his neck. At last, the vein in his neck moved slightly, his pulse fluttered. Hope was reborn. We all still tried to pour water into his mouth. And finally, the sick man opened his eyes. The shadow of death began to vanish from his face... A huge weight rolled off my heart. The children stopped crying and all the occupants of the car began to speak louder. Everyone “praised” the “Medical Staff.” What was the purpose of having such a one?! A formality...

Suddenly, screeching, the car doors opened wide.

Four military men stood before us.

“Car elder, report!”

I reported how many people we were and that there was a critical patient.

“What's wrong with him?”

“Heart attack.”

“Nonsense! What aristocrats!...Hurry up, take your pots and go get the dinner.”

I was afraid to leave my husband before he had completely recovered. Instead of me, Chveidanas, a Jewish man, who was very helpful and very clever in getting out of difficult situations, went to get the dinner. Some people expressed fear that they might not give any food to a non-elder and that we, not having had any soup for a long time, would remain without dinner. But the guard did not protest and our agile, though rather heavy forty-year-old, brought a pail of soup. It was sweet cabbage soup coated with thin whipped mashed potatoes with a little bit of oil.

We were surprised: we thought we had gotten soup with sour cream. But...we soon felt the true taste. The foam of the potatoes separated, and it was only water in which were floating a few small cabbage leaves. Nonetheless, it was a warm soup, but unfortunately, for 26 people, 10 liters was very little.

## 8. NEW ACQUAINTANCES - A DIFFERENT MODE OF TRANSPORTATION

In Novosibirsk we had to leave the train and get onto barges...

But they had not arrived yet. The guards announced that we should go to the last car, that we would be given some bread. Everyone began to bustle about since each family would receive it separately. Of course, I went for my family.

We were called according to a list. Each person was issued 1 kg. Of course, no one weighed the bread, it was given out in small loaves. For my family of five, I received two small loaves.

Finally, after almost a month of traveling, we received bread for the first time and felt a firm, though foreign, the earth beneath our feet.

We received not only bread, but we were allowed to go to the pond! We all ran headlong to the water. Who could describe our joy! After a month in suffocating cars, we rushed to an unlimited amount of water! Even though the water was not very clean, soon the whole shore was crowded with naked bodies. We all washed with enthusiasm, we rubbed our backs, scrubbed our feet and necks... It was a pleasure about which we had dreamed for so long! The women waded further in and were washing clothes, especially of the little ones.

But our joy did not last long. Soon we heard the command:

“Back into the cars!”

It was a pity to leave the fresh air and water. We went back to the cars sluggishly.

“Step it up!” urged the guards. We climbed back into the stinking, hot cars.

“Hurry up, get your things and get out of the cars!”

We did not have to be told twice. We all grabbed our suitcases, bundles, utensils and crowded towards the door. My sick husband was still a little weak, but was already breathing normally. The children were impatient to get out of the stuffy car. However, because of our patient, we waited until the others got out so that we could move more freely.

In the area where we had stopped, apparently, coal was unloaded since there was so much coal dust between the tracks that our feet sank into it. Each person who jumped out of the rather high car raised a cloud of black dust. The bundles placed on the ground also became covered with

coal dust. We looked terrible. Having received the order, we all dragged our belongings to the barges which were standing near the river bank. It appeared that other echelons had arrived here before us. We heard people speaking Latvian and Estonian.

We were pushed onto the barges. There was very little space. We started competing over “living space.” The more nervous women started quarreling. Each one wanted to put her children to bed more comfortably. On the train we had already become accustomed to each other, we had become friends, but here the public was different and varied.

And whom didn't we have here? First, I was overjoyed to meet two acquaintances who were doctors. Stasė Šakenienė-Giedraitytė, my younger sister's classmate from her days at Voronezh, and familiar to me from the Medicine Faculty at the Vytautas Magnus University of Lithuania. The second doctor was Volonsevicius from Lazdijai. In 1924 his father had taken over the governing of the county from my husband. We were more at liberty here. We were permitted to go up on deck, even on shore, understandably, not very far. A woman introduced herself to me - she was a teacher. Someone from her acquaintances said that I was Slavenienė's sister. She and my sister had worked in neighboring schools.

Convinced that it was really so, she collapsed on my breast and sobbed so profusely that her tears soaked through my dress onto my skin.

She was sobbing so, that she couldn't say a word. My tears and those of others were flowing as well, but I did not know why she was crying so.

I began to talk, comforting her.

There was no lack of water here.

Someone brought some water. It seemed that she had been arrested as she was with her two-year-old son and her husband's parents, two old people. The old man was 74 and blind and the old lady was 72. Besides, she herself was pregnant, in her last month. She kept wringing her hands and repeating:

“What will happen to us? What will happen to us?” and she continued shedding tears.

“Don't worry, we'll all help somehow. My two friends here are doctors. They'll help!”

“But how will I give birth? What will become of us?! It's enough to make you jump into the river...” and tears again. I was comforting her again. Some others gathered around and began to console her, but she kept holding on to me, and a little more calmly:

“Probably the Dear Lord himself sent you to me! And you, like your sister, know how to console a person and to help...”

*Chapters 1-4 were published in the June 2020 issue of Bridges.*

## current events

### Security

...With the U.S. planning on reducing troops in Germany from 34,500 by 9,500, there is speculation that they may be reallocated to Poland. NATO's Secretary-General, Jens Stoltenberg, noted that America's operations in Germany, such as the airbase in Ramstein and the military hospital in Landstuhl, project American force beyond Europe and into the Middle East and Africa. He noted that while historically NATO was focused on defense against the Soviet Union, current priorities include preparations for the next decade related to the ascendancy of Chinese military power, the second-largest military spender after the United States. He indicated that the NATO needs to invest in new technologies, to be wary of over-reliance on Chinese supplies, and noted the joint military exercises between China and Russia.

...Russian Ministry of Defense motorized rifle unit carried out a maneuvering assault on positions of a simulated enemy in the Voronezh region about 200 miles north of the disputed Donetsk region of Ukraine. This western military district is Russia's most heavily-militarized district that borders NATO members and Ukraine.

...The Lithuanian Armed Services has taken delivery of the first NASAMS air defense missile system which has a range of up to 25 km. The system was purchased from the Norwegian Ministry of Defense and includes elements from Raytheon and Kongsberg Defense & Aerospace and employs U.S. made AMRAAM aircraft defense missiles.



...At the last moment, Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda refused to attend a planned meeting with the Presidents of Estonia and Latvia because they did not agree to ban electricity purchases from the new nuclear power plant at Astravyets in Belarus. He insists that it is a threat to Lithuania's safety and security. The other countries had agreed to a draft agreement that pledged to help keep the energy from being sold in Lithuania but did not commit to banning the purchase. Coincidentally, three of President Nausėda's chief advisors left the presidential team, which some joined even before his election.

...From a stockpile of 4 million potassium iodide pills, the Lithuanian Health Emergency Situation Center distributed 29,000 pills to the Vilnius District and 95,000 to the Švenčionys District to block the take-up of radioactive iodide in case of a nuclear accident at Astravyets.

...The 450 km Nordic-Baltic power interconnection experienced an unexpected shutdown for 9 days resulting in the need to pull 400 MW from the Kruonis hydroelectric storage plant and 100 MW from Estonia and Latvia to meet Lithuania's needs. The shift in demand resulted in a 52% increase in the wholesale price of electricity to over 45 euros/megawatt-hour in all three Baltic nations.

### COVID-19

...After 93 days the quarantine was lifted in mid-June. The latest count was 350,788 tested, 1,733 confirmed cases, and 74 deaths. With a population of 2,794,000 about 12.6% were tested, of these 0.5% were confirmed cases, and of these 4.3% died.

...Lithuanian Health Minister Aurelijus Veryga said that Lithuania is planning to implement large scale testing to find out what portion of the population has had COVID-19 and may have developed an immunity.

...Poland was incorporated within the "Baltic Bubble" of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania allowing free movement between countries. The informal casually dressed meeting between Prime Ministers at the Budzisko-Kalvarija crossing was without a formal handshake in keeping with the times but included journalists and photographers.

...The Chairman of the Bank of Lithuania, Vitas Vasiliauskas, is concerned that the recent government borrowing might increase the debt level from 39% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) up to 50%. He is concerned that the world economy will shrink greater than during the 2008 financial crisis. The bank forecasted three scenarios for Lithuania based on the world resolution of the COVID-

19 pandemic: a mild decline of 7%; a baseline decline of 9.7%; and a severe decline of 17% if the virus spread is not controlled until a medical solution is found to combat the spread.

...Ever entrepreneurial, the Bank of Lithuania has issued two COVID-19 coins dedicated to healthcare workers called the coin of Hope. The coin has the phrase "after darkness, I hope for light" written around its edge in Latin. It features a shaft of light illuminating the year 2020 and spelling out SOS, the international distress signal in shadow. The Bank is using coin blanks that were made for canceled/postponed events including the Tokyo Olympics. The coins can be viewed at [www.coins.lb.lt](http://www.coins.lb.lt). The 1.5 euro coin, made of a copper/nickel alloy, is sold out while the 5 euro coin is silver and is priced at 52 euros. For those that still want a 1.5 euro coin, the Bank sells a Lithuanian tree beekeeper coin for 2 euros.

...Although travel restrictions have been lifted, there is concern that actual travel will be limited. Therefore, Vilnius is mimicking the look and feel of different countries during weekends. Starting with Italy, the Town Hall Square hosted a collection of Vespa scooters and Alfa Romeo cars while St John's Church was the site of an Italian singer with guitar as local restaurants featured Italian dishes and green, white, and red flags. In the Bernardine Gardens, a children's entertainer was disguised as Super Mario, the video game Italian plumber. In the following weeks, the theme will change to India, the United States, France, Spain, Germany, and Japan.

...With the COVID-19 under control in Lithuania, Foreign Minister Linas Linkevičius felt comfortable sending a team of 11 medical experts to Armenia to help with their outbreak where over 400 cases were reported in one day bringing the total to over 14,000. Armenia was part of the former Soviet Union with 2.9 million people situated south of Georgia in the Caucasus. The team is taking 1.5 tons of medical equipment including PPE's and 30,000 COVID-19 tests and will last for 2 weeks. The effort was supported by Sweden and the EU.

### Business

...The family-owned cat and dog food manufacturer, Kormotech, has invested over 10 million euros in a new plant in the Kėdainiai Free Economic Zone, which gives them tax breaks for 10 years. Kėdainiai is located 51 km north of Kaunas. With only 50 employees and 90% automated, it will have the capacity to produce 20,000 tons of product in 500 distinct product lines (SKUs) over 5 proprietary brands including wet and dry foods, snacks, and private

label brands. Each product was developed using unique technology by pet nutrition specialists in the U.S. and Europe with the assistance of Ukrainian veterinarians and technologists.

...The Seimas has given preliminary approval toward establishing a state bank after a vote of 69 in favor, 12 against, and 15 abstained. The bank would seek a license and be supervised by the Bank of Lithuania, the central bank. President Nausėda is in favor of a state bank; the Finance Minister Vilius Sapoka and the head of the Bank of Lithuania, Vitas Vasiliauskas are cautious. The Finance Minister estimated that it would cost about 1 billion euros and take about 1 year to establish such a bank.



...The government of Lithuania is moving ahead with plans to establish a 700 MW offshore wind farm in the Baltic Sea in an area 29 km from shore and encompassing an area of 137.5 km<sup>2</sup> where the water depth averages 35 meters and the average wind speed is 9 meters/second. The farm is expected to cost about 1 billion euros of private investment and generate between 2.5 to 3 TWh of electricity per year, or almost 25% of Lithuania's power needs. The bids for the development and operation of the power plant are expected in 2023 for completion by 2030.

...The Lithuanian know your customer (KYC) service provider, Ondato, has received 450,000 euros from the Estonian investment firm, Startup Wise Guys. Founded in 2016, Ondato offers remote and KYC and anti-money laundering (AML) compliance solutions to banks such as Luminor, SEB, and Swedbank which are mandated by the European Union to tighten oversight of cryptocurrencies and combating the financing of terrorism. Startup Wise Guys began in 2012 and has invested in over 165 early-stage startups from more than 40 countries and has a rate of 77% raising additional 100,000 euros seed money within 6 months.

### General

...The Genocide and Resistance Research Center of Lithuania has published a list of Lithuanians who were either

## current events

imprisoned or deported by Soviet authorities between 1940 and 1953. The alphabetical list by name and place of residence in Lithuanian is available online and includes the year of arrest or deportation, the place of arrest or concentration camp in the Soviet Union, and the "destiny" which indicates whether the person has returned or died in the prison or camp. Many victims have the text "likimas nežinomas" meaning "destiny unknown".

...The summer solstice was greeted as an official public holiday with the festival of Saint John and Rasos Šventė, the Dew Festival. Head garlands of oak were worn by men while large circular garlands from linden trees and yellow flowers were worn by women. Occasionally a young man will jump over a fire at the Open-Air Museum in Rumšiškės, Lithuania.

...A 100 km track for runners and strollers was opened around Vilnius by Mayor Remigijus Šimašius. The route was designed by the Lithuanian orienteering federation and Vilnius city architects. The continuous route is mostly off-road but includes some asphalt sections. Depending on terrain, the route has different markers – in urban areas, there are stickers glued on metal and wooden columns and luminaries on the track; in forests, there are tapes that encircle trees. The route can be found at [www.vilnius100km.lt/en/](http://www.vilnius100km.lt/en/).

...Vilnius has resettled about 50 Roma families from the taboras, in Kirtimai near the airport to other parts of the city. Half of the families are provided with a monthly stipend of 90 euros per person for rent; the other half have been moved into public housing. About 400 Roma have voluntarily found alternate housing as Vilnius has cleaned out the slum-like area which has a reputation for drug activity. In 2018 the Vilnius Police Department reported that they retrieved 32 bodies due to drug overdoses in the Kirtimai taboras.

...Former President Dalia Grybauskaitė has accepted an invitation to join the World Leadership Alliance- Club of Madrid. Many former Presidents and Prime Ministers are members of the club including US President Bill Clinton, Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus, Latvian President Vaira Vike-Freiberga, Oscar Arias, President of Costa Rica and Mikhail Gorbachev, President of the Soviet Union (1990-91).

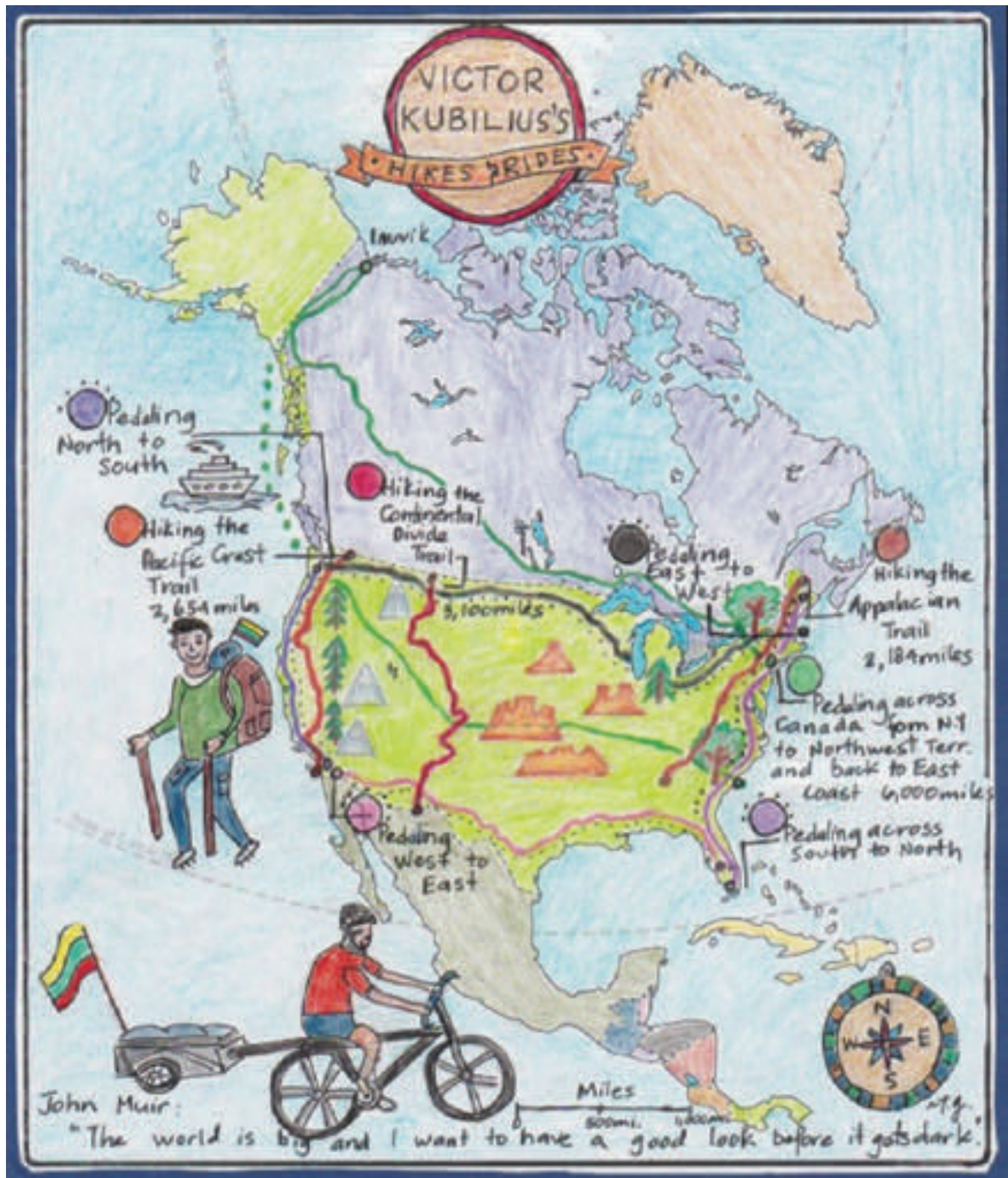
...Per a 2019 law, Lithuanian citizens living abroad can request the assistance of the Foreign Ministry to return home if they are living in a crisis area. Of 187 Lithuanian citizens living in Venezuela, which has experienced politi-

cal and economic instability (including U.S. sanctions), 12 have requested assistance, and 158,00 euros have been allocated of which 90,000 euros have been allotted to the Foreign Ministry for travel expenses and 38,400 euros to the Social Security and Labor Ministry.

...The municipal government in Vilnius constructed an "Open Beach" on Lukiškės Square, site of the infamous KGB prison. Although the sandy beach with sunbeds and sun umbrellas was popular with families who observed the "Beware of Sharks" warning signs, the somber history of the Square prompted the Seimas to vote 78-11 that it be reserved for representative purposes and the beach was disrespectful to the memory of the freedom fighters. The plan is to remove it after the end of summer.

...President Gitanas Nausėda extended condolences to the family of Stanley R. Balzekas, Jr., 95, Honorary Consul of Lithuania in Florida. This year, Mr. Balzekas was presented with the Golden Vytis Badge of Honor by the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in recognition of his many accomplishments including the founding and support of the Balzekas Lithuanian Museum of Culture in Chicago since 1966. In 2016 he was awarded the Grand Cross of Commander of the Order for Merits to Lithuania for his promotion of Lithuanian history and culture in the United States and for his work aimed at consolidating Lithuanian nationhood and encouraging Lithuanian awareness among the émigré community. He saw action in WWII including the Battle of the Bulge earning a Bronze Star and Purple Heart before being captured in February 1945 and spending the rest of the war in a POW camp. One of his last projects was to rehabilitate a vacant lot near the museum into a park which he christened: "Love and Respect Park". The park's focus is a young tree, a scion of the ~ 1500-year-old Stelmužė Oak in Lithuania which lives 100 miles northeast of Vilnius. His good friend, Senator Richard Durbin, (D-IL) entered a tribute in the Congressional Record ending with the statement: "And thanks in part to your efforts, Lithuania's proud history and culture were made an inspiring part to the world's story. Ačiū, my friend. May you rest in peace."





In the July/August issue of Bridges we published a story about an amazing traveler Victor Kubilius who literally crisscrossed the North American continent on foot and bicycling. By mistake, we did not put in the illustration of the map of Victor Kubilius's travels drawn by Teresa Giedraitis, a geography and art teacher. We are publishing it here, and hope that you will enjoy this very descriptive drawing and revisit the article.

# our community

## LAC National Executive Committee News

### Meeting the Candidates to the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania

During the referendum of last year, emigrant Lithuanians won the right to have their own electoral district. From now on, Lithuanians living abroad will have a representative in the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. On October 8, 2019, the Central Electoral Commission decided to set up the world Lithuanian single-member constituency for Lithuanians voting in other countries.

Being the largest Lithuanian organization in the United States, the Lithuanian American Community is making efforts to inform Lithuanian citizens living in the United States about the elections to the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania to be held on October 8, 2020. The Lithuanian American Community is not a political organization and is not involved in nominating or supporting candidates; however, it urges community members to be actively involved in matters relevant to Lithuania. To introduce the candidates to the World Lithuanian single-member constituency, Aušrinė Armonaitė, Dalia Asanavičiūtė, and Andrius Bagdonas, on June 20, 2020, the LAC held a virtual meeting with the aforementioned candidates. At the beginning of the meeting, President of the National Executive Committee Arvydas Urbonavičius presented the activities of the organization, and then the candidates introduced themselves and answered questions regarding Lithuanian education, cultural exchange, and strengthening the ties between Lithuanian emigrant community and Lithuania. The meeting was chaired by Inga Klimašauskienė, Vice President for Business Affairs of the LAC National Executive Committee. The recording of the virtual meeting can be found on the LAC Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/JAVLietuviuBendruomene/>



The LAC virtual meeting with the candidates to the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania

For the fourth Saturday in a row, together with representatives of organizations from 22 countries, members of the Lithuanian American Community have participated in the Global Lithuania virtual seminars entitled "Promoting Civic Participation of Lithuanians Abroad: Will We Maintain the World Lithuanian Constituency?"



Participants of the Global Lithuania virtual seminar

During the solemn ceremonies held at the Lithuanian Embassy in Washington, the Washington Lithuanian community members, Arvydas Barzdukas and Linas Orentas were awarded the Ministry of Foreign Affairs medals "For Merits of World Lithuanians to Lithuania" for special merits in fostering the Lithuanian way of life abroad, promoting the involvement of Lithuanians abroad in the life of Lithuania, and creating prosperity in Lithuania. We congratulate the active members of the Lithuanian American Community. Their meaningful work inspires us to contribute to the fostering of the Lithuanian way of life, to serve noble goals, and to promote the name of Lithuania.

Lithuanian Ambassador Rolandas Kriščiūnas presented the awards to their many years of active public work. The Ambassador noted that the work and dedication of Arvydas Barzdukas and Linas Orentas set an example for all of us by showing how to love one's family, one's homeland, cherish Lithuanian traditions, and serve noble purposes with honesty and sincerity.

To assess the contribution of the diaspora to the fostering of the Lithuanian way of life and the creation of Lithuania, in 2019, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs established an award - a two-degree badge of honor "For the Merits of World Lithuanians to Lithuania". Minister Linas Linkevičius presented the first award, the Golden Vytis Badge of Honor, to President Valdas Adamkus, the World Lithuanian Community, the Archbishop of Vilnius, Metropolitan Gintaras Grušas, the Honorary Consul of Lithua-



nia Stanley Balzekas, Jr., and Lithuanian Bishops' Conference delegate to émigré Lithuanians, Prelate Edmundas Putrimas.

Arvydas Barzdukas has actively contributed and continues to contribute to the activities of the Lithuanian American Community. He was one of the leaders of the organization, former LAC Council member and secretary, LAC National Executive Committee member, LAC Public Affairs Council member, LAC Statute and Rules Committee member, Chairman of the LAC Southeast District, Member of the Executive Committee of the Lithuanian Community Washington Chapter.

At the initiative of Arvydas Barzdukas, in 1989, an office of the LAC Public Affairs Council was established in Washington, DC. Its activities were especially useful in presenting Lithuania's aspirations for freedom in the US capital and in communicating with US politicians. The establishment of the LAC Public Affairs Council office in Washington was the first institutional step towards carrying out the lobbying work to gain support for Lithuania's independence among US politicians and the US administration.

Arvydas Barzdukas is a financial sponsor of various Lithuanian organizations and events. Through his activities, he encourages civic engagement of the Lithuanian American youth and the entire Lithuanian community in the US; he also supports orphanages in Lithuania. Together with his wife, Daiva, he raised three children and has seven grandchildren.



Ambassador Rolandas Kriščiūnas presents the award to Arvydas Barzdukas; standing first from the left, is Daiva Barzdukas. Photo courtesy: Lithuanian Embassy in the US.

Linus Orentas is an active long-term member of the Neringa camp, a generator and implementer of ideas, and one of the camp's leaders. From 2004 to 2012, he was a member of the Neringa Camp Council; since 2016, he serves as the Chairman of the Neringa Camp Council. Linus Orentas was the chairman of the organizing committee of the 15th North American Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival in Baltimore; thanks to his work, efforts, and organizational skills, the Dance Festival was successfully organized and gained great popularity.

From 1992 to 1997, Linus Orentas worked at the Lithuanian Embassy in Washington, DC, and was responsible for trade relations and investments of US companies in Lithuania. He is also actively involved in the activities of the Lithuanian Community in Washington, DC, and is a member of the Executive Committee and former LAC President. Together with his wife, Nerija, he raised four children.



Ambassador Rolandas Kriščiūnas congratulates Linus Orentas. Standing in the middle is Embassy Secretary Tadas Kubilius.

The third session of the LAC XXII Council will take place virtually on October 16-18, 2020. The virtual session of the Council is being organized for the first time in the LAC history. During virtual sessions, it will not be possible to hold ordinary (direct) meetings of the Council commissions. Council commissions will have to present the proposed resolutions before the session. Session meetings will be given less time than usual, and it will, therefore, be particularly important for Council members to familiarize themselves with reports, resolutions, and another material before the session begins. If you have any questions, please contact the LAC Presiding Panel officers by e-mail [presidiumas@javlb.org](mailto:presidiumas@javlb.org).

## our community

On August 3, 2020, Consultant of the LAC Strategic Plan Working Group, Darius Sabaliūnas, Ph.D., and the plan coordinator and manager, Janina Udrienė, presented the theory and methodology of the strategic plan development, its implementation and evaluation process to the National Executive Committee. Upon the approval of the National Executive Committee, the plan will be sent to the members of the LAC Council. It will be presented to the Council at the beginning of September.

The work started by the National Executive Committee of the previous term was completed by a newly-formed working group. Its members are Juozas Polikaitis, Arvydas Barzdukas, Artūras Žilyš, Arvydas Urbonavičius, Austėja Sruoga, Nerija Orentienė, and Gailius Draugelis. Led by Janina Udrienė and consulted by Darius Sabaliūnas, Chairman of the Cincinnati Chapter Council, the group accomplished an important and much-needed task. The strategic plan will help to better guide the organization's activities, define the most important tasks, and plan the work of fostering the Lithuanian way of life for several years in advance as well as get the resources required for the implementation of these tasks.

---

Together with its partners, the LAC is organizing North American Lithuanian Business Forum which will take

place in Philadelphia on April 16, 2021. President of the Republic of Lithuania Gitanas Nausėda agreed to be the sponsor of the event. In addition to high-ranking officials of the State of Pennsylvania government, the Ministry of Economy and Innovation of the Republic of Lithuania officials and members of organizations, Versli Lietuva, Investuok Lietuva, Global Lithuanian Leaders (GLL), as well as leaders of global American businesses will take part in the Business Forum.

Meetings of representatives of Lithuanian companies with managers of US companies and visits to US companies are planned. More information can be found here: <https://www.bacc.nyc/forum>. A website is being set up for this purpose, where you will soon find more information.

---

The creation of a database of Lithuanian professionals in the USA has started. The Agile CRM platform has been chosen for the database. We invite professionals and entrepreneurs to share their contacts and all information available to the that pertains to the Lithuanian business in the USA. For more information, please contact Inga Klimašauskiene, LAC Vice President for Business Affairs by e-mail: [ekonomika@javlb.org](mailto:ekonomika@javlb.org).

## The Commemoration of the Day of Mourning and Hope



Consul General of the Republic of Lithuania, Mantvydas Bekešius (third from the left) and Chicago Lithuanians participated in the event "Say it. Hear it. Remember it".

"Preserving history is the duty of every Lithuanian. The occupiers sought to destroy Lithuania, erase our past and future. Therefore, we must ensure that all those who died and all those affected by the Soviet repressions are named and not forgotten," said Mantvydas Bekešius, Consul General of the Republic of Lithuania in Chicago.

To commemorate the Day of Mourning and Hope, the World Lithuanian Center in Lemont, Illinois hosted the Chicago Lithuanian event "Say it. Hear it. Remember it", during which the names and fates of deportees and political prisoners were read out loud. The Consul General of the Republic of Lithuania, Mantvydas Bekešius, the Chairperson of the Lemont Chapter, Violeta Valaitytė, and the Commander of the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union in Diaspora, Julius Butkus, addressed the participants.

The memory of the deportees was honored with a moment of silence. Wreaths were laid at the monuments of Partisans' Mother and Adolfas Ramanauskas Vanagas, the leader of freedom fighters. The names and fates of the deportees were read out loud by members of the Lithuanian community in Chicago and representatives of the Scouts, the Riflemen's Union, the Lithuanian Foundation, the World Lithuanian Center, and the Consulate General of the Republic of Lithuania. During the event, the participants joined the global virtual event "Say it. Hear it. Remember it" organized by Mission Siberia.



Portland Lithuanians commemorated the Day of Mourning and Hope. Photo courtesy: Event organizers.

On June 14, 2020, a group of members of the LAC Portland Chapter, along with guests from Los Angeles, California, and Seattle, Washington, commemorated the Day of Mourning and Hope, taking part in a symbolic march around the historic Vancouver Fort. At the initiative of Vilius Žalpis, a long-term chairman of the Portland Lithuanian Community Executive Committee, the participants sang the songs of Aukštaitija partisans. Agnė Gurevičienė, a representative of the Lithuanian Consulate in Los Angeles, California, and her family joined the event.



Portland Lithuanian community members commemorated the Day of Mourning and Hope. Photo courtesy: Event organizers.

## Lithuanian Americans joined the "National Anthem around the World" celebration



Lithuanians in Los Angeles sing the National Anthem.

Due to the sharp increase in the number of those infected with the coronavirus in the Los Angeles area, the beaches were closed and large gatherings were restricted. Therefore, this year Lithuanians could not continue the tradition of singing the National Anthem on the beach of Santa Monica. In the State of California, church services and gatherings are also banned. However, this did not prevent Los Angeles Lithuanians from coming together for this beautiful event. Los Angeles Lithuanians gathered in the Lithuanian parish of St. Casimir, listened to

the Lithuanian anthem performed by composer Kęstutis Daugirdas, and sang it with all of their hearts. Interim Consul General Agnė Gurevičienė congratulated participants on the occasion of the State Day. To see the video recording, please press [HERE](#). With strict restrictions in place, the National Anthem was sung in the homes of many Lithuanians in Los Angeles and the West Coast.



Lithuanians in Central New Jersey came together to sing the National Anthem.

# our community

## Sports

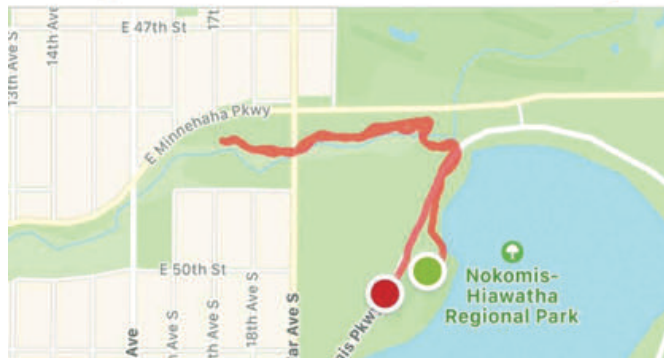
### Lithuanian Americans Took Part in the Virtual Lithuanian Olympic Mile Run



**2.04km Run**

Tuesday, Jun 23 at 6:07 pm

Activity: Run



Minnesota Lithuanians ran the Olympic Mile. Photo courtesy: Event organizers

The virtual Lithuanian Olympic Mile Run united Lithuanians from all over the world. On June 23, 2020, on the International Olympic Day, more than 3,000 compatriots from 32 countries on all continents of the world attended the run. Whether alone or together with family members, friends, and colleagues, Lithuanian Americans ran the Lithuanian Olympic mile, the distance of which symbolizes the restoration of the Lithuanian National Olympic Committee (LTOK).

"It is unbelievable that such a seemingly simple idea shook the whole world," Mantas Marcinkevičius, the director of the Lithuanian Olympic Foundation, which organized the virtual run, said. "Once again, we had a chance to witness the unity of Lithuanians and their appreciation for the community spirit. I would like to emphasize that as soon as we announced the run, members of the World Lithuanian Community approached us and wanted to be a part of this run."

"We saw our compatriots gather in the parks in Belgium, Germany, Italy, the USA, and Australia and run the Lithuanian Olympic mile together. They did it at their initiative. We wanted to encourage people to take an active part in sports and feel the love for sports. After seeing photos of smiling people and receiving thank you messages, it seems that our mission has been accomplished."

Everyone who ran the Lithuanian Olympic mile on June 23rd, recorded the result with the help of a running app, and shared it on social media with #OlympicDay2020 could receive one of the 15,000 prizes prepared by the organizers.

The 11th World Lithuanian Sports Games, which were scheduled to be held in 2021, will be moved to 2022. The exact date of the games will be announced later.

The world is unfortunately dealing with the Coronavirus Pandemic; however, the Lithuanian Foundation has not relented. It continued working within the quarantine guidelines. For the past three years, the Grants Commission has been meeting twice a year – spring and fall. This year's spring meeting was held over two days, May 16 and 17. To ensure the safety of the commission members, it was held virtually.

In attendance were three Lithuanian Foundation members: Juozas Kapačinskas, Saulius Čyvas, and Dalius Vasys, and three representatives of the Lithuanian American Community (LAC): Laura Garnytė, Janina Udrienė, and Virgus Volertas. Also participating in the meeting was an alternate LF Board member – Marius Kasniūnas and an alternate representative of the LAC – Žygintas Januškevičius. Also in attendance were Tauras Bublys, LF President, Audrone Pavilčius-Karalius, LF Chairperson of the Board, Jūratė Mereckis, LF Executive Director. Arvydas Urbonavičius was invited as a guest to attend the meeting. Vida Bieliauskienė was the meeting's acting secretary.

The Lithuanian Foundation operates and disperses funding according to section 501(c) (3) of the US Internal Revenue Code. The distribution of funds for activities and scholarships is guided by the funding and scholarship priorities approved by the Board of Directors. In total, the LF Board has authorized \$1,275,000 for disbursement in grants and scholarships in 2020. Grants Commission adheres strictly to the Allocation Guidelines provided by the LF Board of Directors.

The Lithuanian Foundation received 124 requests for funding of various projects, the total sum of which was \$1,779,414. The Grants Commission decided to support 86 projects, distributing \$786,310. The LF Board approved the decisions by the Grants Commission at the Board's meeting on June 9.

The complete list of awards can be found here: 2020 first LF grant allocation

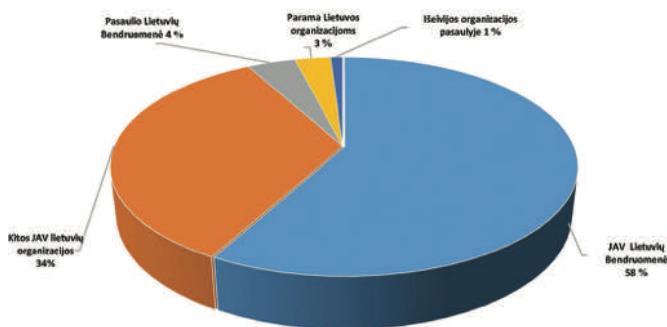
A large proportion, \$455,800 (58%) of the grant money was awarded to various projects administered by the Lithuanian-American Community. Grants were awarded to the Lithuanian World Community \$31,510 (4%). Other grants were awarded to various organizations and individuals that support Lithuanian activity in the US \$266,000 (34%), in Lithuania \$22,000 (3%), and throughout the world-wide Lithuanian diaspora \$11,000 (1%).

A second Grants Commission meeting will be held this year in October. The Scholarships Sub-Commission will meet in November 2020. Grant applications will be accepted July 1 – September 1, 2020 (second allocation). Scholarship applications will be accepted August 1 – October 1, 2020.

The Lithuanian Foundation is grateful for the generous support from the members of the LF, who, over the years, have enabled our organization to support a wide range of Lithuanian activities in the US and throughout the world.

More information is available at <https://www.lithuanian-foundation.org/>

LF paramos 2020 M. I skirstymas (786,310 JAV dol.)



The registration of voters planning to vote abroad on October 11, 2020 in the elections to the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania is underway. We invite citizens of the Republic of Lithuania who are either permanently residing in the US or arrived for a temporary stay and will be in the United States during the elections, to register to vote abroad. Citizens of the Republic of Lithuania wishing to vote abroad are invited to register to vote through the

electronic registration system. The registration will take just a few minutes. All voters must register, even those who reside abroad and have already been on the lists of voters voting abroad in previous elections or referendums. You will also be able to vote in the elections by mail. Ballots will be sent to the address you indicate. You will be able to mail your ballots back to the Lithuanian embassy or consulate free of charge.

Pensininkas is a 32-page magazine for Lithuanian seniors. It is printed in large print and has sections such as "From the Christian World", "Health is the Most Important Thing", and "Travel Threads". In the magazine, you will find a wide range of household tips, as well as tips on how to grow plants, simple but interesting food recipes, poems, and descriptions of fun events. Pensininkas is edited by Danutė Bindokienė, a former long-term editor of the daily Draugas. The annual subscription price is \$20 in the USA and \$25 in Canada, Lithuania, and elsewhere abroad. The magazine is published every other month, i. e. 6 times a year. Please write and send your check to:

LITHUANIAN HUMAN SERVICES COUNCIL OF USA, INC.

2711 West 71st Street  
Chicago, IL 60629

The history of this almost 40-year-old magazine is closely related to its founder and publisher, the Social Affairs Council of the Lithuanian American Community. "Occasionally, the LAC Social Affairs Council receives a question: 'Is it still worth publishing Pensininkas?'" The answer has always been and still is: 'Not only is it worth it, but it is necessary!' Many publications of the diaspora could envy such determination and enthusiasm.

[https://blog.lnb.lt/lituanistika/2020/06/08/parodai-lietuviu-iseivijos-ziniasklaidos-luziai-po-1990-uju-besirengiant-ilga-zurnalo-pensininkas-kelione/?fbclid=IwAR3yXLMtAMsOdbIYMYrMnv9BsoYIDB8\\_M30RoZA5d8fciYL\\_zOEp37KDX7w](https://blog.lnb.lt/lituanistika/2020/06/08/parodai-lietuviu-iseivijos-ziniasklaidos-luziai-po-1990-uju-besirengiant-ilga-zurnalo-pensininkas-kelione/?fbclid=IwAR3yXLMtAMsOdbIYMYrMnv9BsoYIDB8_M30RoZA5d8fciYL_zOEp37KDX7w)

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 34th annual Los Angeles Lithuanian Days celebration, which was to take place in October of 2020, has been canceled.

Our sincere congratulations to a chemist, public leader, host of Lithuanian radio shows and writer for the Lithuanian press, active member of the Lithuanian community, former Chairman of the LAC National Executive Committee, Vice President of the World Lithuanian Community,

# our community

Juozas Vytautas Gaila on his birthday anniversary! We wish him good health and many more years!



Juozas Gaila at his home in 2005. Photo from personal archive

For the first time in the history of the Lithuanian American Community, a professional concert in virtual space will be held! It will be dedicated to the Baltic Way. We invite you to connect! The event is supported by the Lithuanian Foundation.

**SUJUNKIME RANKAS IR ŠIRDIS**

Rugpjūčio 23 d., 2 val. po pietų (CST Čikagos laiku)

prisijunkite prie virtualaus "Baltijos keliui" skirto koncerto, transliuojamo per Facebook gyvai: **JAV Lietuvių Bendruomenė / Lithuanian American Community, Inc. puslapyje.**

Šiuolaikinių technologijų pagalba sujungsime tautiečius Jungtinėse Amerikos Valstijose ir Lietuvoje.

Koncerto dalyviaus atlikėjai: **Povilas Meškėla, Česlovas Gabalis, Jeronimas Milius, Nida Origalavičiūtė**, gitarų virtuozai **Tomas Varnagiris** bei **Audrius Piragis** ir kiti.

Renginį ves muzikologas, "Eurovizijos" komentatorius **Darius Užkuraitis** ir kino kūrėjas **Arvydas Rencikas**.

Čikagos apylinkėse gyvenančius lietuvius kviečiame gyvai renginį stebėti bei dalyvauti prie Pasaulio Lietuvių Centro, Lemont, kur vyks filmavimas.

Nuotoliniu būdu apjungsime JAV lietuvių bendruomenės apylinkes.

Smagesnė informacija tel. **708-288-6662, 630-640-9817**

**ATVYKITE SU ŠEIMA!**

Renginio metu vyks piešimo amf grandinio krepšinio vaiku festivalis "Piešiu Lietuvai". Dalyviai bus apdovanojami saldžiais prizais.

Koncertą rengia **JAV LB Kultūros Taryba**

## bridges

## SUBSCRIPTION ORDER FORM

Please check all that apply:

- New     Renewal  
 Gift     Donation

**Mail to:**

LAC, Inc./BRIDGES Subscriptions  
 1471 Wood Avenue  
 Downers Grove, IL 60515

Order online with PayPal at [lithuanian-american.org](http://lithuanian-american.org)

Make check payable to: Lithuanian American Community. Please mark "Bridges" on the Memo line.

**Please send:**

- 1 year electronic (10 issues via email) \$30  
 1 year print (10 issues by mail) \$40  
 2 years print (20 issues by mail) \$75

Your Name (please print)

Gift Subscription Name (please print)

Your Email

Gift Subscription Email

Your Address

Apt. No.

Gift Subscription Address

Apt. No.

City

State

Zip

City

State

Zip



LIETUVIŲ TAUTINIŲ  
ŠOKIŲ ŠVENTĖ

FILADELFIJA 2021

LIETUVIŲ LITHUANIAN  
TAUTINIŲ FOLK  
ŠOKIŲ DANCE  
ŠVENTĖ FESTIVAL

DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC  
THE XVI LITHUANIAN FOLK DANCE FESTIVAL  
IS RESCHEDULED TO THE WEEKEND OF  
AUGUST 6-8, 2021



# bridges

VOLUME 44 ISSUE 7

LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

PERIODICALS  
POSTAGE PAID

**POSTMASTER:**  
Dated Material  
Please Deliver Immediately

