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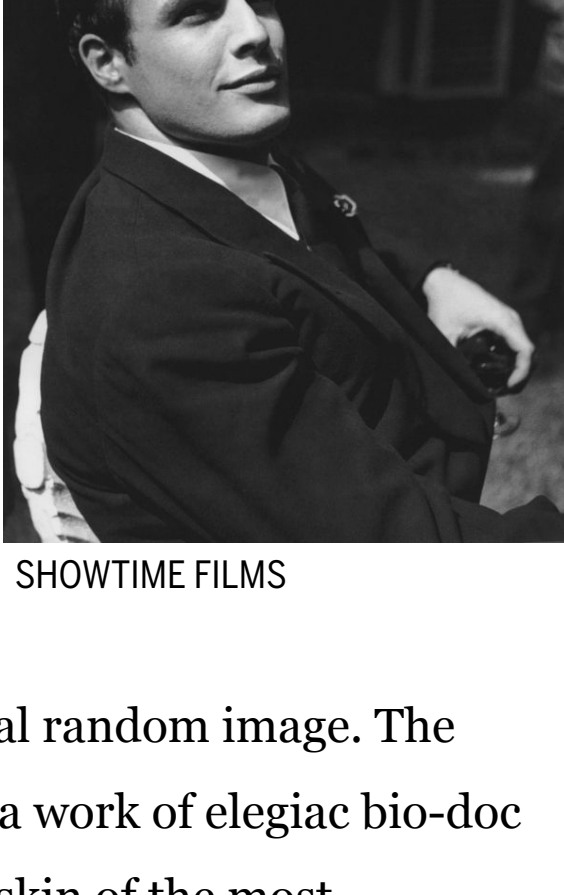
MOVIE REVIEW

'Listen to Me Marlon' shows Brando unbuttoned

By Ty Burr Globe Staff, August 13, 2015, 6:00 p.m.



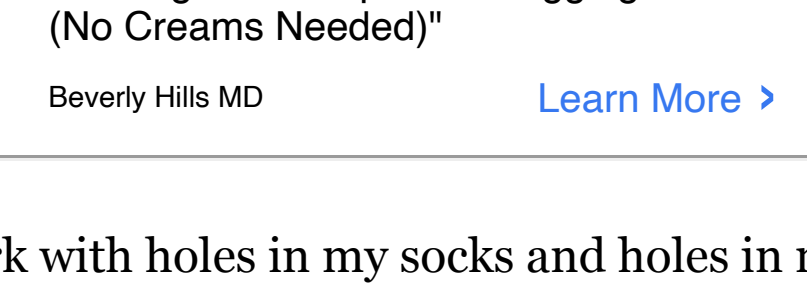
'Tis the season for celebrity documentaries made from the inside out. "Amy," with its rich trove of Amy Winehouse home-video footage, is still in theaters, and here comes "Listen to Me Marlon," a spooky and fantastically moving meditation on the life and career of Marlon Brando that is told almost entirely in his own words. British filmmaker Stevan Riley has availed himself of hours of private audio recordings made by the late actor over the course of his life, and he has edited these together with films clips, news reports, archival footage, and the occasional random image. The result is something that feels fresh, even revelatory — a work of elegiac bio-doc impressionism. "Listen to Me Marlon" gets under the skin of the most mysterious performer of the 20th century and forces us to recalibrate all our feelings about him.



SHOWTIME FILMS

The movie's signal image is its eeriest find: digitized footage of Brando's head and face from a 1980s film test. This is Marlon as the ghost in the culture's machine, a blue grid of Brando-esque pattern-dots that reappears throughout the documentary to quote Shakespeare and drop bitter musings in our ears.

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"I arrived in New York with holes in my socks and holes in my mind," the actor says, and Riley folds in clips of Brando the young god, on the loose in New York. We glimpse acting teacher Stella Adler in old interviews and hear Brando recalling how she taught him to live and act without fear. Early memories of his youth in Omaha turn from innocence to darkness; of his adored mother, he says, "I used to love the smell of liquor on her breath."

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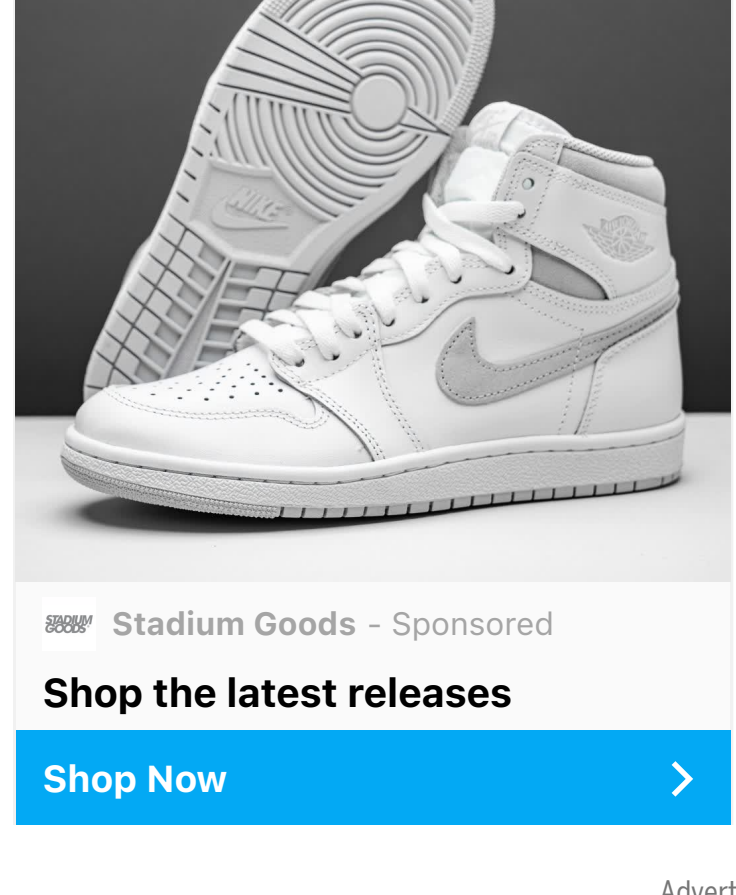
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Fame comes with "A Streetcar Named Desire" on Broadway and then on screen, "and then your life changes. Girls saying 'Hi, Mar.'" Not that he turned a single one of them down. But already the split was evident between who Brando was and who we wanted him to be — an entirely new kind of actor, an entirely new kind of star. He was revolutionary in both areas, but you can feel the hostility when he says, "There's nothing about me like Stanley Kowalski. I *hate* that guy," and you can see it in his eyes during his first Hollywood screen test or when he got mobbed at the New York premiere of "Guys and Dolls." "If they think I'm going to bare my soul for my next movie," Brando says at one point, "they're going to choke on their shrimp salad."

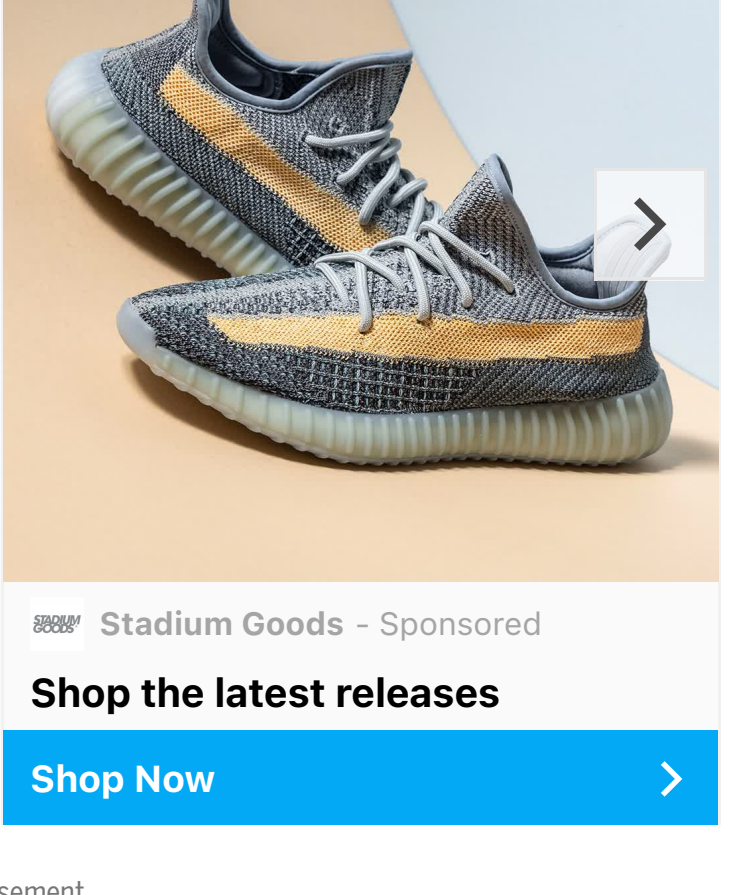
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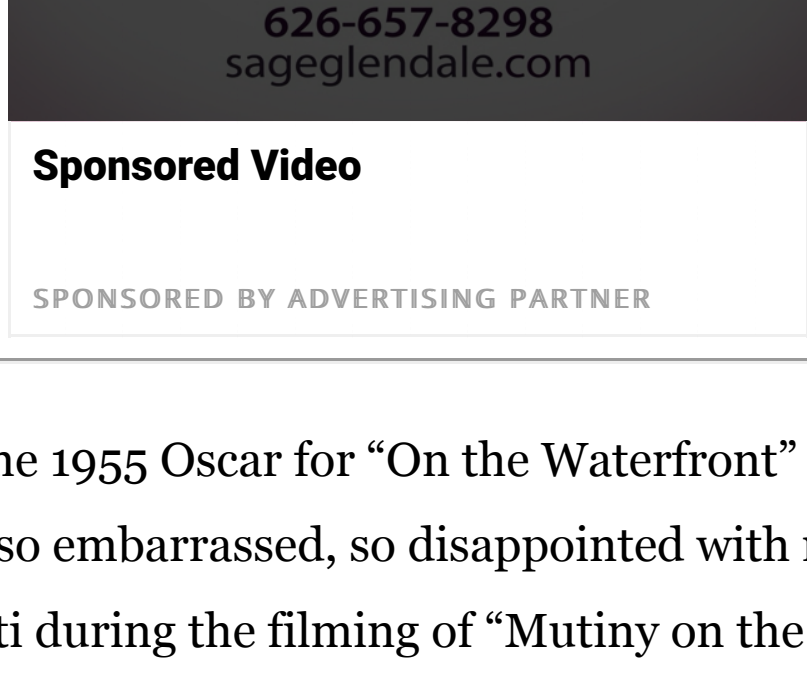


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And so on, through the 1955 Oscar for "On the Waterfront" ("When I saw the picture finally, I was so embarrassed, so disappointed with my performance"), the discovery of Tahiti during the filming of "Mutiny on the Bounty," the decline in the 1960s, the resurgence with "The Godfather" and "Last Tango in Paris," the personal tragedies of Brando's later years. He was scorned by so many people for getting fat, for losing his art, for not being sufficiently grateful for our attention, but with "Listen to Me Marlon," it's as if Riley has ushered us into the darkened chamber of the actor's memories, where Brando himself can whisper in our ear.

The movie convinces a viewer of the actor's seriousness of intent in supporting the civil rights struggles of the 1960s and the Native American resistance movement of the 1970s. We all remember the farce of Sacheen Littlefeather lecturing the Oscar audience when Brando turned down his "Godfather" award, but Riley makes sure to add a subsequent Dick Cavett interview in which the star waxes brutally eloquent on America's treatment of its native peoples.

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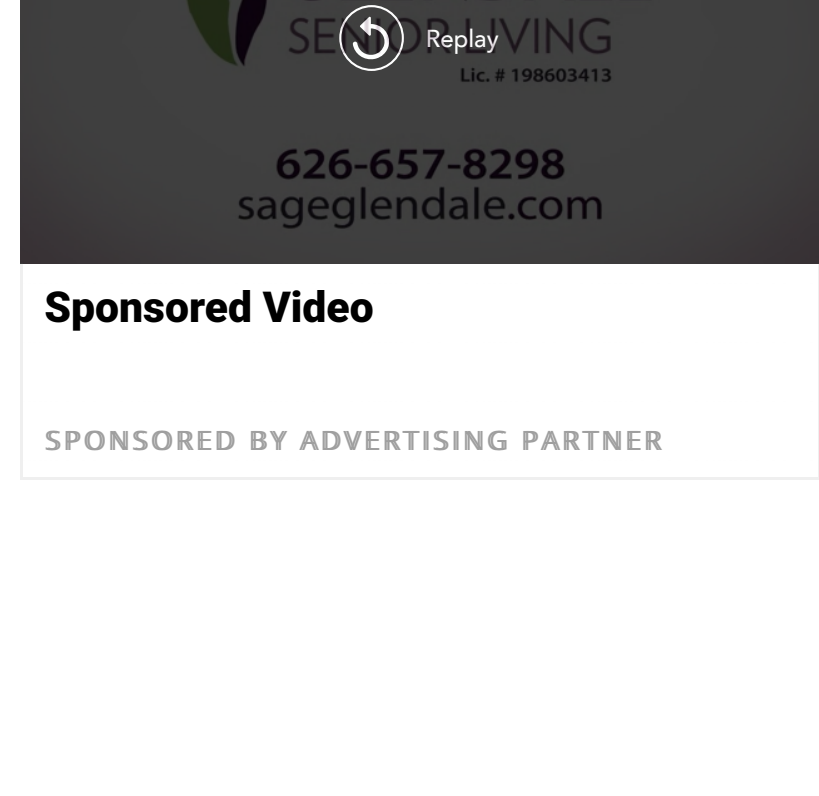


Riley serves as his own editor, and he makes historical and emotional connections that Brando himself might argue with. Did Brando's son Christian shoot and kill his sister's abusive boyfriend out of the same protectiveness that prompted the young Marlon to shield his own mother from paternal beatings? That's a tabloid reach, thankfully one of the movie's few.

More often, "Listen to Me Marlon" puts us in a fugue state — with the help of a carefully chosen ambient-rock score and Brando's own homemade self-hypnosis tapes — and urges us to consider anew this damaged, sensitive, ridiculous man who, when he cared to, could seem more thrillingly *there* than anyone in the history of cinema. "Figure out a way to do it that has never been done," we hear Marlon say to his tape recorder — for us, for posterity, or maybe just to remind himself. "You want to stop that movement of the popcorn to the mouth. The truth will do that. . . . Then you feel whole. You feel good."

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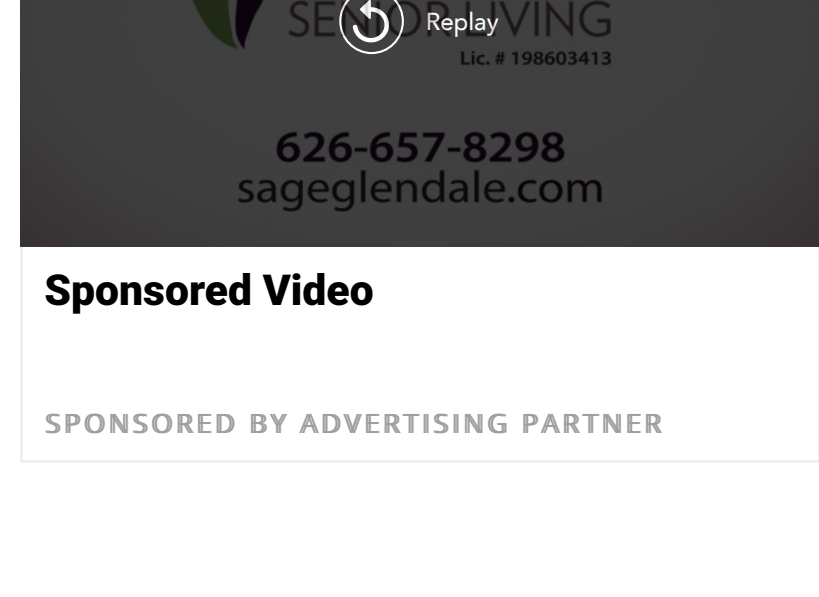
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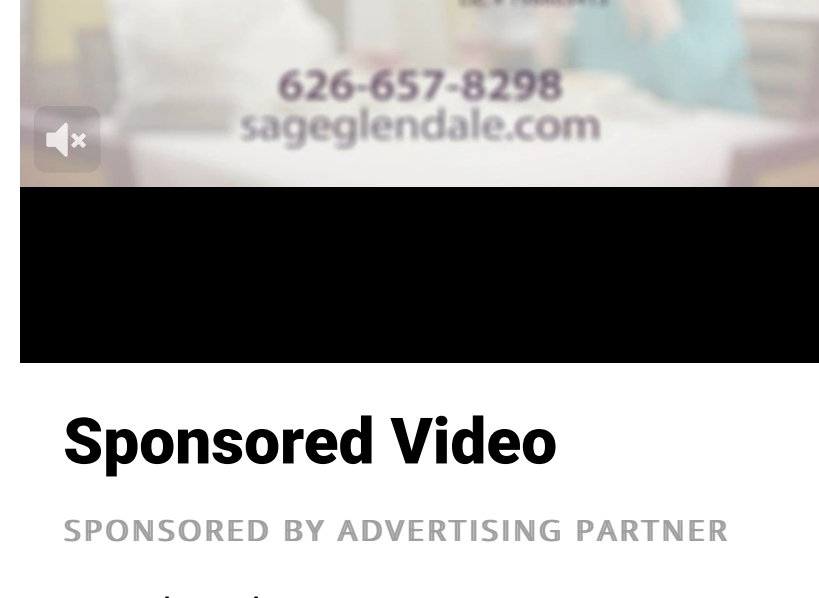
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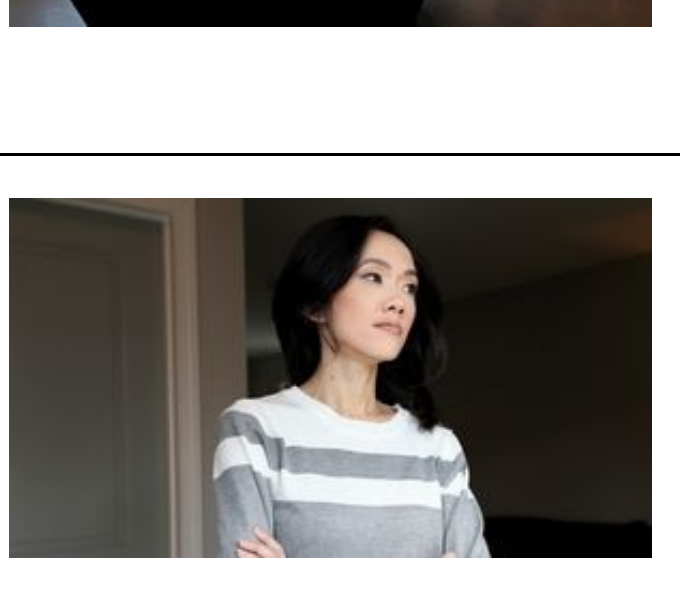
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Three Massachusetts high schools ranked in the top 100 nationwide.



Boston employers are embarking on a grand experiment by shifting their offices to a hybrid model

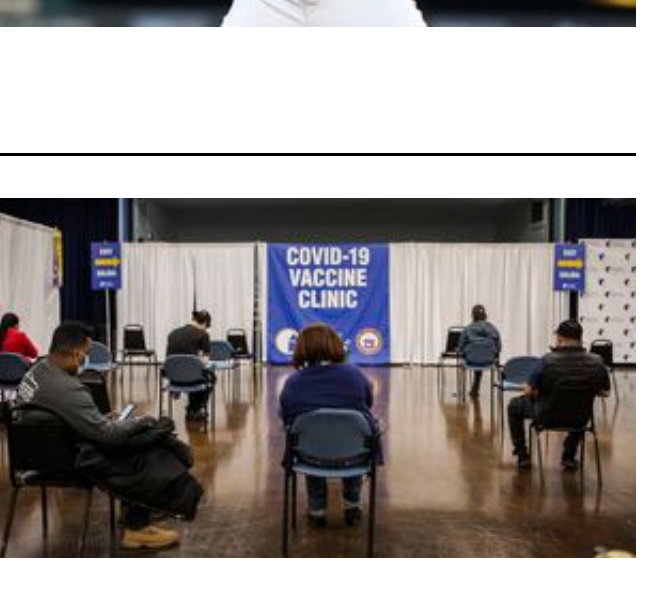
As they plan to bring workers back to the office starting this summer, white-collar employers in the Boston area are entering a world in which remote work becomes more the norm than the exception.



RED SOX 1, METS 0

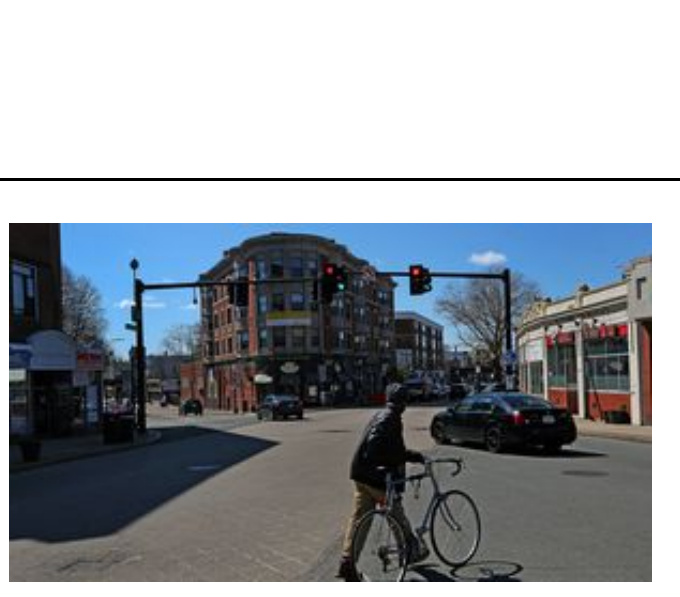
Nick Pivetta, Red Sox bullpen outduel ace Jacob deGrom and Mets for 1-0 victory

Doubles by Xander Bogaerts and Christian Vázquez in the second inning gave the Red Sox the only run they needed.



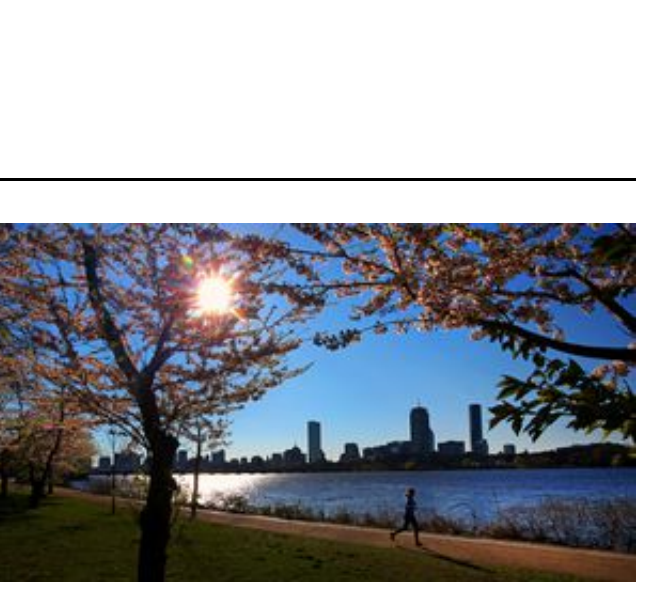
'He asked me if I wanted to date a board member': An Asian American grant writer on being treated like a commodity at work

Angela Chan O'Donnell is a grant writer for a local nonprofit. Here, she talks about the experience of being a young Asian American woman treated like a commodity by the older white men she used to work with.



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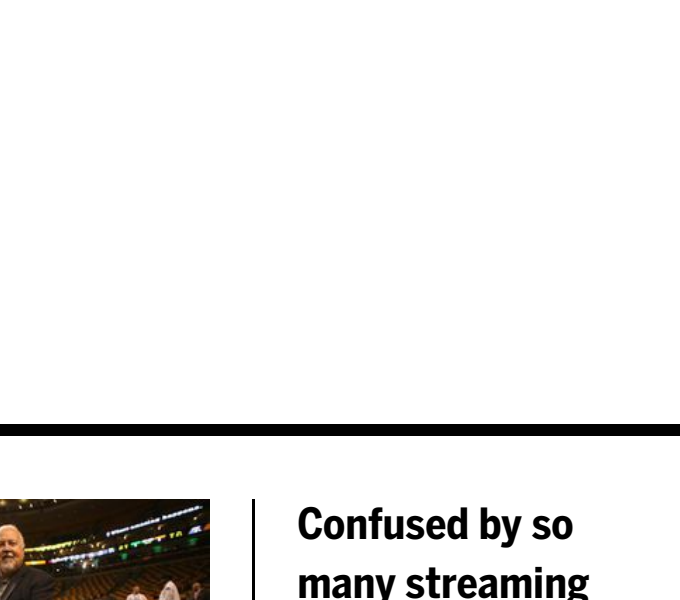
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ON THE STREET

Known for its diversity, Fields Corner now must make room for development

Residents have come to know Dorchester's Fields Corner as a place where newcomers can find a home. From Vietnamese to Haitian Creole to Spanish to Portuguese, signs in the store windows and chatter on the street reflect a neighborhood like few others in Boston.



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