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JUDGMENT DAY FOR TRUMP

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Morgan Spurlock



THE WEEK

THE BEST OF THE U.S. AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA

Insatiable appetite

Can artists and writers stop AI from devouring their work?

Pages 6 and 20



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Editor's letter

What a coincidence. The same “Appeal to Heaven” flag that has flown outside Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito’s New Jersey shore home, *Rolling Stone* reported last week, also proudly flutters outside the Maine mansion of his close friend, Federal Society co-founder Leonard Leo. The most powerful American most Americans have never heard of, Leo is the primary architect of the court’s 6-3 conservative majority. He gave Donald Trump the Federalist Society–vetted names of Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh, and Amy Coney Barrett, and fought to get Alito, John Roberts, and Clarence Thomas confirmed. It’s no exaggeration to call Leo, an ultra-conservative Catholic, a theocrat. His mission, he says, is to defeat the “unchurched” and “vile and immoral current-day barbarians, secularists, and bigots” whom “the devil” is using to move society away from its “natural order.” In recent years, Leo has joined evangelical Christian Trump supporters in embracing the 18th-century “Appeal to Heaven” flag as a defiant

symbol of their belief that America must be freed from the tyranny of secular progressives.

Alito is again claiming his wife is “solely responsible” for flying the flag, but its message matches his stated views and rulings. Alito has said that “religious liberty is worth special protection,” and that a “new moral code”—requiring tolerance for LGBTQ rights, gay marriage, and reproductive freedom—poses a threat to the “core beliefs” of Catholics like him. It was Alito, of course, who wrote the majority decision to overturn *Roe*—a fulfillment of Leo’s four-decades-long campaign. Two-thirds of Americans disagreed with that ruling, but Alito and Leo answer to a higher authority than mere democracy. In a second term, Trump has promised to give far-right Christian nationalists even greater power. “We have to bring back *our* religion,” Trump recently told them. “We have to bring back Christianity.”

William Falk
Editor-at-large

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Decision time in Trump's hush money trial

What happened

After more than a month of testimony that involved claims of infidelities, tabloid payouts, and a conspiracy that reached into the White House, the jury in Donald Trump's New York hush money trial this week began deliberations in the first criminal case against a former U.S. president. Prosecutors have charged Trump with 34 felony counts of falsifying business records relating to a \$130,000 payment to porn star Stormy Daniels ahead of the 2016 presidential election. Trump, who has pleaded not guilty and who denies having sex with Daniels, could face up to four years in prison if convicted. During closing arguments, Trump defense attorney Todd Blanche told the 12 jurors that his client's actions weren't crimes, just typical business practices. And he attacked prosecutors for relying on the testimony of former Trump attorney Michael Cohen—who made the payment to Daniels and says he was reimbursed by Trump for “legal services”—calling the fixer the “MVP of liars.”

Prosecutor Joshua Steinglass spent five hours reviewing testimony, documents, and recordings to outline what he called “a conspiracy and a cover-up” that Trump masterminded “to hoodwink the American voter.” He noted that Cohen's mendacity had once been useful to Trump. “We didn't pick him up at the witness store,” Steinglass said. “The defendant chose Michael Cohen to be his fixer because he was willing to lie.” Judge Juan Merchan told jurors that to find Trump guilty of the felony of falsifying records, they must find that he did so to hide another crime, which could be one of multiple election-related offenses. As the jury headed off to deliberate, Trump called the trial a “disgrace,” adding, “Mother Teresa could not beat these charges. The whole thing is rigged.”

What the editorials said

“The jury should acquit,” said *National Review*. Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg's big theory is that Trump “defrauded the voters of information” about the 2006 affair he's alleged to have had with Daniels. “But concealing bad things during an election isn't a crime,” and none of the business records that are involved in this case were created until after 2016. Bragg—a soft-on-crime Democrat “notorious for pleading felonies down to misdemeanors”—has effectively “taken a trifling case of dodgy accounting” and “inflated it into 34 felony counts.”



Accused of conspiring to ‘hoodwink’ voters

“speaks volumes about the political moment.”

What the columnists said

The prosecution “had the better of the argument” throughout, said Norman Eisen in *CNN.com*. Steinglass highlighted Trump's “repeated admissions” that his payments to Cohen were reimbursements, not income, and effectively argued that every critical point in Cohen's testimony was “supported or corroborated by other proof—or by common sense.” It's trickier to prove that Trump had the “intent to defraud,” and “if there is a juror who will hang the jury (resulting in a mistrial), this may well be where they do it.”

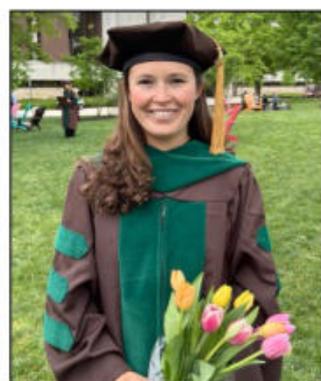
“Strong circumstantial evidence” suggests Trump was not blind to these transactions, said Jacob Sullum in *Reason*. But falsifying records is only a misdemeanor without a connection to another crime—and the prosecution's contention that the transactions amounted to a knowing “subversion of democracy” simply doesn't hold water. If that were the case, then Trump would have broken the law even if he'd “merely asked Daniels to keep quiet, perhaps by appealing to her sympathy for his wife.” Yet such a “commodious definition” of election fraud does not exist.

The country's future now “hangs by a thread,” said Hayes Brown in *MSNBC.com*. If Trump is found guilty, prison seems unlikely, but even probation could hobble him on the campaign trail. Not guilty? Trump will claim “total exoneration.” He might even try to “spin a hung jury as a victory.” Polling suggests a conviction will cause some Trump supporters to reconsider voting for him, but plenty can change once reality sets in. Only this is certain: “America is in no way ready for the new chapter that a verdict—or lack thereof—in Trump's case will usher in.”

It wasn't all bad

■ Andreas Pernerstorfer, a winemaker, was renovating his cellar in the village of Gobelsburg, Austria, when he found what looked like a piece of old wood. Remembering that his grandfather had found teeth there decades ago, he reported the discovery to the authorities, who unearthed 300 mammoth bones. The remains, between 30,000 and 40,000 years old, belonged to at least three mammoths from the Stone Age, most likely ensnared by human hunters. “I've worked in many parts of the world and have never seen so many mammoths in one place,” said archaeologist Hannah Parow-Souchon.

■ During her second year of medical school at Rowan University in Camden, N.J., Keri Cronin learned she had stage 4 non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and that her prognosis was not favorable. Disease was no stranger to the now 28-year-old doctor: In third grade, she was diagnosed with a blood vessel inflammation



Cronin, M.D.

disorder that kept her from playing basketball and field hockey, her favorite sports. After hearing the cancer diagnosis, Cronin burst into tears, but she pushed through and took a year-long break to recuperate from chemotherapy. Last month, she graduated with the disease finally in remission. In the future, she wants to become an oncologist herself and help other cancer patients. “To be in this stage within three years of treatment, I'm very proud of myself,” she said.

■ When Rob Hale spoke at the commencement for the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, the billionaire philanthropist gave each one of the 1,200 graduates a gift with a twist. He handed each grad two envelopes. One contained \$500 for their personal use and another with the same amount to donate to a worthy cause. It's a graduation gift system he's used before, at three other colleges. Though he doesn't have any assurances that the students will fulfill his giving request, Hale hopes to inspire the new generation. “These are times of turmoil, and the more we help each other, the better off we'll be,” Hale said.

Outcry after Israeli strike kills refugees in Rafah

What happened

Israeli forces stepped up their push into Rafah this week, even as global outrage grew over an Israeli air attack on a refugee tent camp in the southern Gaza city. The strike set off an inferno that burned whole families alive in their tents, killing at least 45 Palestinians, including children, and wounding 200. Israeli officials said the strike was targeted at two Hamas leaders and used two small bombs that may have inadvertently ignited a fuel tank or ammo stockpile; Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called the blaze a “tragic accident.” But Israel did not slow its incursion into Rafah, which is sheltering hundreds of thousands of civilians, many of them displaced from elsewhere in Gaza. Instead, it sent several tanks into the city center and launched an airstrike that Gaza officials said killed at least 21 civilians.



Flames ripped through the encampment.

The tent-camp strike came two days after the U.N. International Court of Justice ordered Israel to end its Rafah operation, citing the risk to civilians and the “spread of famine and starvation” in Gaza. As images of children’s charred bodies went viral on social media, international leaders spoke out in condemnation. “Israel has crossed the line,” said German Vice Chancellor Robert Habeck. As if to underline Israel’s growing isolation, Spain, Norway, and Ireland formally recognized a Palestinian state this week. The U.S. said the strike did not violate President Biden’s “red line,” but warned that Israel must refrain from a full-scale Rafah assault or risk losing U.S. military support. “We don’t want to see a major ground operation,” said White House spokesman John Kirby. “We haven’t seen that.”

What the columnists said

If this doesn’t cross Biden’s red line, “then what could possibly qualify?” asked **Ayman Mohyeldin** in *MSNBC.com*. The desperate Gazans packed into tent camps have “nowhere safe left to go.” The “so-called humanitarian zone” has no shelter, food, or medical care, and Israel has blocked the crucial Rafah aid crossing. Now some Israeli officials are saying they will continue the war through December. Will Biden do anything to stop them?

Have Americans forgotten “how wars are won”? asked **Bret Stephens** in *The New York Times*. Allied bombers killed hundreds of thousands of civilians in Europe in WWII and nearly a million more in Japan—that was the price of victory. Having started the war with a terrorist attack, Hamas chooses “to fight and hide among the innocent so that it may be rescued from destruction by the world’s concern for the innocent.” Allowing it to survive would simply “vindicate the strategy of using civilian populations as human shields.”

This episode underscores “how disastrous Israel’s entire war has become,” said **Zack Beauchamp** in *Vox*. For Gazans, hungry, homeless, and terrified, the siege is “a humanitarian nightmare on an unimaginable scale.” But it’s also a catastrophe for Israel, whose government of “right-wing fanatics” has approved brutal tactics that hurt both Israel’s reputation and its “long-term prospects for security.” With no sign Netanyahu will let up, Israel’s campaign in Rafah increasingly looks like “a form of murder-suicide.”

Alito rejects calls for recusal in flag dispute

What happened

Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito spurned Democratic demands that he recuse himself from Jan. 6–related cases after reports that a second flag with extremist associations had been flown at his vacation home. Last summer, a white flag with a green pine tree and the slogan “An Appeal to Heaven” was raised at his New Jersey beach house, two years after neighbors saw an upside-down Stars and Stripes at his Virginia home. The inverted flag is a symbol of the “Stop the Steal” movement, and the pine-tree flag is linked to Christian nationalists; both were carried by Jan. 6 rioters. Alito said earlier that the U.S. flag in Virginia was hoisted by his wife, Martha-Ann, during a spat over anti-Trump signs. However, *The New York Times* reported this week that the neighbors’ signs had been up for months and the climactic argument—in which a neighbor insulted Martha-Ann with an obscene slur—happened a month after the inverted flag was flown.

Democrats argued that the displays of partisanship made Alito unsuited to rule on charges that Donald Trump tried to overturn the 2020 election results. Rep. Jamie Raskin (D-Md.), the lead House prosecutor in Donald Trump’s impeachment trial, urged the Justice Department to petition the rest of the high court to require Alito’s recusal in Jan. 6–linked cases. Alito, however, denied in a letter to lawmakers that the pine-tree flag had any insurrectionist overtones, and maintained that in any case the flags did not warrant his recusal. “My wife is fond of flying flags. I am not,” Alito wrote.

What the columnists said

Alito’s “grotesque malfeasance” should be the spur for Senate Judiciary Chair Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) to finally hold hearings and exercise ethics oversight, said **Jennifer Rubin** in *The Washington Post*. Revelations about the second flag not only made Alito’s excuses look hollow but also suggest the justice has an affinity for “a group that defines the United States as a White Christian country” and “repudiates the division between law and Christian dogma.”

The people undermining the Supreme Court are those acting as if Alito “is sending secret signals from the flagpole at his beach house,” said *The Wall Street Journal*. The “Appeal” flag references a 1690 work by John Locke about the inherent right to overthrow tyranny. Just because “some bozos brought it to the Jan. 6 Capitol riot” doesn’t mean it and Alito are tainted. We saw a similar effort to redefine the “Don’t Tread on Me” Gadsden Flag as a far-right symbol when citizens of all stripes embrace its message of liberty and individualism.

The notion that Alito can do whatever he wants, regardless of rules that apply to ordinary staff of the Supreme Court and the justice system, is utterly corrosive, said **Dahlia Lithwick** in *Slate*. It’s not just that we’re being shown the “law is for suckers,” it’s “the tragic collective conclusion that there is nothing to be done.” Maybe “God wants us all to live under the fist of an imperial court,” but that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t be talking seriously about term limits, court expansion, and an inspector general.

Johansson vs. Altman: A defining moment for AI?

This is “the most interesting tech scandal in recent memory,” said Reed Albergotti in *Semafor*, and it could be the most consequential. Actress Scarlett Johansson accused OpenAI CEO Sam Altman last week of stealing her voice and giving it to “Sky,” the new voice assistant for its ChatGPT artificial intelligence chatbot. In a statement, Johansson said she was approached by Altman twice about licensing her voice—which she declined to do—and was “shocked, angered, and in disbelief” when OpenAI debuted a “Sky” voice “so eerily similar to mine that my closest friends and news outlets could not tell the difference.” OpenAI has now “paused” the voice, and Altman apologized to Johansson “that we didn’t communicate better.” But he insists Sky’s voice “was never intended to sound like hers” and that a different voice actor was hired for the role. Still, this incident has crystallized fears of artists, lawmakers, and the public that if a figure as wealthy and powerful as Johansson can’t stop the “AI juggernaut” from stealing her work and her identity, “what chance does anyone else stand?”

The Johansson-OpenAI farce is a “chicken-or-the-egg” situation, said Sonia Rao in *The Washington Post*. Altman’s critics say the smoking gun is his one-word tweet, “her,” from the day of Sky’s debut—*Her* being Spike Jonze’s 2013 sci-fi drama about a lonely man who falls in love with “Samantha,” a disembodied AI voiced by Johansson. *Her* is Altman’s favorite film, but does the tweet prove he stole Johansson’s voice? Or was this *Her* superfan just celebrating his creation of a Samantha-like talking AI? OpenAI records and documents do confirm that recording sessions for Sky took place before Altman contacted Johansson, said Nitasha Tiku, also in the *Post*. The actors were told to be “warm” and “engag-



The actress and the tech CEO

ing,” and Johansson and *Her* were never mentioned as references.

Maybe so, but OpenAI “has a track record of cutting corners when it comes to permissions,” said Andrew Chow in *Time*. Its large-language models are trained on reams of human-produced content—books, articles, songs, and videos—which are chewed up and regurgitated for OpenAI’s profit. A group of authors including John Grisham and George R. R. Martin are now suing OpenAI for “systematic theft”; *The New York Times* has filed a lawsuit alleging copyright infringement; and Sony Music, home of Adele and Beyoncé, wants to know if OpenAI and other tech giants used its songs to develop AI systems. Altman’s “Johansson blunder” is somewhat different, said Derek Robertson in *Politico*, but it will only increase pressure on Congress to regulate AI. Sen. Chris Coons (D-Del.) called the incident “frankly disturbing” and vowed to introduce a bill to crack down on AI-generated human likenesses.

“In a way, we are all Johansson,” said Kyle Chayka in *The New Yorker*. Most of us have put “content” online—think of family photos and life updates on social media—that have since been fracked and digested by AI. Now we’re just “waiting to be confronted with an uncanny reflection of ourselves that was created without our permission and from which we will reap no benefit.” I’d sleep better if AI’s “apostles weren’t so creepy,” said Jeffrey Blehar in *National Review*. It’s not exactly reassuring that this industry’s most prominent figure says he’s “inspired” by a “cautionary tale” about AI’s dangers. Either Altman hasn’t watched the dystopic *Her* all the way to the end, or our future is being written by “weird people whose psychological priorities are very different from yours and mine.”

Only in America

■ The Colorado Republican Party is urging all parents in the state to pull their children out of public schools. In a mass email, the state’s GOP slammed a new law requiring schools to respect students’ preferred pronouns as an attempt to “break down the family unit” and “turn more kids trans.” The party says it will fight these “woke laws” in court, but that win or lose all parents should aim “to remove their kids from public education.”

■ Lawmakers in Illinois have passed a bill that would reclassify some “offenders” as “justice-impacted individuals” under state law. The redesignation would apply to convicted criminals who have enrolled in a rehabilitation program meant to keep them out of prison. “Carrying a label of offender for life,” said Democratic state Rep. Kelly Cassidy, is not appropriate for a system that’s supposed “to return people to full participation in society.”

Good week for:

Olive branches, after Donald Trump magnanimously wished a “Happy Memorial Day” to the “Human Scum that is working so hard to destroy our Once Great Country,” singling out the two “Trump Hating” judges who have presided over his New York trials.

American exceptionalism, after the World Economic Forum ranked the U.S. first in its annual survey of the planet’s “travel and tourism” destinations. The U.S. was the only North American nation in the top 10; Canada finished a lowly 11th.

Diplomacy, after Beijing announced it will send a pair of giant pandas—Bao Li, 2, a male, and Qing Bao, 2, a female—to Washington’s National Zoo. The zoo’s Panda House has been empty since November, when its last three bears were shipped back to China.

Bad week for:

Motivated sellers, after a San Francisco realtor listed a 10,000-square-foot lot for sale in coveted Alameda. The lot’s low asking price of \$400,000 reflects the fact that it sits at the bottom of a lagoon, which the property’s owner reportedly didn’t realize when he bought it sight unseen last March hoping to “fix it and flip it.”

Locker room talk, after Pope Francis apologized for using a derogatory Italian term for gay men, *frociaggine*, in a private discussion with bishops about the church’s policy regarding gay priests. Francis “never intended to offend or express himself in homophobic terms,” said a Vatican spokesperson.

Outdoorsiness, after the CDC reported that six members of a South Dakota family contracted potentially lethal brain worms from a meal of undercooked bear-meat kebabs; all have fully recovered.

In other news

Judge Cannon rejects Trump gag order

The federal judge overseeing Donald Trump’s classified documents case in Florida this week denied prosecutors’ request to place a gag order on the former president. After Trump baselessly claimed Biden had authorized the FBI to kill him during a search of his Mar-a-Lago property (see Talking points, p. 17), special counsel Jack Smith asked that Trump be barred from making statements that could pose a “danger to law enforcement agents.” But Judge Aileen Cannon said Smith hadn’t properly informed Trump’s lawyers about the request, calling his communication with them “lacking in substance and professional courtesy.” Prosecutors can seek a gag order again if they give Trump’s team “sufficient time” to respond, Cannon said. A gag order was imposed on Trump in his New York hush money case.



Schmidt

Portland, Ore.

Progressive defeat:

Multnomah County voters rejected their liberal district attorney for his tough-on-crime opponent last week.

Portland's top prosecutor, Mike Schmidt, was elected in May 2020, during Covid lockdowns and just before widespread racial justice protests. In Portland, pitched battles between protesters and police in riot gear lasted into 2021. During Schmidt's tenure, Portland murders more than doubled, hitting records of 92 in 2021 and 101 in 2022. Part of a wave of "progressive prosecutors" in cities such as Philadelphia, San Francisco, and St. Louis, Schmidt promised a reform-oriented approach to drugs, crime, and homelessness. But many residents grew disillusioned. Nearly 800 people in Schmidt's jurisdiction died of overdoses last year, and Oregon repealed Measure 110, its drug-decriminalization law, this year. Nathan Vasquez, Schmidt's deputy, ran against him as an independent, vowing to aggressively prosecute criminals and end open-air drug use. He won 53 percent of the vote.



Phelan

Austin

Survivors: Two establishment Republican politicians staved off challenges from right-wing candidates in Texas' GOP primary this week. Texas House Speaker Dade Phelan won

a close runoff against David Covey, a first-time candidate who was endorsed by Donald Trump. Phelan had earned the ire of Texas' Republican right wing after leading a failed effort to impeach Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton on charges of taking bribes and abusing his authority. Establishment Republicans like former Gov. Rick Perry campaigned for Phelan. Rep. Tony Gonzales (R-Texas) also survived a runoff against YouTube star Brandon Herrera, a gun-rights activist who calls himself the "AK Guy"—after a Russian automatic rifle—and was endorsed by Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-Fla.) and House Freedom Caucus leader Bob Good (R-Va.). "It's my absolute honor to be in Congress," said Gonzales, "but I serve with some real scumbags."

Uvalde, Texas

Video violence: The relatives of the Uvalde school-shooting victims announced two groundbreaking lawsuits last week against the manufacturer of the weapon used in the attack, the publisher of *Call of Duty* video games, and Instagram's parent company, Meta. The suits link the mass shooting to the marketing of firearms by gaming platforms and social media companies. The Uvalde shooter, 18-year-old Salvador Ramos, killed 19 students and two teachers in 2022, using an AR-15-style rifle featured in *Call of Duty*. The complaints argue that Meta, rifle manufacturer Daniel Defense, and *Call of Duty* publisher Activision have groomed a generation of "socially vulnerable" men to enact violent fantasies. Josh Koskoff, the plaintiffs' attorney, argued that video games exposed Ramos "to the dopamine loop of virtually killing a person. That's what *Call of Duty* does."



Baton Rouge

Abortion pills: Louisiana became the first state to categorize abortion pills as a controlled substance last week, making possession without a prescription illegal. Republican Gov. Jeff Landry signed a bill reclassifying mifepristone and misoprostol, which are used in almost two-thirds of U.S. abortions, as Schedule IV drugs, alongside antidepressants like Xanax and Valium. Neither drug has potential for abuse or dependency, but the new law makes possession punishable with up to five years in prison, though women who have the drugs for their own use appear to be exempted. Over 250 doctors spoke out against the law, arguing it would make it harder to access the pills for other purposes, such as treating miscarriages. Louisiana has the country's highest maternal mortality rate and its abortion ban contains no exceptions for rape or incest. President Biden called the reclassification of the drugs "outrageous" and said it's a "direct result of Trump overturning *Roe v. Wade*."

Washington, D.C.

Never Trumpers:

Libertarians selected Chase Oliver, a former Democrat, as their nominee, after greeting Donald Trump with a barrage of boos at their national convention this week. The party's national committee asked the presumptive Republican nominee to speak at its nominating convention—an unprecedented invitation—hoping his appearance would boost attendance. Trump had gone to the convention looking to solidify his support among foes of President Biden. But the audience quickly soured on his 35-minute speech. "You crushed my rights!" one audience member called out. "Swamp creature!" yelled another. Boos intensified after a visibly frustrated Trump suggested he should be selected as the Libertarian presidential nominee. "If you want to lose, don't do that. Keep getting your 3 percent every four years," he said. The next day, Libertarians nominated Oliver, who gained attention as a U.S. Senate candidate in Georgia in 2022, after seven rounds of voting.



Libertarian rage

Arkansas, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Texas, and Virginia

Extreme weather: Severe storms and blistering heat plagued a wide swath of the country this week, from the Midwest to the South. Tornadoes killed at least 23 people across Arkansas, Texas, Oklahoma, and Kentucky. In the northern Arkansas town of Rogers, almost two-thirds of residents lost power. Tornadoes knocked trucks over, downed trees, and ripped through homes.



Path of destruction

"You could see tops of trees just shaved off. I've never seen anything like it," said Rogers Mayor Greg Hines. More than 800,000 Texans lost power after storms slammed the region with rain, hail, and strong winds. Tornadoes even threatened the East Coast, with one injuring five people in Virginia and a warning issued from Maryland to North Carolina. Across the Southeast, residents struggled in record-breaking heat. New daily highs of 96 degrees were recorded in Miami and Fort Lauderdale, while Del Rio, Texas, near the U.S.-Mexico border, broke its May record with 112 degrees.

London

Accused spy found dead: A former Royal Marine charged with spying for China was found dead last week in a London park in what investigators believe was a suicide. Matthew Trickett, 37, was one of three men arrested late last month and accused of conducting surveillance to help Chinese authorities keep tabs on Hong Kongers in the U.K. More than 185,000 Hong Kong residents have relocated to Britain since 2019, when Beijing began a crackdown on civil liberties in the formerly autonomous region. Prosecutors had requested pre-trial detention for Trickett for his own welfare after a suicide attempt, but he was released on bail last week and found dead days later. China, which offers large bounties for information leading to the arrest of leading Hong Kong activists living abroad, called Britain's claim it was spying on the expat community "malicious slander."

Agde, France

Scandal in swingersville: The mayor of Agde, a French beach town known for wild sex parties, has been charged with corruption for spending taxpayer money on a clairvoyant who claimed she could channel his dead father. Prosecutors say Mayor Gilles d'Ettore has been using Sophia Martinez's services for four years, buying her lavish South Pacific vacations and renovating her home with public funds and even giving several of her family members government jobs. Martinez, who faces embezzlement charges, is said to be a gifted ventriloquist who can transform her voice to sound masculine during seances. D'Ettore's lawyer, Jean Marc Darrigade, told *BBC.com* that Martinez had "found a mental weakness in him and exploited it for personal gain." Agde is known as Europe's unofficial capital for swingers.



D'Ettore, Martinez

Mexico City

Brutal heat: It's so hot in Mexico that howler monkeys have been dropping dead in the jungle. At least 157 howler corpses have been found in Tabasco and Chiapas states. "They were falling out of the trees like apples," said wildlife biologist Gilberto Pozo. The heat dome that has trapped hot air over much of the country has also killed at least 48 people since March and shows no sign of letting up. Mexico City, which typically reaches only about 80 degrees, has set three new records this year with temperatures in the mid-90s, and the National Autonomous University of Mexico warns that the next two weeks will bring "the highest temperatures recorded in Mexican history." Mexico City is in a drought and has been rationing water; it could run out altogether next month.



Saving a howler monkey

Lizon, Haiti

Gangs kill Americans: Gangs assaulted a Christian compound in Haiti last week and shot to death three missionaries, including an American couple. Davy Lloyd, 23, had grown up on the property at his parents' Missions of Haiti orphanage—speaking Creole before he learned English. In 2022, a year after the collapse of Haiti's government plunged the country into chaos, he moved back to work there with his wife, Natalie, 21, the daughter of a Missouri state legislator. Last week, a gang ambushed the couple along with orphanage director Jude Montis, robbed them, and tied them up. They managed to free themselves and call Lloyd's parents in the U.S., but then a second gang breached the complex and killed the three. Gang warfare has overrun much of Haiti since February.



The Lloyds

Berlin

Too extreme for extremists: The Alternative for Germany (AfD) party got kicked out of the far-right coalition in the European Parliament this week after its leader said elite Nazi guards were "not all criminals." AfD lead candidate Maximilian Krah told the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica* that members of the SS—a Nazi division whose main job was guarding concentration camps—should be assessed individually, not condemned en masse. That remark was too much for Identity and Democracy, the bloc of populists and nationalists whose membership is expected to swell following next week's EU elections. The bloc had already distanced itself from the AfD over revelations the party had discussed mass deportations of migrants.



Krah: Not all SS



Set on purpose

Valparaíso, Chile

Firefighter was arsonist: A volunteer firefighter and a former forestry official have been charged with intentionally starting a massive wildfire that roared across central Chile in February, killing 137 people. Francisco Mondaca, 22, was arrested last week inside the firehouse where he works and accused of setting four fires in the hills of Valparaíso at a time when high winds and hot temperatures would fan the flames; he and accomplice Franco Pinto allegedly planned the crime to increase demand for firefighting services. The mammoth blaze charred more than 100 square miles over several days, damaging or destroying 14,000 buildings and leaving 16,000 people homeless. "We are completely devastated," said Valparaiso Fire Department chief Vicente Maggiolo, adding he hoped the inside job "would not tarnish" the reputation of a department that has saved lives for 170 years.

Kharkiv, Ukraine

Civilians targeted: Russia dropped two bombs on a busy mega-store in Kharkiv last week, killing at least 18 people and injuring dozens in Ukraine's second-largest city. "There was black smoke everywhere, and it was hard to breathe," store director Oleksandr Lutsenko told *CNN.com*. "Some people were jumping out of the windows." Ukraine is being bombarded with 3,200 guided aerial bombs each month, President Volodymyr Zelensky said this week. "How do you fight that?" he asked. He called on Western countries to put "tangible coercion on Russia" to force a peace, saying Moscow was planning to "destroy Ukraine and move on" to other European countries.

Kharkiv is close to the Russian border, and Ukraine has found it hard to defend the city because it is not allowed to use Western-supplied weapons to strike Russia's missile launchers. In a turn-

around, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg urged member countries this week to lift their restrictions on Ukraine's use of their weapons against Russian territory, saying Ukrainians can't fight with "one hand tied behind their back." France and Germany agreed to allow Ukraine to use their weapons as it sees fit, but Belgium, which just promised to deliver 30 F-16 fighter jets, did not, saying those jets must be used only over Ukrainian soil. And the U.S., by far Ukraine's biggest supplier of weapons and aid, reiterated this week it will not allow U.S.-supplied weapons to be used inside Russia. "We do not want this to escalate in any form," White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said this week.



Not a military target

Seoul

Bags of filth: North Korea sent more than 250 balloons carrying bags of trash and manure this week across the border into South Korea, where they splatted down in streets, fields, and yards. The South Korean government urged citizens not to touch the hazardous contents—including batteries, plastic debris, and animal waste. The North said the balloons were "tit-for-tat" retribution for South Korea's recent "psychological warfare" involving "mounds of wastepaper." That was a reference to the 20 balloons that South Korean activist group Fighters for a Free North Korea sent to the North a few weeks ago bearing 300,000 propaganda leaflets and thousands of USBs loaded with K-pop songs. South Korea has outlawed sending balloons to the North, but activists often do it anyway.



Smelly gift

Taipei, Taiwan

U.S. show of support: Two bipartisan U.S. congressional delegations met with Taiwan's new president, Lai Ching-te, this week, days after China staged threatening military drills off the Taiwanese coast. Beijing views democratic Taiwan as a renegade province that must be reunited with the Chinese mainland, by force if necessary, while the U.S. maintains strong ties to the island and is unofficially committed to its defense. In "these increasingly dangerous times," said Sen. Dan Sullivan (R-Alaska), "it is critical that America show steady, unwavering bipartisan commitment and resolve in support of Taiwan's democracy." China simulated bombing raids and practiced boarding ships in its drills, meant as an answer to Lai's inauguration speech in which he said neither side of the Taiwan Strait was "subordinate" to the other.

Kaokalam, Papua New Guinea

Landslide buries thousands: More than 2,000 people were killed in the Enga region of Papua New Guinea last week after a mountainside collapsed in the middle of the night following a massive rainstorm. A torrent of mud and rock buried most of the village of Kaokalam, including hundreds of homes, while residents slept. Only a few bodies were recovered, and no survivors. "I have 18 of my family members buried under the debris and soil that I am standing on," said one resident, Evit Kambu. "But I cannot retrieve the bodies, so I am standing here helplessly." Papua New Guinea officials ordered some 7,000 people to evacuate, saying the sodden area was prone to further mudslides. "The climate change effects that are here now are not just in Enga," said Deputy Prime Minister John Rosso. "For the last two months we have seen unprecedented disasters throughout the country."



No hope of survivors

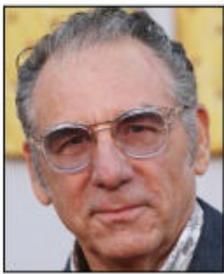


Georgians want to join the EU.

Tbilisi, Georgia

Russian law enacted: Mass protests erupted again this week in Georgia after lawmakers overrode a presidential veto to pass a "foreign influence" law modeled on one that Russia used to crush its own civil society groups. The law labels media and civil rights groups that get international funding "foreign agents" and subjects them to sanctions, and European officials have warned that enacting the law would damage the former Soviet republic's hopes of joining the EU. Some 80 percent of Georgians want to join the EU, and the ruling Georgian Dream party claims it does, too, yet it has insisted on the law. Pro-Western President Salome Zourabichvili urged the tens of thousands of demonstrators to vote out Georgian Dream in the Oct. 26 parliamentary election. "Are you angry today?" she asked. "Get angry, but let's get down to business."

The self-doubt of *Seinfeld's* Kramer



Michael Richards has spent a lot of time thinking about the rant that wrecked his career, said Gillian Telling in *People*. In 2006, the *Seinfeld* star—who won three Emmys for his portrayal of Cosmo Kramer—was performing at a stand-up club in Hollywood when a heckler shouted that he wasn't funny. Richards shot back with a torrent of racist slurs. "I was immediately sorry," says Richards, 74. "I have nothing against Black people. The [heckler] just said what I'd been saying to myself for a while. I felt put down. I wanted to put him down." Richards' managers pushed him to do damage control. "But the damage was inside of me." He has spent the past 18 years largely out of the limelight, and in therapy for his anger and insecurities. They stem, he says, from a feeling of being unwanted—he was raised by a single mother who had initially wanted an abortion, but didn't have one as they were illegal and dangerous at the time. "I was a good character actor, but I was comfortable being the character, not in being me. I said no to the offer of a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. I didn't feel deserving." Richards says he doesn't expect forgiveness for his racist tirade. "I'm not looking for a comeback. [I'm] learning and healing. Healing and learning."

Questlove's childhood on tour

Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson grew up on the road, said David Fricke in *Mojo* (U.K.). His father was frontman of the doo-wop group Lee Andrews & the Hearts, and rather than pay a babysitter, his mom and dad would take the young Ahmir and his sister on tour. "Going on the road, man, I loved it," says Questlove, drummer with hip-hop group the Roots. "I found out later that rock stars staying in finer hotels—that was an '80s thing. In the '70s, you stayed in the hotel closest to the airport or stadium. My father was doing a month at this Sheraton in Buffalo, and for a week I was pinball buddies with one of the guys in Kansas." In 1978, when he was 7, Questlove ran into his favorite rock band, KISS. "It's 1:30 in the morning. I go out to the soda machine, the elevator doors open, and it's them! Gene Simmons was still in makeup. They were staying on the same floor." There were also disappointments, like the time he asked Chuck Berry for an autograph, only to be cursed at and have a door slammed in his face. At age 12, Questlove was invited to join the family band—a smart money move by his dad. "He knew I knew the show. He started me at \$250 a week, which was way shy of the \$600 he had to pay a regular drummer."



Turner finds girl power at home

Sophie Turner credits her daughters for showing her how to be courageous, said Chioma Nnadi in *Vogue*. The British *Game of Thrones* actress was 23 and on a retreat in Bali when she discovered she was pregnant with her oldest, Willa. She waited to tell her then-husband, pop star Joe Jonas, until she got back to Los Angeles. "I remember throwing the pregnancy test at him, saying, 'What do you think we should do?' When you're in your early 20s, life is so frivolous. But something changed that day. I just knew I had to have her." Another daughter, Delphine, followed two years later, as did an acrimonious, very public divorce, and tabloid claims that she was out partying while Jonas stayed home with the girls. Turner, now 28, had previously been criticized for her weight and for being her husband's "groupie," but being mom-shamed was intolerable. "It felt like I was watching a movie of my life that I hadn't written, hadn't produced, or starred in. Some days I didn't know if I was going to make it." She moved back home to England to be with family and found that her girls were a prime motivation to keep her head up. "Once anyone says to me, 'Do it for your kids,' I'm doing it. I wouldn't do it for myself, but I'll find the strength for them."

In the news

■ Comedian **Dave Chappelle** accused Israel of committing "genocide" in Gaza during a sold-out show in the United Arab Emirates last week. Before Chappelle took the stage in Abu Dhabi, the song "My Blood Is Palestinian" boomed throughout the Etihad Arena. Halfway through the set, Chappelle—a Muslim—referenced the war between Hamas and Israel, leading an audience member to shout "Free Palestine!" Chappelle then called on Americans to do more to fight against antisemitism, saying that if American Jews felt "loved and supported" then they wouldn't "have to support a country that is committing genocide just to feel safe." Last October, just days after Hamas slaughtered 1,200 Israelis, several people

walked out of a Chappelle set in Boston after he reportedly referred to Israeli "war crimes" in Gaza and accused the Jewish state of killing civilians.

■ **Donald Trump's** lawyers are trying to block the U.S. sale and distribution of a new biopic that depicts their client's rise as a real estate mogul in the 1970s and '80s. In *The Apprentice*, Trump—played by Sebastian Stan—cuts business deals with mobsters; rapes his first wife, Ivana; abuses amphetamines; and undergoes liposuction and scalp-reduction surgery. The film received an 8-minute standing ovation at its premiere at the Cannes Film Festival last week. Soon after, the independent film's producers received a cease-and-desist letter from Trump's legal team that labeled the film a "libelous farce." Trump campaign spokesperson Steven Cheung said *The Apprentice* "belongs in a dumpster fire." The film's producers told *Variety* that the biopic is a "fair and balanced portrait," adding, "We

want everyone to see it and then decide."

■ **Sean "Diddy" Combs** was hit last week with a seventh sexual-assault lawsuit, filed in New York just days after the release of security camera footage that showed him beating ex-girlfriend Cassie Ventura. In the new lawsuit, April Lampros said she met the rap mogul while studying at a Manhattan fashion school in 1994. Combs "love-bombed her," the suit claims, but soon became violent. Lampros said the Bad Boy Records boss plied her with alcohol at a Manhattan bar in 1995, then taxied her to a hotel and raped her. Three more sexual assaults occurred over the next six years, Lampros alleges, including one incident in which Combs forced her to take ecstasy and have sex with his then-girlfriend Kim Porter. In March, federal agents raided Combs' homes in Florida and California as part of an ongoing sex-trafficking investigation; he has previously denied any wrongdoing.

Latinos' rightward shift

Once solidly Democratic, Latino voters are increasingly moving toward Republicans—with big implications for both parties.

What do the numbers show?

A steep rise in the number of Latinos who identify as Republican. In 2016, Hispanic Americans were 36 percentage points more likely to say they were Democrats than Republicans. That gap narrowed to 28 points in 2020 and to 12 points in 2023. The shift was apparent in the 2020 election, where Joe Biden won Latino votes by far smaller margins than Hillary Clinton had in 2016. In Miami-Dade County—which is 70 percent Latino, mostly Cuban-American—Biden won by 7 points, down from Clinton's 29. “The firm hold that the Democrats had on Hispanics in Florida seems to have given way,” said Eduardo Gamarra, a political scientist at Florida International University. In Texas' Starr County, which is 96 percent Hispanic and majority Mexican-American, Clinton beat Trump by 60 points; Biden won by only 5. The move right is expected to continue this year. In a recent *New York Times* poll, Trump—who took 28 percent of the Latino vote in 2016 and 38 percent in 2020—led President Biden among Latino voters by 46 percent to 40. The ramifications of this shift reach far beyond the November race.



Trump won 38 percent of the Latino vote in 2020.

Why is that?

Because Latino voters' influence is growing fast. An estimated 36 million Latinos are eligible to vote this year—that's about 15 percent of all eligible voters—double the number in 2008. And they hold great power in swing states, including Arizona and Nevada, where about 1 in 4 voters is Latino and where nearly 4 in 10 voters who've reached voting age since the 2022 midterms are Latino. For decades, experts believed that this rise in Latino voters would aid Democrats, but not anymore. “The Latino electorate used to be seen as a massive liability for Republicans,” said Daniel Garza, executive director of the Libre Initiative, a conservative group targeting Latino voters. “Now it's turning out to be an asset.”

What's behind the shift?

There's no single factor. Some experts point to Latinos' rising socioeconomic status and their focus on pocketbook issues, an area where many trust Republicans over Democrats. Others note that many Latinos—a majority of whom are Catholic or evangelical—are socially conservative and receptive to the GOP side of culture war issues such as the fight over gender identity. Some Latino organizers say the GOP has also made effective outreach efforts to a bloc that Democrats have long taken for granted. And Trump is a major factor. His blunt speech and jingoism appeal to many Latino voters. Political demographer Ruy Teixeira says Democratic activists have made a mistake in talking to working-class Latinos as “brown people who are oppressed.” Those voters don't buy that narrative and instead think, “I'm here to get ahead in life. I'm here to make a good life for my family.... I'm American.”

An evangelical influence

While experts debate what's behind Latinos' turn to the right, one factor is clear: the growing influence of Latino evangelicals. The number of Hispanics who identify as Catholic dropped from 67 percent in 2010 to 43 percent in 2022, according to Pew Research Center; 21 percent now identify as Protestant, including 15 percent as evangelical Protestant. Those evangelicals are strong backers of Trump and other Republicans. “We want order, strength,” said Camilo Perez, pastor of an evangelical church in the Las Vegas suburbs. “We try to separate politics and religion and the Bible and everything, but it is impossible.” Such church leaders have great sway with their congregations, notes Dionny Báez, founder of the H2O Church in Miami. “There are literally thousands of people who are influenced by our word,” he said. Galvanized by issues including policing, parental rights, abortion, and religious liberty, Latino evangelicals are “more involved than ever” in electoral matters, said Samuel Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference. “This year [they] are going to vote like no other year.”

What about Trump's migrant talk?

Trump's rants about immigrants “poisoning the blood of our country” has not alienated as many Latinos as might be expected, and for some it's a draw. A recent study found a third of Latino voters—most of whom were born in the U.S.—believe recent arrivals from Latin America are hurting their social status. They feel “resentment” at being “lumped in” with these migrants and worry about being wrongly deported, said political scientist Flavio Rogerio Hickel Jr. Many Latinos are angered by what they see as border chaos. In the heavily Hispanic Rio Grande Valley, support for a border wall doubled from 2018 to 2022, to about 35 percent, according to a University of Texas study. When Trump vowed at a rally last November in Hialeah, Fla.—where nearly three-quarters of residents are foreign-born—to launch the biggest deportation effort in U.S. history, the crowd erupted in cheers.

How are the campaigns courting Latino voters?

Biden's team launched its Hispanic outreach operation, Latinos Con Biden-Harris, in March, with a plan to spend \$30 million on spring advertising. The campaign has targeted ads at Cuban-Americans in Florida and Puerto Ricans in Pennsylvania, and Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris have done interviews with Spanish-language outlets. The conservative Libre Initiative launched a “seven-figure” campaign in April to engage Latino voters, while the five-year-old organization Somos Votantes is spending \$33 million to mobilize Latinos for Biden and Democratic House and Senate candidates. Latino voters will be crucial in November, political consultants agree—but broad efforts to rally them may prove difficult.

What is the challenge?

Latinos are not a monolithic group. They are a racially, ethnically, and geographically diverse cohort with diverse political beliefs and concerns. What's important to Dominican-Americans in the Bronx, for example, might look different to fifth-generation Mexican-Americans in Arizona or Venezuelan-Americans in Florida. “I think the most important thing for people to understand is that there is no ‘Latino vote,’” says political scientist Lisa García Bedolla. Some experts also question whether the current move toward the GOP represents an enduring shift or whether it's largely a function of Trump's unique influence. A widely predicted Latino surge toward Republican candidates in the 2022 midterms failed to materialize, with Latinos voting for Democrats over Republicans by 2 to 1. Whichever way the demographic leans in coming years, one thing remains indisputable for both parties, said Edward Vargas, professor of transborder studies at Arizona State University: “You can't win elections without Latinos.”

The GOP's 'unified reich' generation

David Austin Walsh
The New York Times

The GOP's extremism problem "goes far beyond" Donald Trump, said David Austin Walsh. There's a new "generation of young Republican staff members" who are openly embracing white nationalism and neo-Nazi symbols and terminology. A Trump aide posted a video on Truth Social last week featuring fake headlines about Trump's re-election, with one mentioning the "creation of a unified reich"—a suggestion that his second term would put us "on a glide path toward Nazi Germany." Trump's campaign claimed that a supporter created the "reich" headline and that it had slipped by, but this excuse only revealed the extent to which young white nationalists have infiltrated the Republican Party. Last summer, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis had to fire a star speechwriter for making a campaign video with clear Nazi imagery. At least a dozen Trump aides from his first term reportedly had ties to neo-Nazi hate groups, and Trump praised "very fine people" at a white supremacist rally. The Jan. 6 insurrection was laced with right-wing extremists flying Confederate flags. If he wins, Trump vows to replace thousands of career civil servants with MAGA loyalists. White nativists dreaming of "a unified reich in America" could soon occupy "positions of real power."

A 'plot' that's in the open

Noah Rothman
National Review

Have you heard about the conspiracy by "a shady cabal" of monied Jews to defeat a member of "The Squad"? asked Noah Rothman. Rep. Jamaal Bowman and his far-left allies are blaming the Jews for the fact that he's facing a Democratic primary in his district in the Bronx and Westchester County, which is heavily Jewish. Like other progressive House members who call themselves The Squad, Bowman has veered into antisemitic rhetoric while denouncing Israel's actions in Gaza after the Oct. 7 massacre of Israeli civilians. Bowman called reports of Hamas' sexual assaults of Israeli women a "lie" and Israeli "propaganda," backing off after being confronted with evidence. Bowman has allied himself with pro-Palestinian extremists' use of the phrase "from the river to the sea." Not surprisingly, many of Bowman's Jewish constituents are supporting his opponent, Westchester County Executive George Latimer. The American Israel Public Affairs Committee's political-action committee is buying \$1.9 million in ads aimed at defeating Bowman. Bowman's allies have attacked these donations as racist (Bowman is Black) and "anti-democracy." But the effort to defeat Bowman is no shadowy plot; it's right out in the open, fueled by constituents appalled by Bowman's "mainstreaming of antisemitic rhetoric."

Why a gun can get you killed

Jonathan V. Last
The Bulwark

Senior Airman Roger Fortson is dead because we have chosen "the worst of all worlds" on guns, said Jonathan V. Last. When police recently came to an apartment complex in Florida in response to a domestic disturbance report, they pounded on Fortson's door and shouted for him to open it. The 23-year-old active-duty airman was alone, and answered the strange knock with his pistol at his side. A sheriff's deputy immediately shot the young Black man six times—even though Fortson's pistol was lowered and facing down. "What good is the Second Amendment if you can be in your home, peacefully existing, and using a firearm exactly as intended for personal protection—and still be shot dead by police?" The proliferation of guns has left police on "a hair trigger," with nervous cops concluding they should "shoot first and deal with the possible legal fallout second." Gun rights activists have made not a peep of protest in Fortson's behalf. That's probably because "Fortson is Black," and gun rights extremists see their weapons as protection *against* dark-skinned people. America has lost a respected serviceman not to a foreign enemy but to our deep national dysfunction on guns.

It must be true... I read it in the tabloids

■ A Florida priest was charged with biting a woman during a fight that erupted as he was administering communion. Father Fidel Rodriguez, pastor of a Catholic church in St. Cloud, refused to give the woman a communion wafer; a witness speculated the priest was bothered by the woman's revealing clothing. When the woman grabbed for the plate of wafers, Rodriguez bit her hand, saying he was "defending myself and the sacrament." After Rodriguez's arrest, the local diocese said he was "trying to protect the Holy Communion from this sacrilegious act."



■ The first airline catering to dogs has taken its inaugural flight. BARK Air, which promises to "revolutionize flying for dogs" with "a positively luxurious, curated experience," flew six canines and 11 people from New York's Westchester County to Los Angeles. Tickets were \$6,000 per dog and human companion. Dogs get calming music, scents and colors designed to soothe their anxiety, belly rubs from onboard concierges, dog-friendly cupcakes and chicken-flavored "puppucinos." Flights from New York to London are \$8,000 a ticket, and are selling out, says the airline.

■ A New York judge officiated a wedding for a Cleveland man—right after sentencing him to 10 years in prison for burglary. Anthony Santiago, 35, was convicted of robbing a home in Syracuse and pistol-whipping a man and woman. After sentencing the repeat offender, Judge Melinda McGunnigle joined him and his fiancée Victoria in matrimony. Moments later, he was taken off in handcuffs to prison.

Viewpoint

"How do you memorialize the dead of a failed war [in Afghanistan]? This year, when I remember the dead, I will remember why they died. All the reasons they died. Because they believed in America. Because America forgot about them. Because they were trying to force-feed a different way of life to people from a different country and culture. Because America could be a force for good in the world. Because Presidents Bush, Obama, Trump, and Biden didn't have much of a plan. Because it's a dangerous world, and somebody's got to do the killing."

Marine Corps veteran Phil Klay in *The New York Times*

Life
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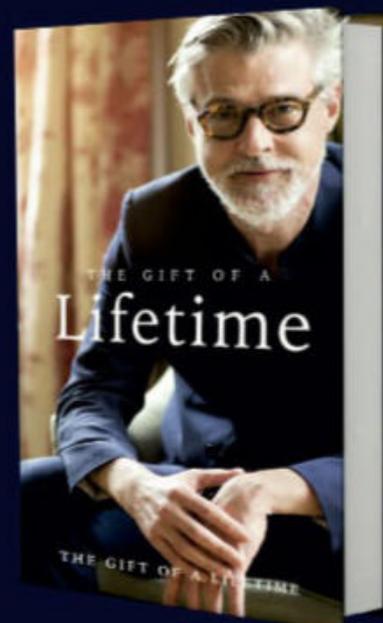
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NETHERLANDS

The populists want us to leave the EU

Diederik Samsom
De Volkskrant

The Netherlands' most right-wing government in decades hasn't even formally taken power yet, but it's already antagonizing the European Union, said Diederik Samsom. The incoming coalition, led by xenophobe Geert Wilders, has published a governing plan touting a "strictest-ever asylum regime" that would effectively bar refugees. Since such a heartless policy would flout EU rules, the new government will seek "an opt-out clause for European asylum and migration policies." Reading this document, officials in Brussels probably thought that "the AI translator" had gone on the fritz. An opt-out clause? EU members can arrange excep-

tions for themselves only while a treaty is being negotiated, not after it's been signed—and only four have ever been granted. Wilders knows this but is purposely testing the EU's limits. He's doing the same thing with climate law, trying to engineer a Dutch exemption from EU rules on fertilizers. Of course, populists always love to "bang their fists on the table" and declare they'll "teach Brussels a thing or two," but this "toddler swagger" hides a dangerous goal. In order to get coalition partners, Wilders pretended to renounce his plan to withdraw the Netherlands from the EU. But he's clearly trying to lay the groundwork for a "Nexit."

LITHUANIA

Blame Russia for dwindling tourism

Arunas Karaliunas
Lietuvos Rytas

The city of Vilnius just spent half a million euros on a splashy new PR campaign that will convince precisely zero tourists to visit, said Arunas Karaliunas. Its latest video ad is meant to reverse West European stereotypes of the Lithuanian capital as a post-Soviet wasteland, and it goes about that task in cheeky fashion. First it shows a dreary montage, with images of "ancient cars, dilapidated buildings, a man urinating on a brick wall," street brawls, and "potholed roads." Then, the picture brightens: Now we see modern-day Vilnius with its medieval architecture cleaned of grime, its parks bustling with happy locals, its cafés overflowing with lively chatter. The problem is, tourists aren't staying

away because they think we're still a Soviet-style backwater. They're staying away because we're located in such a sketchy neighborhood. Russia, with whom we share a 170-mile border, has already invaded one former Soviet republic, Ukraine, and many fear it has its eye on the Baltic states next. Just last week, Moscow unilaterally decided to redraw the border in the Baltic Sea to snatch some of our coastal waters. And right now, NATO is in the middle of massive military exercises in Vilnius that will continue through June. Who wants to "spend their leisure time in such a setting?" War has cast its ugly shadow across the Baltics, "and no video clips will help."

United Kingdom: Bleak outlook for Tories after 14 years

Did Rishi Sunak just want to get his inevitable "appointment with defeat" over with? asked **Andrew Rawnsley** in *The Observer*. "Hunched and drenched" in the pelting rain, the Conservative prime minister stood outside 10 Downing Street last week to announce an early election, his words nearly inaudible thanks to a protester blasting the theme song for the opposition Labour Party on a boombox. He didn't come across as a leader rallying supporters to victory—he looked like a "drowned ferret." And why set the election for July, months before it was due, at a time when the Conservatives are trailing Labour by 20 points in polls? After all, "no governing party has ever started that far behind and gone on to win," and Sunak's Tories have to campaign on a legacy of economic slumps and ethics scandals. Perhaps it's because, less than two years into the job, he can't bear it anymore. "Living under a decomposing regime is not a pleasant experience for those being ruled by it. Presiding over one must be miserable as well."



Sunak: Like a 'drowned ferret'

Fourteen years of Tory rule, under four successive prime ministers, have done "colossal damage" to this country, said **Jonathan Freedland** in *The Guardian*. Wage growth stalled out even as inflation rose, yet the government responded to struggling families by slashing child benefits. Then they slashed everything else, leaving a country of "closed libraries, drained swimming pools, and playgrounds left to rust." Ninety percent of crimes go unsolved, and 7.5 million Britons wait for vital surgeries or cancer treatment. The Tories blame forces beyond their control like

Covid and the Ukraine war, but it was their prime ministers who authored Britain's descent into mediocrity. David Cameron first gave us the "boneheaded policy of austerity" that wrecked social services and then opened the door to Brexit, the divorce from the EU that is still costing the economy tens of billions a year. He was followed by Boris Johnson, who cheated and lied his way through the pandemic, and Liz Truss, who spent her scant time driving up our mortgage rates. Sunak's main contribution was a barbaric plan to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda. The Tories "have degraded everything they have touched."

And that's just here at home, said **Matthew Syed** in *The Times*. Abroad, Britain suffered "a collapse in global reputation" and soft power. The Tory instinct to "hug China tight" and welcome dirty Russian money "made a mockery of Western unity and putative sanctions," while their skimping on defense hollowed out our armed forces. This week, Sunak pledged that if he won, he'd bring back compulsory military service—but that's a sign of desperation, not a real national security policy. Britain under Conservative rule is simply "no longer a serious nation." Yet Labour would be little better, said **Jeremy Warner** in *The Telegraph*. Its platform "is as anodyne and unconvincing" as its leader, Keir Starmer, an emptiness papered over with "the tired old political promise of change." Neither party has a plan to get us out of "the rising tide of debt" that will swamp the country in the next crisis. "Abandon all hope," ye who enter the polling station.

Myanmar: A motley rebel alliance takes on the junta

“Myanmar is ablaze with violence,” said **Arunima Chakraborty** in *Ei Samay Sangbadptra* (Bangladesh). When its notoriously brutal military, the Tatmadaw, overthrew the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021, a “Spring Revolution” of armed protest movements swept across the country, and the civil war has raged ever since. “Day by day, the heat of the fire of rebellion is increasing,” and in recent months the rebels have made major gains. But the Tatmadaw isn’t their only target. In many places, the conflict has turned sectarian, with ethnic militias turning on one another—or on civilians. Over the past two weeks in Rakhine state, one of those militias, the Arakan Army, has torched thousands of homes of Rohingya Muslims, sending 200,000 fleeing for their lives. The scorched-earth attack recalls the Tatmadaw’s genocidal 2017 campaign against Rakhine’s Rohingya Muslim minority, when the army burned down entire villages and forced 700,000 Rohingya into neighboring Bangladesh. But this time, it was local rebels who started the fires.

Ethnic violence has a long history in Myanmar, said **Nyi Nyi Kyaw** in *Myanmar Now* (Myanmar). The British pitted our more than 130 ethnic groups against one another during the colonial era. And the Tatmadaw, which has ruled since 1962 but for a brief flowering of democracy from 2011 to 2021, did the same, stoking religious and ethnic divisions to maintain its power. This divide-and-conquer strategy explains the rebels’ attacks—but it doesn’t excuse them. Even in the heat of war,



Rebel militia Mandalay People’s Defense Force

rebels must remember that the mostly Buddhist Rakhine people and the Muslim Rohingya share “a common enemy: the Myanmar military.” Young people are flocking to that fight against the Tatmadaw, said **Quentin Sommerville** in *BBC.com* (U.K.). Having come of age under civilian rule, with a “taste of democratic freedom,” Myanmar’s youth poured into the streets to protest the coup in 2021, only to be mercilessly crushed by the army. Hundreds of them were killed and thousands jailed, and a generation of freedom fighters was born.

Their ranks have swelled further since February, when the junta instituted mandatory conscription for all men and women at age 18. Rather than reporting for service, thousands of young people fled into the jungles to join the resistance. Taking an “underground railroad” of safe houses and clandestine routes, they have regrouped in rebel-held areas, where they use Starlink satellites to connect to the internet and plan their attacks. This mass rebellion “is the greatest threat to military rule in Myanmar in years.”

Yet the Tatmadaw won’t be easy to dislodge, said **K. Yhome** in the *Indian Express* (India). The rebels have notched unprecedented victories this year, including driving the army out of military bases and even setting up their own local government in some areas. But while the junta has been weakened by “battlefield deaths, defections, desertions, and low recruitment rates,” it remains much better armed and much better trained. At this point, “a scenario where one side emerges victorious on the battlefield looks doubtful.” The war will slog on.

MEXICO

The runners forced to race in sandals

Carmen Morán Breña
El País (Spain)

The Juárez marathon’s obsolete rules are hurting Indigenous runners, said **Carmen Morán Breña**. To compete in the special Indigenous category, marathoners have to wear traditional native dress, which for women includes floral skirts and sandals. That’s not ideal gear for running 26 miles on hard, paved roads. One runner, **Verónica Palma**, said she ran the first few miles in the sandals during the 2022 marathon but swapped them out for sneakers once her feet started bleeding—and when she got to the finish line she found herself disqualified. She and other Indigenous runners are now pushing for authorities to amend the marathon rules,

saying requiring sandals amounts to the “folklorization” of Indigenous identity. The Indigenous category was originally established in the race as a way to highlight the famed “light-footed runners” of the Tarahumara people, who traditionally run long distances on mountain trails connecting their widely dispersed settlements. Yet the marathon rules trap them in an impossible bind: Either they run hobbled by obsolete gear—“grinding their feet down until they’re bloody”—or they don’t register as Indigenous, which “dishonors their ancestors.” It’s time to “distinguish tradition from torture,” and let Indigenous runners wear what they want.

CANADA

Proudly open borders, too little planning

Loly Rico
Macleans.ca

Canada is taking in record numbers of refugees with no way to house them, said **Loly Rico**. An “explosion in global conflicts,” from Ukraine and Sudan to Haiti and Afghanistan, has sent migrants streaming into this country for refuge. Last year, we accepted nearly 144,000 refugees, up from just 92,000 the year before. That’s an astonishing number—more than twice as many as the U.S. accepted, even though our population is one-eighth the size—and it has utterly overwhelmed our facilities. With no federal system set up to match arrivals with resources, the refugees are on their own, and they often end up on the streets. In Toronto,

where I run a refugee welcome center, we’re “seeing things I have never witnessed in my 34 years of advocacy.” People show up who haven’t eaten in days, and there’s nowhere to put them. Last winter, a Nigerian refugee froze to death outside a full shelter. Some call this a “refugee crisis,” but it’s really a “resource crisis.” The federal government simply didn’t prepare for “the waves of refugees it should have known were coming,” and now it needs to rush to open dozens of new reception centers across the nation. Canada “prides itself on being a rich, multicultural tapestry.” We should give these future citizens a proper welcome.

Noted

■ For the first time, the number of Americans who use marijuana just about every day has exceeded the number who drink alcohol that frequently, according to national survey data. Nearly 18 million Americans reported using marijuana daily or near daily in 2022, compared with 15 million daily or near-daily drinkers. In 1992, fewer than 1 million people said they used weed daily.

Associated Press

■ Illegal crossings of the U.S.-Mexico border were down by 54 percent in the first three weeks of May, compared with the record highs reported in December. In May, the border patrol apprehended about 3,700 undocumented migrants each day. U.S. officials attribute the drop to a crack-down on migrants by the Mexican government, as well as stepped-up enforcement on this side of the border.

CBSNews.com



■ There were 11 near-collisions involving commercial aircraft in the U.S. last year, nearly twice as many as in 2022 and four times the number in 2019. The air traffic control workforce is short about 3,000 staffers, partly because of pandemic-era retirements. The Federal Aviation Administration can train only about 1,800 controllers a year.

Politico

■ The Senate last week confirmed the 200th judge nominated by President Biden, approving Magistrate Judge Angela Martinez to become a federal judge in the District of Arizona. Donald Trump, who advanced 234 judges to federal courts during his presidency, had confirmed 196 by this point in his term; his predecessors, Barack Obama and George W. Bush, had 148 and 176, respectively.

MSNBC.com

Bird flu: Failing to stop the next pandemic?

“It was bound to happen again,” said Katherine J. Wu in *The Atlantic*. A Michigan dairy worker was diagnosed last week with bird flu, the second confirmed human case linked to an outbreak in U.S. dairy herds. Like the first case—in a Texas dairy worker in April—the Michigan infection “has at least one reassuring element”: Exposure in both

cases involved repeated contact with infected cows, and both patients suffered only mild and brief eye infections. But “the true case count is almost certainly higher.” Anecdotal reports of sick farmworkers have trickled in from across the U.S., where the H5N1 virus has been detected in at least 63 herds and in raw milk and meat from infected cows. Yet only 40 people nationwide have so far been tested for H5N1. Health authorities rightly note that the risk of a pandemic is low, said Michael Mina and Janika Schmitt in *Time*. But the more the virus spreads, the higher the risk that it could mutate in ways that enable human-to-human transmission or cause more serious illness. “We must stop flying blind.” The routine testing of animals and people is our only way to stop the virus.

“Compared with Covid, dealing with this outbreak should be straightforward,” said Lisa Jarvis in *Bloomberg*. Whereas Covid “was completely



Few dairy workers are being tested.

worry that a confirmed infection will spell “financial ruin,” said Sarah Owerhohle in *Stat News*. Others have said no to offers of protective face shields, which fog up in hot milking parlors and make worker accidents more likely.

Our initial approach to this outbreak “has had an unsettling resonance with the first months of Covid,” said Dhruv Khullar in *The New Yorker*. There are the testing failures—when dairy cows are transported across state lines, only 30 have to be tested for H5N1, irrespective of the size of the herd—and the lack of preparedness in hospitals for a possible pandemic. More worrying, we have a “Covid hangover” that’s left the country divided and fatigued, with an empowered anti-vaccine movement and a strong distrust in government. “If bird flu becomes human flu, one gets the sense our principal fight won’t be with the virus but with one another.”

Supreme Court: Diluting the Black vote

The Supreme Court “just made it far more difficult to challenge racial gerrymandering,” said Matt Ford in *The New Republic*. In a 6-3 decision last week that fell along partisan lines, the justices reversed a lower court ruling that had struck down South Carolina’s 2022 congressional map as a “stark racial gerrymander.” To strengthen the GOP’s hold on a Charleston area district, the state’s Republican legislature shunted 30,000 Democratic-leaning Black voters to a neighboring, solidly blue district. Writing for the Supreme Court’s conservative majority, Justice Samuel Alito noted that the 14th Amendment only bars the government from making decisions based on race, and so the redistricting was permissible because it was likely driven by partisan political motives. Justice Clarence Thomas’ concurrence went further. The courts, he wrote, should have “no power to decide” racial gerrymandering cases. And in “perhaps the most startling portion,” Thomas blamed *Brown v. Board of Education* for unleashing “extravagant uses of judicial power” since 1954.

Thomas was in no way “defending segregation,” said Ramesh Ponnuru in *National Review*. He wasn’t even referring to the landmark 1954 case that desegregated schools, but *Brown II*, the 1955

decision that essentially put the court in charge of fixing racial injustice. Thomas merely argued that giving courts sweeping powers over state affairs should be avoided whenever possible. But Alito’s decision sets a regressive new standard, said Ian Millhiser in *Vox*. He argued the court must extend a “presumption of legislative good faith” and made no exception for states with a history of suppressing the Black vote. He has, in effect, written “a presumption of white racial innocence into the law.”

Alito’s “ultimate goal” is to read “the Reconstruction amendments right out of the Constitution,” said Elie Mystal in *The Nation*. The 14th Amendment was written after the Civil War, when “good faith” was in short supply and Northern states were certain their defeated slaveholding cousins “would try to deny equal rights to the newly freed citizens.” But for Alito and his fellow conservatives, “this critical revision to the Constitution” does not apply unless a mapmaker declares, “I’m finna do some racism, today!” The court’s originalists have effectively robbed the 14th Amendment of its original purpose: to protect Black voters from being bleached off the map. The votes of “the Republican majority within the white majority” are now “the only votes that are allowed to matter.”

Trump: Biden tried to assassinate me

Trump world is aflame with a “patently absurd” claim of a deep state conspiracy to assassinate Donald Trump, said **Matt Lewis** in *The Daily Beast*. The latest “Big Lie” began last week when an FBI court document was unsealed and a MAGA gadfly tweeted a passage authorizing the agents who searched Mar-a-Lago for classified documents in 2022 to use “deadly force”



FBI agents at Mar-a-Lago in 2022

only if they were violently attacked. This “boilerplate” search-warrant language was actually intended to *restrict* the use of deadly force—the same words appeared in an FBI warrant to search President Biden’s home. But the “irresponsible and dangerous” assertion that the FBI plotted to kill Trump “spread like wildfire” on the right. Trump said he’d “nearly escaped death” and that Biden “was locked & loaded and ready to take me out.” Rep. Paul Gosar (R-Ariz.) said Biden “ordered the hit on Trump”; former Trump aide Steve Bannon called it “an attempted assassination.”

This manufactured plot shows us we’re in a very real “crisis,” said **Jonathan V. Last** in *The Bulwark*. Trump just made the startling charge that the sitting president plotted to have his political opponent killed—a claim that will become “gospel”

for Trumpists—and the response was a collective shrug. We’ve reached a point where one of our two major parties routinely peddles transparently nonsensical “propaganda,” and “voters and our institutions *accept* it as a fact of life.” This particular lie serves an ominous purpose, said **Nick Catoggio** in *The Dispatch*. It “reinforces the creeping fascist belief on

the right that American institutions have grown so sinister and corrupt” that an authoritarian like Trump is needed to restore order. And if the evil Left is plotting the murder of their Dear Leader, “the Right will need to support forms of ruthlessness that it hadn’t previously condoned.”

In other words: violence, said **Juliette Kayyem** in *The Atlantic*. The claim that Biden and the FBI are plotting to kill Trump legitimizes the use of force “by presenting it as a matter of self-defense.” In a fundraising email, Trump wrote, “You know they’re just itching to do the unthinkable.” Don’t dismiss that as Trump’s “typical hyperbolic ranting.” He’s sending a “dangerous signal” to supporters—that Trump’s enemies will do anything to take him out. “Unless, of course, Trump and his mob get to them first.”

Haley: A half-hearted Trump endorsement

What “a missed opportunity” by Nikki Haley, said **Noah Rothman** in *National Review*. The former South Carolina governor, who had articulated “an alternative vision to Trumpism” during a surprisingly strong run in the Republican primaries, made a “uniquely tepid” endorsement of presumptive GOP nominee Donald Trump last week, saying she would reluctantly vote for him because re-electing President Biden would be a “catastrophe.” Haley had the leverage to extract some policy concessions from Trump; even after she dropped out of the race in March, between 13 and 22 percent of Republican primary voters continued to check her name at the ballot box—a clear indication they agree with her sharp criticism of the former president. During the primaries, Haley called Trump “totally unhinged,” an agent of “chaos,” and mentally “unfit” for the presidency. But Haley “gave away the store” by surrendering to a “deeply flawed man” for nothing in return.

Haley has proved she’s a cynical “coward,” said **Mary Ellen Klas** in *Bloomberg*. To preserve her future viability to run for office as a Republican, she said “never mind” to the millions of people who voted for her. Remember when she called

Trump a bully and said, “I feel no need to kiss the

ring”? She’s just left “that ring with a nice big lipstick smudge.” Haley could have served as conservatism’s shadow leader and voice of conscience. Instead, she chose to join the long list of Trump critics turned lapdogs, including Sens. Marco Rubio, Tim Scott, Ted Cruz, and J.D. Vance. “Thanks, Nikki.”

Most of Haley’s primary voters may also hold their noses and vote for Trump, said **Philip Bump** in *The Washington Post*. In a “deeply polarized” country, few people cross party lines, especially when most Republicans think of “Democrats as evil.” Don’t be so sure of that, said **David Frum** in *The Atlantic*. During the primaries, polls found that about two-thirds of Haley’s voters truly hate and fear Trump and say they’d rather vote for Biden. These are traditional Republicans who oppose Russia and support free trade, small government, and decency—positions the party held “in that bygone era when Reagans and Bushes and Romneys roamed the Earth.” About 20 percent of all Republicans still fall into that “waning” but not “extinct” category, and they may ignore Haley’s phony endorsement. In a close election, anti-Trump votes from Republicans “may be more than the margin of national victory.”

Wit & Wisdom

“We sleep safely at night because rough men stand ready to visit violence on those who would do us harm.”

Winston Churchill, quoted in *The Washington Times*

“Never follow someone else’s path. Unless you’re in the woods and you’re lost and you see a path, then by all means you should follow that.”

Ellen DeGeneres, quoted in *Good Housekeeping*

“Four hostile newspapers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets.”

Napoleon, quoted in the *Daily Guardian (Philippines)*

“Without art, our ability to think, to see freshly, and to renew our world would wither and die.”

Salman Rushdie, quoted in *The Millions*

“When you meditate on death, you love life more, you cherish life more.”

Thich Nhat Hanh, quoted in the *Washington Classical Review*

“Try again. Fail again. Fail better.”

Samuel Beckett, quoted in *The Economist*

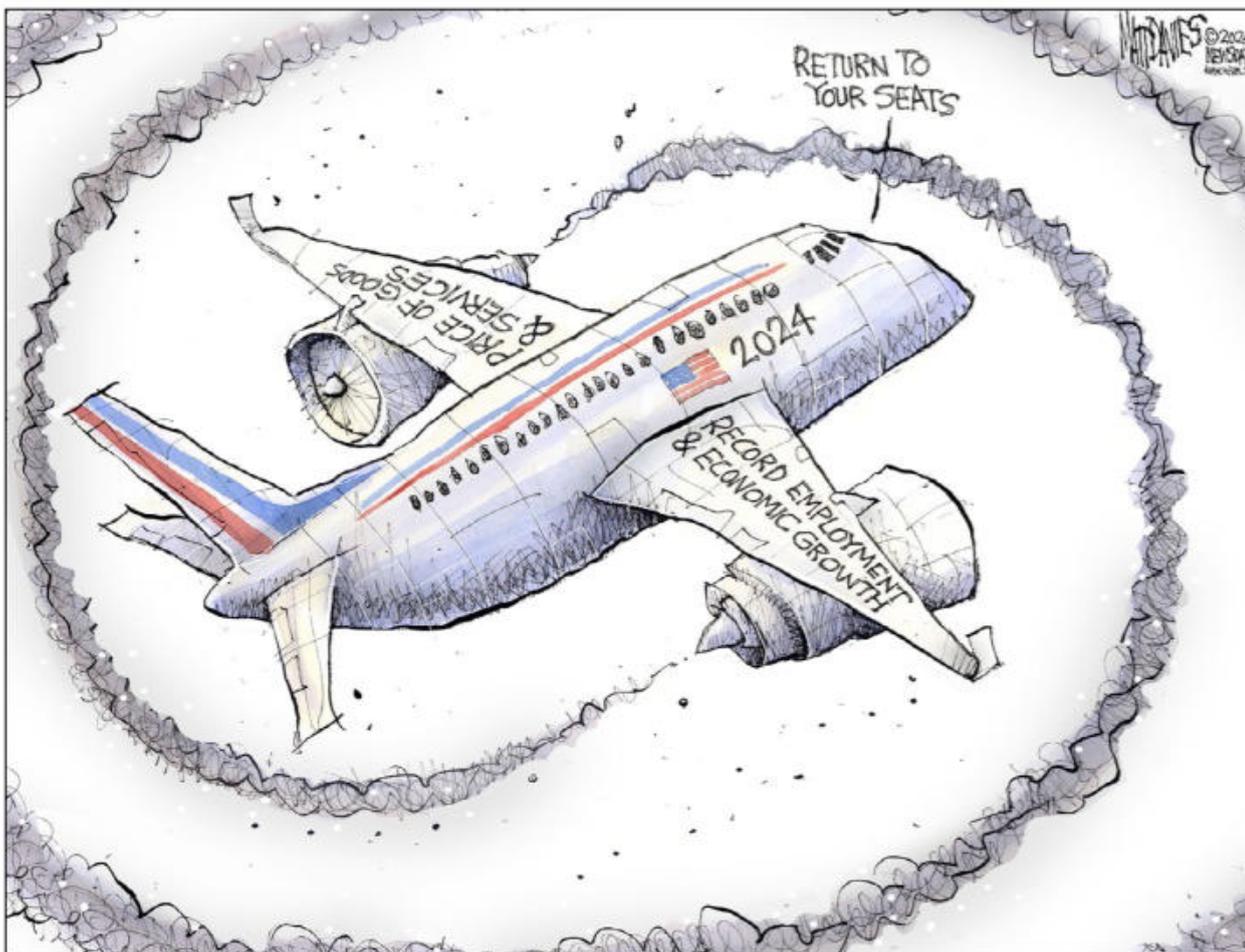
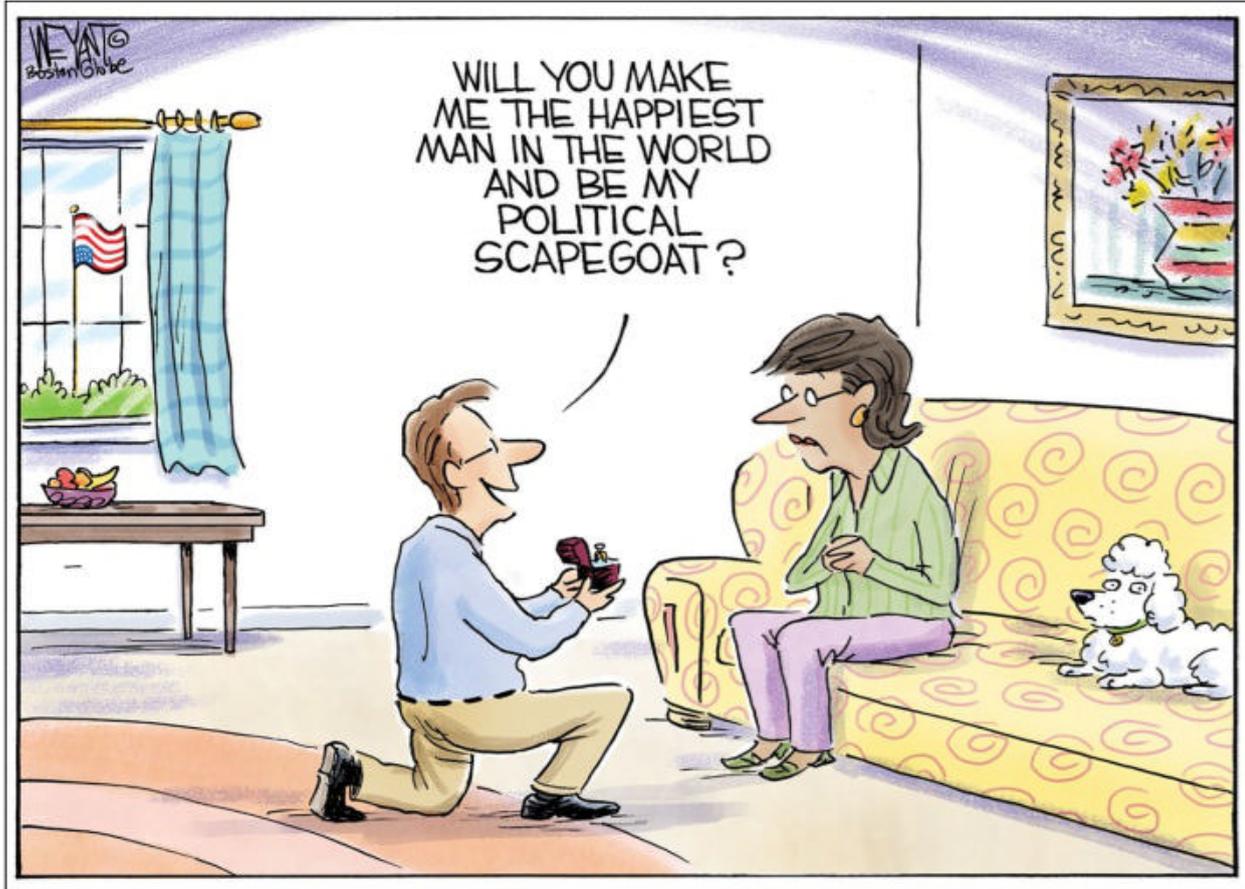
“Success didn’t spoil me. I’ve always been insufferable.”

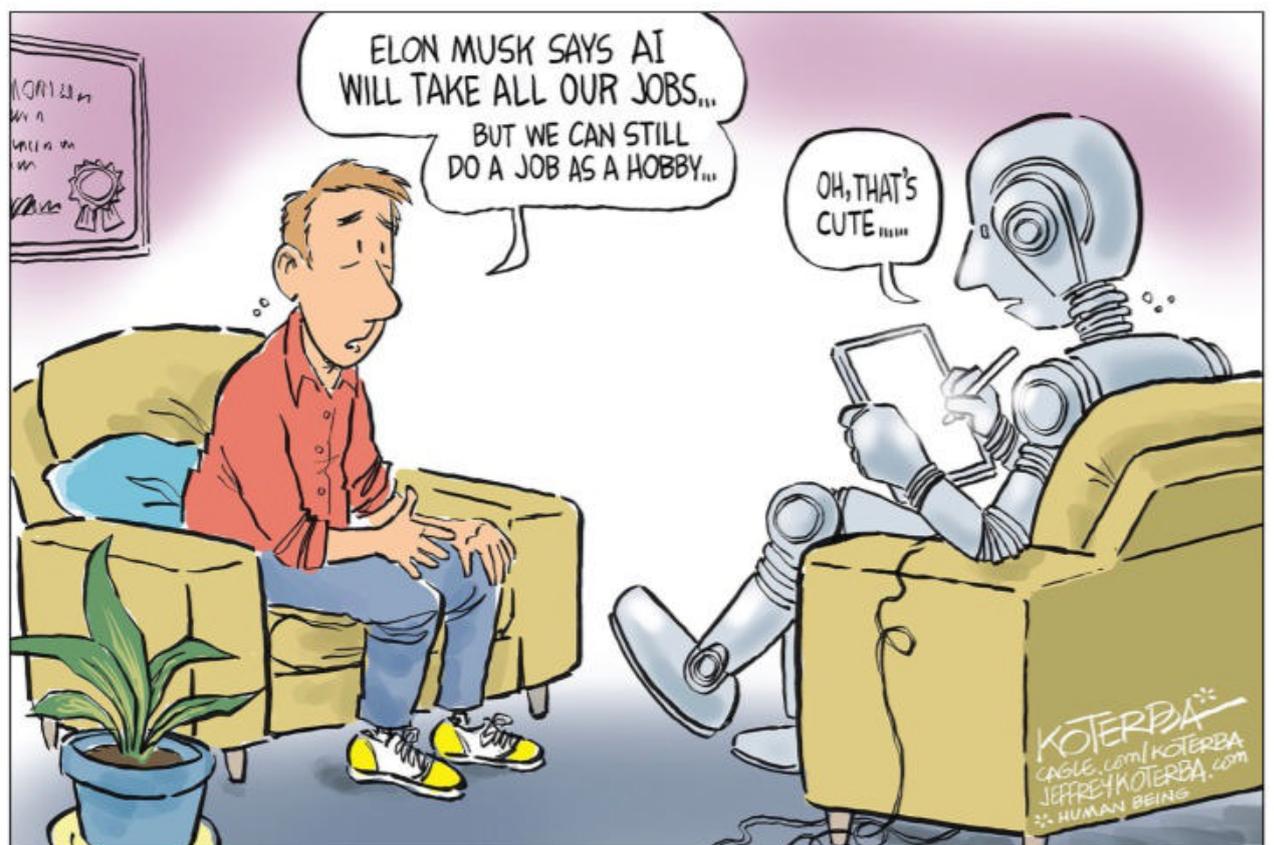
Fran Lebowitz, quoted in *Forbes*

Poll watch

■ **30%** of Americans get their news from mainstream media, including CNN and newspapers; **10%** from conservative media, including Fox; **11%** from local news; and **15%** from social media. Among conservative media consumers, **83%** believe that President Biden has opened the border to all undocumented migrants, and **44%** think Donald Trump won the 2020 election. Ipsos

■ **62%** of people say inflation is one of the biggest problems facing the country, while **60%** cite the cost of health care, and **53%** point to gun violence. Pew Research Center

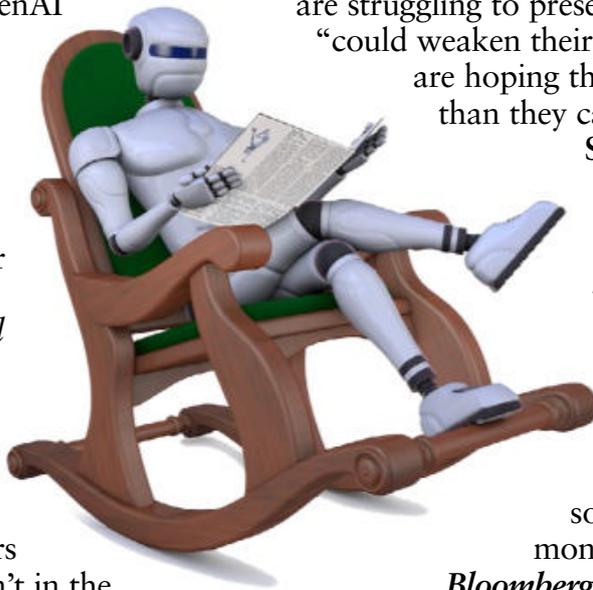




Media: Will publishers regret their AI deals?

News publishers are getting bought off by OpenAI and making a deal with the devil, said Jessica Lessin in *The Atlantic*. It's no secret that AI firms need journalism. "Accurate, well-written news is one of the most valuable sources" for their chatbots, which "need timely news and facts to get consumers to trust them." OpenAI has shown an increasing willingness to pay for this news, which sounds like a good deal for publishers. News Corp., publisher of *The Wall Street Journal*, just agreed to a five-year licensing agreement worth \$250 million; the *Financial Times*, Associated Press, and Axel Springer have worked out individual deals as well. But signing a licensing agreement is the wrong answer to this moment. Publishers should know that "technology companies aren't in the business of news." AI firms, especially, are building products that disrupt search and ultimately reduce the need for consumers to click links to articles. "It's simply too early to get into bed with the companies that trained their models on professional content without permission."

Not everyone is taking the cash, said Sara Fischer in *Axios*. Eight prominent regional U.S. newspapers have joined *The New York Times* in a lawsuit against OpenAI and Microsoft for allegedly using their copyrighted material illegally to train their models. It's a bellwether lawsuit, but the fact that "news outlets



are struggling to present a unified front in their fight" against AI "could weaken their leverage." The publishers who are suing are hoping that a judge will give them a richer payday than they can get from a chatbot maker, said Zoë Schiffer and Casey Newton in *Platformer*—or that their threats "will improve their negotiating position in the meantime." It's obviously a gamble. If a judge were to rule that the scraping of journalism content constitutes "fair use," then "the price AI companies are willing to pay might drop precipitously."

Given that real possibility, I don't blame some big media companies for taking the money and walking away, said Dave Lee in *Bloomberg*. "Face it, there's no opting out of OpenAI"; publishers can either take a deal or not, but "the machine has likely guzzled up their content regardless." I just wonder what's going to happen to small, local publishers and trade magazines. "I don't see OpenAI turning up at their door with cash." OpenAI's dealmaking is also bad for the future of AI, said Kyle Wiggers in *TechCrunch*. The agreements aren't being made just out of "fairness" to publishers; they give OpenAI exclusive access to "high quality" content it can use to train its models. "Publishers should be paid—and paid fairly." But the AI industry could end up in a situation where "only a few powerful companies have access to vast pools of valuable training sets."

Innovation of the week

A semi-enclosed e-bike is turning heads on the streets in Germany, said Ben Coxworth in *New Atlas*.



"The pedal-electric, bicycle-car hybrid" from Hopper Mobility is a "three-wheeler with an open-sided body that provides a fair bit of weather protection while also placing the rider in a comfortable car-like driving position." The rider can pedal, however, and the bike is "augmented by a 250-watt rear hub motor, taking the Hopper up to a top speed of 16 mph." And because it's legally considered an e-bike, the Hopper can both travel in bike lanes and go on roads with other vehicles. About 30 prototypes have already been built and are in use in Germany, and a first-edition commercial version is now available for preorder in Germany for 13,500 euros (about \$14,700).

Bytes: What's new in tech

Pizza by Google: Just add glue

Google's AI search summaries are getting answers hilariously wrong, said Ina Fried in *Axios*. Users on social media have been posting examples in which Google's AI results were way off. In some cases, Google suggested "using glue to keep cheese on pizza—a comical notion seemingly taken from a Reddit post." It recommended eating a rock every day, advice that came courtesy of the satirical site *The Onion*. It also said that President Obama was the country's only Muslim president (a baseless conspiracy theory). "Google has spent 25 years defending its reputation for informational integrity," but it has recently come under threat from OpenAI, which has reportedly been working on a search engine with ChatGPT. The messy rollout of its own AI-powered search results, however, could put Google's "reputational reserve at risk."

Joining the AI job rush

Tech workers are refining their skills to catch the AI wave washing across the economy, said Katherine Bindley in *The Wall Street Journal*. It seems like "every company suddenly wants to be an artificial-intelligence company," and workers have noticed. There is incredible "demand for a specific type of tier-one AI

talent—namely those who have the technical knowledge or experience working with large-language models." Many of those who don't have those skills are now scrambling for spots in AI boot camps. OpenAI runs a six-month residency that accepts workers from a wide range of backgrounds. Entrants have included "college dropouts, neuroscientists, and a graduate from the Juilliard School who worked on an AI-based music project."

Get a prize, then get suspended

A group of Emory University students were suspended for making an AI homework tool that had won a university-sponsored prize, said Jason Koebler in *404Media*. The students described their program, called Eightball, as a "search engine for class material" posted on Canvas, the platform used for course readings and documents. The software was hailed by the university, which last spring awarded Eightball the \$10,000 grand prize at Emory's own "Entrepreneurship Summit." Despite this, according to a lawsuit filed by one of the students, the creators of Eightball were suspended under Emory's honor code because the AI tool could be used for cheating—even though the "school's Honor Council did not actually find evidence that it was ever used to cheat."

Extraordinarily detailed images from Euclid

Bright magentas, hazy oranges, and deep maroons swirl in stunning new images of the universe captured by the European Space Agency's Euclid space telescope. Launched last July to orbit a spot a million miles from Earth, Euclid has now produced images four times more precise than terrestrial telescopes, revealing clusters of galaxies billions of light-years away in unprecedented sharpness. Euclid's mission is to create a precise map of the universe so that scientists can begin to understand the two greatest mysteries in astrophysics: dark energy and dark matter. Though we can't see them, those substances are thought to make up 95 percent

of the universe. Astronomers believe dark energy exists because something is accelerating the expansion of the universe, while they know dark matter is out there because its gravitational pull bends light, warping images of galaxies. The massively detailed images from Euclid, each containing nearly 700 million pixels, will give them enough data to measure the degree of distortion around the galaxies, measurements that can then be used to calculate the distribution of dark matter. Already, Euclid has revealed 300,000 previously undetected sub-stellar objects, and more discoveries are expected over its six-year mission. "The best is definitely yet to



Messier 78, a region where stars are being born

come," astrophysicist Mark Cropper of the University College London tells *Space.com*. "Euclid will be game-changing for astronomy. Absolutely game-changing."



In rare cases, stomach paralysis can result.

Ozempic's scary side effect

Appetite-suppressing drugs such as Wegovy and Ozempic are remarkably successful in helping people lose weight. But new research—which is based on real-world data but has yet to be peer-reviewed—suggests that users of these GLP-1 agonists may be increasing their risk of stomach paralysis, or gastroparesis. One study involving data from millions of patient records found that people who took these medications had a 50 percent increased risk of developing the condition compared with those who didn't, reports *CNN.com*. Another put the figure at 66 percent. Fortunately, even that elevated risk is still extremely low: In the first study, just 10 out of every 10,000 people given the drugs, or 0.1 percent, were affected, compared with 4 out of 10,000 similar people, or 0.04 percent, in a control group. In most cases, the gastroparesis improved quickly once the medication was stopped. Some patients, though, didn't get better for months, suffering debilitating symptoms like intense nausea and vomiting, and it's so far unclear whether their condition will be permanent. Patients should be aware that there's a chance "that you may have gastrointestinal side effects," says Prateek Sharma, head of gastroenterology at the University of Kansas School of Medicine, "and then the drug may have to be discontinued."

Cancer prevention breakthrough

Scientists have managed to preserve living breast tissue outside the body for more than a week, which could be a game changer in research to prevent breast cancer. When placed in a special hydrogel solution, the tissue remained viable for days, maintaining its structure, cell types, and capacity to respond to drugs. The development could significantly boost researchers' ability to develop new preventive drugs or therapies—without the need to test on animals. "There are various risk-reducing options for women at high risk of developing breast cancer," such as tamoxifen, co-author Hannah Harrison, from the University of Manchester, tells *The Guardian* (U.K.). "However, not all drugs work for all women. This new approach means that we can start to determine which drugs will work for which women by measuring their impact on living tissue." One avenue the researchers plan to explore is to test how dense breast tissue—a known risk factor for cancer—responds to various hormones and chemicals. More than 300,000 American women get breast cancer each year, while about 42,000 die of it.

Weed that's too strong for seniors

While most of the conversation around legalizing cannabis centers on the health risks to teens, seniors are also at risk, reports *The New York Times*. In a new study, researchers found that the number of people age 65 or older going to the hospital for cannabis poisoning doubled after Canada legalized marijuana in 2018, and then tripled when it legalized the sale of edibles 15 months later. Some of those cases resulted from accidental ingestion, such as when people mistook their adult children's THC-laced gummy bears for sweets. But in many cases, the seniors intended to take the drug but simply didn't realize how much stronger the modern stuff is than the joints they rolled in their youth—up to 10 times more potent. And some may have simply been unfamiliar with edibles, which can take a couple of hours to kick in, leading impatient users to ingest more than they can handle. Lead author Nathan Stall, a geriatrician at Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto, says older folks interested in hitting the dispensary should follow a mantra often used in geriatric medicine: "Start low and go slow."

Cockroach evolved in the kitchen

The German cockroach is the world's most prevalent household pest, but scientists weren't sure where it came from—until now. After studying the genomes of nearly 300 cockroaches from 17 countries across six continents, researchers concluded that the hardy species evolved from the larger Asian cockroach as recently as 2,100 years ago, in either India or Myanmar. The reason was us humans: The roaches adapted their diet to the crops we planted, then moved indoors to the kitchen, where those



Not from Germany

foods were readily available. The new species then spread westward, first hitching a ride to the Middle East with soldiers some 1,200 years ago, then traveling to Europe with returning colonials about 270 years ago. The findings could help scientists work out how the insects have been so successful at overcoming our attempts to control them. "If we can know the origin of the species," co-author Qian Tang, from Harvard University, tells *The Washington Post*, "we can try to identify the mechanism of this rapid evolution of insecticide resistance."

Review of reviews: Books

Book of the week

**In My Time of Dying:
How I Came Face to Face With
the Idea of an Afterlife**by Sebastian Junger
(Simon & Schuster, \$28)

“*In My Time of Dying* is the book that Sebastian Junger did not want to write,” said Edward Banchs in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. Though the seasoned journalist faced death while reporting from the battlefields of Afghanistan and dissected a doomed fishing expedition in his breakthrough, *The Perfect Storm*, his latest book emerges from the shock of nearly dying four years ago from a ruptured pancreatic artery. Junger was 58, relaxing at a cabin in Cape Cod, Mass., when the pain struck. Rushed to a hospital an hour away, he came within seconds of dying on the operating table. And it was at that moment he experienced a vision that left him with questions about the afterlife that he’d never previously entertained. As is the case in life, “the joy in this book is that there are no finite answers.”



Junger: A rationalist with some heavy questions

Junger remains a great storyteller, and the first third of this slim book is “a terrifically detailed medical thriller, as suspenseful and pacy as an episode of peak-era *ER*,” said Simon Osborne in *The Guardian*. “There are heroic doctors, bags of blood, and remarkable accounts of the medical innovations that ultimately spare him.” But it was what occurred inside Junger’s mind that shook him most. Below him to his left, a black pit yawned open and

exerted a steady pull on him. Above the pit loomed the presence of his father, who’d been dead several years, calmly inviting him to join him. Junger devotes the rest of the book to his quest—through a review of brain studies, wide readings on near-death experiences, and interviews with fellow survivors—to understand why he saw what he did and what the vision could mean.

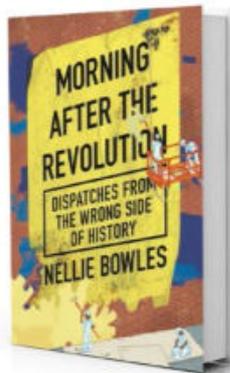
“Until that day, Junger was a man who did not believe in the afterlife,” said Michael Hainey in *Air Mail*. An atheist, he doesn’t dismiss the possibility that he merely experienced a hallucination. But because he comes to the conclusion that only the dying have similar visions of the deceased people they’ve been close to, he feels compelled to explore “the most fundamental mystery of life”: namely, does consciousness survive death? And by extension, if there is an afterlife, what possible forms might it take? A single day in 2020 utterly changed Junger’s thinking about death, and we’re lucky that it did. “Written with Junger’s usual combination of intelligent reporting and flashes of poetry, this riveting, inspiring volume is an intimate and powerful work sure to prompt reflections in anyone who reads it.”

**Novel of the week
The Second Coming**by Garth Risk Hallberg
(Knopf, \$32)

Garth Risk Hallberg’s 900-page previous novel, *City on Fire*, “deserved most of the hype and some of the scorn it received,” said Thomas Mallon in *The New Yorker*. Even so, grand ambitions suited his talents, and his new New York City novel pulls back too much on its aspirations. In its opening, a troubled 13-year-old makes the cover of the *New York Post* after leaping onto a subway track to retrieve her dropped cellphone, prompting her estranged father, a washed-up actor and drug addict, to attempt a reconciliation. But while Hallberg retains his “spot-on” wit, he has too few surprises to share about the central father-daughter dynamic to merit nearly 600 pages. Though he’s an intelligent writer, said Dwight Garner in *The New York Times*, “he’s a wild and frequently sloppy one.” As the story passes between narrators and moves back and forth through time, referencing 9/11, Occupy Wall Street, and Covid, “there is little sense of momentum; the pages never turn themselves.” Instead, *The Second Coming* is “so intensely written that it gave me a headache,” and “I was glad when it was over.”

**Morning After the Revolution:
Dispatches From the Wrong
Side of History**

by Nellie Bowles (Thesis, \$30)



“Nellie Bowles fashions herself as a dissident chafing against orthodoxies in pursuit of truth,” said Kate Knibbs in *Wired*. Her wife, Bari Weiss, another former *New York Times* writer, has gone so far as to declare Bowles “the love child of Tom Wolfe and Joan Didion.” But in Bowles’ first book, a best-seller in which the *Free Press* co-founder explains why she turned against the orthodoxies of today’s Left, her writing is, “too often, simply not good enough,” and the criticisms she slings at the tribe she left behind are “meant to confirm biases rather than complicate them.” While Bowles “has a talent for identifying forthrightly goofy ‘woke mind virus’ moments,” her arguments about the damage the Left has wrought “often do not stand up to scrutiny.”

At best, the book is “a grab bag of Bowles’ pet peeves,” said Becca Rothfeld in *The Wash-*

ington Post. As she tries to make the case that progressivism went berserk in 2020, she scoffs at diversity, equity, and inclusion workshops and Black Lives Matter protests but ties those broad movements to fringe actors who’ve asked for more than she thinks they should. She does find some worthy targets of scorn, including the BLM leaders who mismanaged hundreds of thousands of dollars in donations. More often, she shows a damning indifference to understanding how her new adversaries see the world, resulting in a book that’s just another salvo in the culture war. “Its intent is to pander, not to persuade.”

But the excesses that Bowles chronicles shouldn’t be forgotten, said Kat Rosenfield in *UnHerd*. “The critical response to her book from most mainstream media outlets has a definite air of hit dogs hollering,” as most would rather you remember the circa-2020 social justice movement for being heroic rather than devolving into the ridiculous. And the absurdity lives on. To mark the fourth anniversary of the police killing of George Floyd, a charity founded in his name recently held a “Self-Care Fair” mixing wellness treatments with arts and crafts. “The arc of the social justice universe is long, but it bends toward free massages and macaroni art.”

Best books...chosen by R.O. Kwon

R.O. Kwon is the best-selling author of *The Incendiaries*, a 2018 novel that was a National Book Critics Circle finalist. Her acclaimed new novel, *Exhibit*, follows two women artists who explore hidden desires after beginning an extramarital affair.



Black Women Writers at Work edited by Claudia Tate (1983). I love this book of fascinating, in-depth interviews Tate conducted with foundational Black women writers such as Audre Lorde, Gwendolyn Brooks, and Toni Morrison. *Black Women Writers at Work*, as Angela Davis has said, “serves as a much-needed reminder that the imagination always blazes trails that lead us toward more habitable futures.” It’s a volume of treasures, one I revisit again and again.

Girlhood by Melissa Febos (2021). This brilliant essay collection has helped me to think more deeply and truthfully about listening to my body, and to try to cast aside limiting scripts about what I get to desire and how I’m supposed to live. I’ve given copies of *Girlhood* to many friends.

Land of Milk and Honey by C Pam Zhang (2023). Set in a near future with severely limited food options, this second novel by the Booker Prize-nominated author of *How Much of These Hills Is Gold* raises powerful questions about the climate catastrophe and how we’ll live, and what pleasures and fulfillment we might find on a rapidly changing Earth.

Dictée by Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (1982). One of the first books written by a Korean-American writer to be published in the U.S., this formally inventive volume reads as though it miraculously sprang free from any pressures Cha could have felt to make her griefs more legible—and so, the thinking often goes, more easily peddled—than they might be to herself. It’s an intensely freeing, rewarding book.

A Map of Future Ruins by Lauren Markham (2024). Part memoir, part contemporary journalistic investigation, and part a history of migration, this genre-traversing book ranges across some of today’s most pressing disputes with such wisdom, clarity, and grace that to read it is to have a foretaste of living in the better world that Markham imagines.

The Penguin Book of Spiritual Verse edited by Kaveh Akbar (2022). Bringing together verse from 110 poets, including contemporary writers, the ancient Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu, and the 23rd-century B.C. Sumerian high priestess Enheduanna, this splendid collection explores faith and the divine.

Author of the week

Jenny Erpenbeck

Jenny Erpenbeck still feels a need to defend the vanished world she grew up in, said **Lisa Allardice** in *The Guardian*. The revered German novelist has just been awarded the 2024 International Booker



Prize for *Kairos*, a novel set in East Berlin just before and after the fall of the wall that once divided the

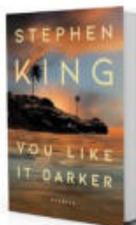
city. When the wall came down, in 1989, Erpenbeck was 22—close to the age of the novel’s protagonist, who at the same moment had recently entered into a heated, toxic six-year affair with an older married man. The book grew out of Erpenbeck’s desire to render East Germany visible to readers who view it as having been merely a totalitarian state dominated by its secret police. “I try to make people aware that almost nothing is only black or white,” she says. “The end of the system that I knew, that I grew up in—this made me write.”

Erpenbeck doesn’t portray East Germany as simply a better world, said **Steven Erlanger** in *The New York Times*. “There are some kinds of freedom that you wouldn’t expect to have surrounded by a wall,” she says. But she was raised in a family of Socialist Unity Party intellectuals who, while critical of socialism as it was practiced, were committed to making the system better. She argues that there was also a particular kind of freedom in living in a country committed to an ideology of equality, “a freedom not to be forced to expose yourself and shout out all the time about how important you are, to sell yourself.” *Kairos* captures that freedom, even as it also exposes how corrupting totalitarianism could be. “The idea of the country,” she says, “was better than the country itself.”

Also of interest...in summer chillers

You Like It Darker

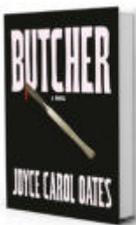
by Stephen King (Scribner, \$30)



Stephen King’s latest story collection “proves once more that his smaller-sized tales pack as powerful a wallop as the big boys,” said Brian Truitt in *USA Today*. His new best-seller is a 12-pack assortment of “tried-and-true King staples,” offering cosmic horror, crime drama, a harrowing survival tale, and even a novella featuring a character from 1981’s *Cujo*. Given the stories’ range, *You Like It Darker* is “like a big bag of Skittles: Each one goes down different, but they’re all pretty tasty.”

Butcher

by Joyce Carol Oates (Knopf, \$30)



Joyce Carol Oates “has always been interested in intimations of the sinister, the way it suddenly hoves into view on an ordinary summer day,” said Daphne Merkin in *The New York Times*. The author’s 63rd novel, inspired by true events, is “undoubtedly one of her most surreal and gruesome works, sparing no repulsive detail” as it relates its story of a misogynistic, undertrained 19th-century gynecologist who performs depraved experiments on the helpless patients at a lunatic asylum for women.

My Favorite Thing Is Monsters: Book Two

by Emil Ferris (Fantagraphics, \$45)



“Emil Ferris was no flash in the pan,” said Chris Barsanti in the Minneapolis *Star Tribune*. The follow-up to her acclaimed 2017 graphic novel “continues to thread creature-feature fantasy with a poignant coming-of-age story,” following Karen, a 10-year-old horror aficionado in 1960s Chicago, after the deaths of her mother and a beloved neighbor. “Given the real monsters stalking Karen’s waking world, escaping into gothic fantasia seems a smart call.”

The Witches of Bellinas

by J. Nicole Jones (Catapult, \$27)



In the fictional contemporary California town of this debut novel, “gender hierarchy is in full force,” said Lorraine Berry in the *Los Angeles Times*. Tansy Black, a newcomer, stands accused of witchcraft by the artsy commune, but the charge stems from Tansy’s resistance to customs that require women to focus on child rearing and subservience. “In telling how a cult comes to substitute group-think for a rational engagement with the world, Jones’ power as a storyteller burns fire-hot.”

Exhibit of the week**LaToya Ruby Frazier:
Monuments of Solidarity***Museum of Modern Art,
New York City, through Sept. 7*

“The art world needed LaToya Ruby Frazier,” and she continues to show us why, said Sebastian Smee in *The Washington Post*. Raised in the hollowed-out former steel town of Braddock, Pa., Frazier first picked up a camera in her teens and began documenting the life she knew, starting in the home she shared with her grandmother and mother, then branching out to the predominantly Black community they belonged to. When the photo series, “The Notion of Family,” first appeared roughly a decade ago, it showed a way for art to “break out of its solipsistic bubble” and begin addressing urgent real-world concerns, such as many Americans’ fight for shelter, clean water, medical care, and dignity. Frazier’s new mid-career survey at MoMA demonstrates that she herself has found fruitful ways to expand on that initial project. At heart, it’s “an ode to sisterhood—an exhibition about how (mostly) women respond to crises by banding together.”

Whichever crisis she turns to, “Frazier



A Frazier heroine, with family, from a 2019 series

seems almost compelled to blur the lines between herself and her subjects, becoming deeply involved in their lives and struggles,” said Veronica Esposito in *The Guardian*. In one section of her MoMA survey, you’ll see citizens in Flint, Mich., coping with the town’s lead-contaminated water crisis; in another, you’ll witness the final days of a unionized General Motors plant in Lordstown, Ohio. Amazingly, MoMA

chose not just to display Frazier’s body of work but also to “show it in a way that she never thought she might be able to,” especially at the tender age of 42. Frequently presented alongside the photos in her later series are transcripts in which her subjects share their personal stories, some of which tell not of need but of resilience and hope.

“Do you have the bandwidth for that? Does a family of dehydrated MoMA-attending tourists?” asked Madeline Leung Coleman in *NYMag.com*. Given how much time is required to read all the text Frazier provides, “‘Monuments of Solidarity’ is a show that makes you think hard about venue and scope, and whether an artist of Frazier’s commitment is really best served by a survey that by its nature privileges breadth over depth.” The artistic challenges she confronts today are also greater than those she faced at 20, said Holland Cotter in *The New York Times*. Compare her family photos with more recent work and “you instantly see a difference in intensity,” the result of her transitioning from “a fully embedded emotional participant” to “a documenting tourist.” Still, “any monument builder working on the tough tasks of truth telling and healing” must tackle and resolve such challenges again and again. “Frazier is such a builder.”

The Lonely Few*MCC Theater, New York City ★★★★★*

Jones and Patten: Harmony in action

Though Lauren Patten and Taylor Iman Jones are both veteran Broadway stars, they make “damn convincing rockers,” said David Cote in the *Observer*. In a musical that’s new to Broadway and “tries to balance drama with the sweaty ecstasy of a concert,” Patten plays Lila, the “mighty-voiced” frontwoman of an undiscovered Kentucky grunge band, while Jones plays a more successful singer-songwriter who falls for Lila the night she first sees her. Jones’ Amy soon invites Lila and the band, the Lonely Few, to join her on tour. Though the show winds up having “too many songs and not enough book,” Patten and Jones throw off “so much talent and charisma” that it’s

impossible not to get caught up in Lila and Amy’s “messy, passionate love story.”

“The chemistry between these two is instant, and profound,” said Laura Collins-Hughes in *The New York Times*. “As soon as they sing together, so is the harmony.” Patten, who won a Tony for *Jagged Little Pill*, is “an absolute ace,” bringing to her role “full-voiced ferocity” and “a vulnerability that could just about break you.” Meanwhile, Rachel Bonds and Zoe Sarnak’s “tightly woven” story gives the show’s stars more to play than just a romance. But the elements of that story, including lingering domestic trauma and the desire to escape small-town life, “feel cobbled together from off-the-shelf parts,” said Kenji Fujishima in *TheaterMania*. What’s most frustrating about *The Lonely Few* are “the momentary glimpses it offers of a richer, more distinctive show”—one that would let each of its six talented performers manifest more than one trait or complication. Though it’s satisfying to see a queer love story that’s not presented as inescapably tragic, “celebrating a show for *not* being something isn’t the same as celebrating it for what it is.”

Problems Between Sisters*Studio Theatre, Washington, D.C.*

★★★★★

Be forewarned: “This is in-your-face theater,” said David Friscic in *Broadway World*. Julia May Jonas’ “joltingly immersive” new



Fox and Janssen

play offers a feminist riff on Sam Shepard’s *True West*, relocating the action to Vermont and swapping Shepard’s warring brothers for two pregnant sisters who spar over their conflicting approaches to life and the making of art. Annie Fox and Stephanie Janssen co-star, and “the physical stamina required of both actors is almost impossible to convey.” *Problems Between Sisters* makes “a slow-burn start” before it really gets going, but “when it does, there is an apocalyptic quality to the sisters’ showdown,” said Alan Zilberman in the *Washington City Paper*. Unlike the brothers in *True West*, however, these mothers-to-be eventually storm right up to a line they’re unwilling to cross. In context, “it’s a roundabout way to critique male privilege, not just in *True West* but everywhere women make hard choices.”

Ezra

Directed by Tony Goldwyn
(R)



A divorcé fights for his autistic son.

It's rare to see a big-screen portrayal of autism as true to life as *Ezra*, said Nate Richard in *Collider*. The "irresistibly charming" comedy-drama, inspired by screenwriter Tony Spiridakis' experiences with co-parenting an autistic child, never sugarcoats the challenges of raising a kid on the spectrum, and unlike most movies with autistic characters, *Ezra* features a neurodivergent actor in the title role. As 11-year-old Ezra, newcomer William Fitzgerald "steals your heart," and despite a few hokey scenes, the familial strife captured by co-stars Bobby Cannavale, Robert De Niro, and Rose Byrne "feels genuine and raw." Cannavale, 54, "knows he's landed a great role and really runs with it," said Michael Rechtshaffen in *The Hollywood Reporter*. The *Boardwalk Empire* actor is perfect for the part of Ezra's fiercely protective father, a



Cannavale and Fitzgerald: A special bond

recently divorced stand-up comedian who balks at the idea that his son should be medicated and transferred to a school for kids with special needs. "His interplay with young Fitzgerald never feels less than authentic," and the same is true of his heated bantering with De Niro, who plays Ezra's stern but loving grandfather.

Unfortunately, the small moments in the movie that "really work" are "overshadowed by the big ones that feel manufactured," said Brian Tallerico in *RogerEbert.com*. When he's served with a restraining order, Cannavale's hothead abducts Ezra and takes the boy on a cross-country road trip—a Hollywood contrivance that distracts from the film's "smart, sweet little beats." Still, Cannavale is great here, and "anyone who has struggled with how to raise a child with autism will find something emotional to hold onto."

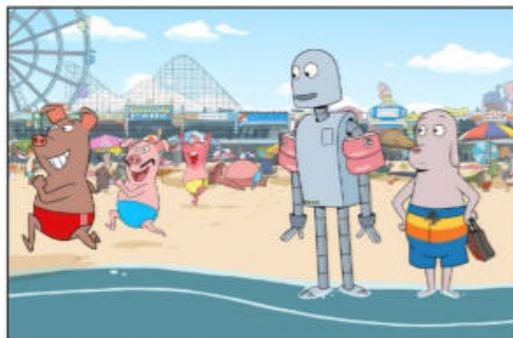
Robot Dreams

Directed by Pablo Berger
(Not rated)



A lonely dog befriends a mail-order robot.

"If any further evidence were needed to support the theory that we are enjoying a new boom time for quality animation, this is it," said Wendy Ide in *The Guardian*. A hand-drawn, nearly wordless film that was nominated for an Oscar and is only now reaching U.S. theaters in a slow rollout, *Robot Dreams* uses gentle humor to tell the story of a lonely dog in 1980s New York City who buys a mail-order robot who quickly becomes his best friend. But bring tissues, because Pablo Berger's bittersweet buddy movie "matches Spike Jonze's *Her* as one of cinema's most devastating and profound studies of loneliness and the fragility of emotional connections." To me, it works best as a tribute to the New York of four



Robot and Dog hit Coney Island.

decades ago, said Carlos Sousa in *The New York Sun*. When the duo go roller-skating in Central Park, the scene's "bond-building, fun-loving energy serves as the movie's emotional linchpin," especially because the action is set to Earth, Wind & Fire's exuberant "September" and the colorful backgrounds are packed with amusing detail. The pair is forced

to separate not long afterward, and the effect is devastating. At that point, this "wise and wondrous" movie "becomes as concerned with friendship's limits as much as its rewards," said Robbie Collin in *The Telegraph* (U.K.). If you can find a way to see it, bring the whole family. "Kids will be amused and enchanted, and any accompanying grown-ups existentially destroyed."

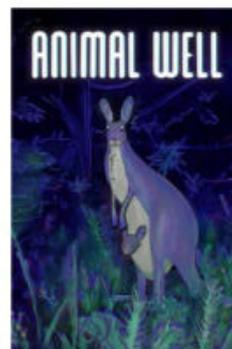


Hades II

(Supergiant Games)

Back in the first year of the Covid pandemic, "playing *Hades* was exactly the balm I needed," said Moises Taveras in *Kotaku*. The hit 2020 video game inspired by Greek mythology "remains one of the most brilliant things I've ever played," yet the new sequel—currently available as an unfinished early-access release—is "somehow even more gorgeous," introduces a compelling

new protagonist, and demands a more tactical approach to fighting. In the first game, Hades' surly son, Zagreus, tries to break from his unloving father by hacking and slashing his way out of the underworld. In *Hades II*, you play as Melinoë, Zag's sister, a blade- and magic-wielding sorceress whose determination to reunite with her family "strikes a far more resonant chord." Melinoë meets a huge pantheon of gods, goddesses, and other mythical characters in her war with Chronos, the Titan of Time, said Louryn Strampe in *Wired*. Though the main story won't be finished until the game's final version arrives in 2025, "you can uncover the tragic love story between the original himbo Narcissus and his mournful counterpart, Echo, or get to know powerful witches like Circe and Medea. Perhaps you'll happen upon Arachne, who spins armored dresses while lamenting the gods that cursed her."



Animal Well

(Bigmode)

Looks can be deceiving, especially with video games, said Elijah Gonzalez in *Paste*. Take *Animal Well*, the "uniquely enrapturing" brainteaser that this season has become the new obsession of puzzle addicts. With its 8-bit pixel art and ominous synth soundtrack, the \$25 indie sensation resembles 2D platforming games from the late 1980s and early '90s. But beneath those retro

trappings is a game that "profoundly understands how to encourage and pay off curiosity." *Animal Well*'s many-layered puzzles "range from quick and easy challenges to world-spanning enigmas that will have you drawing up a convoluted evidence board full of half-solved riddles." Perplexing in a good way, the puzzles "frequently generate revelatory 'aha' moments," said Lewis Gordon in the *Financial Times*. Playing as a gelatinous blob, you hop around a subterranean world full of glowing plants, running water, and "a menagerie of bewitching creatures: creepy flamingos, killer ostriches, an unnerving ghost cat." Solo developer Billy Basso spent seven years designing this "dense, Borgesian labyrinth," and for players, burrowing into its depths "can feel like peering into the most intimate—and often strangest—recesses of its creator's mind."

Streaming tips

Tales from weird America

Ren Faire

The madness of “King George” Coulam, head of the Texas Renaissance Festival for 50 years, is on full display in this irreverent new three-part docu-series. Pondering retirement at 86, Coulam sets in motion an absurd three-way battle for succession among his second in command, a kettle-corn kingpin, and a former elephant trainer. *Max*

American Movie

You could be forgiven for mistaking this 1999 documentary, about would-be filmmaker Mark Borchardt's fanatical attempt to make a low-budget horror short, for a Christopher Guest mockumentary. Borchardt's dogged spirit and a hilarious collection of friends make it memorable. *Tubi*

Fast, Cheap & Out of Control

No other director has so thoroughly explored America's weird edges as Errol Morris. In this 1997 documentary, he profiles a lion tamer, a topiary gardener, a naked mole rat expert, and a robotics designer, each chasing bliss on an idiosyncratic path. *Tubi*

Some Kind of Heaven

Every paradise has its discontents, including the Villages, the raucous 130,000-resident Florida retirement community profiled in this funny and often charming 2021 documentary. *Magnolia Selects*

Hands on a Hardbody

It's a peculiar Texas tradition: Whoever can keep one hand on a prize pickup the longest drives the truck home. This documentary focuses on the contest's 1995 edition, and gets its heart from the determined contestants themselves. *\$10 on demand*

Winnebago Man

In this 2009 documentary, a young filmmaker tracks down Jack Rebney, who had become a YouTube sensation owing to outtakes that captured the string of furious curses he unleashed one day while appearing in a commercial video for Winnebago RVs. *Tubi*

The Week's guide to what's worth watching

The Acolyte

Disney's expansion of the *Star Wars* universe continues with a series built around a spree of mysterious murders. Sol, a Jedi master, investigates the killings, tracking them to a former student of his who has been coaxed to the Dark Side. Soon, the forces behind the killings become a major threat to peace in the galaxy. Lee Jung-jae, Amandla Stenberg, Jodie Turner-Smith, and Carrie-Anne Moss co-star. *Tuesday, June 4, Disney+*

Clipped

What's the opposite of *Winning Time*? On the heels of that entertaining Lakers series comes a new show about the most embarrassing moment in the history of Los Angeles' other NBA franchise. Just as the Clippers were turning a corner, having lured in a championship coach and top free agents, team owner Donald Sterling was outed for racist comments recorded by an ambitious personal assistant alleged to be his mistress. Ed O'Neill stars as Sterling in the six-part drama, which also features Cleopatra Coleman as V. Stiviano and Laurence Fishburne as coach Doc Rivers. *Tuesday, June 4, Hulu*

Hitler and the Nazis: Evil on Trial

Are the horrors of the Holocaust vanishing from public memory? Documentarian Joe Berlinger fights spreading amnesia in this six-part series, which leans heavily on the Nuremberg Trials and William Shirer's influential 1960 book, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, to detail how Hitler came to power and pushed his nation to engage in industrialized genocide. Shirer's voice, resurrected through the use of AI, narrates the author's eyewitness accounts while the series' powerful soundtrack features compositions written by Holocaust victims. *Wednesday, June 5, Netflix*

How to Rob a Bank

Careers in bank robbery tend not to last very long. For a while, Scott Scurlock made the job look easy. This documentary mixes archival footage with dramatizations of Scurlock's crimes to detail how the charismatic former premed student took lessons learned from the 1991 movie *Point Break* to rob 18 banks in and around



Johnson unloads on Mizuno in 'Am I OK?'

Seattle before his luck finally ran out in late 1996. *Wednesday, June 5, Netflix*

Am I OK?

Coming out can be a struggle. It's particularly so for the 32-year-old played by Dakota Johnson in this comedy drama from married co-directors Tig Notaro and Stephanie Allynne. Only when her best friend announces that she's leaving L.A. does Johnson's Lucy finally realize she needs to give up on men, accept that she's a lesbian, and pursue a partner on those new terms. Sonoya Mizuno co-stars. *Thursday, June 6, Max*

Other highlights

30 for 30: I'm Just Here for the Riot

Another strong 30 for 30 entry delivers a close look at the riots that followed the Vancouver Canucks' Game 7 loss to the Boston Bruins in the 2011 Stanley Cup Finals. *Tuesday, June 4, at 7:30 p.m., ESPN*

Sweet Tooth

In the final season of this charming sci-fi series, half-human, half-deer hybrid Gus treks to Alaska, along with his allies, hoping to save both hybrids and humans from post-apocalyptic peril. *Thursday, June 6, Netflix*

Becoming Karl Lagerfeld

Haute couture's black-gloved icon gets the biopic treatment in a series that focuses on his rivalry with Yves Saint Laurent. *Friday, June 7, Hulu*

Show of the week

Hit Man

Everyone seems to love a good hitman story. But what about the story of a fake hitman? Richard Linklater's latest movie is a romantic action comedy in which Glen Powell portrays a professor who moonlights by working undercover to help cops nab ne'er-do-wells who aim to hire a contract killer. He's masterful at assuming new personas and ensnaring his marks until he falls hard for a beautiful married woman, played by Adria Arjona, who wants to off her husband. *Hit Man* could have been forgettable nonsense. Instead, it so deftly blends humor, action, and romance that it's one of the most entertaining movies of the year. *Friday, June 7, Netflix*



Arjona and Powell: How much is make-believe?

Dusted chicken skewers: Bite-size fun for the season's cookouts

Perfect for spring or early summer barbecue season, these lively skewers “pack a lot of flavor,” say Sara Kramer and Sarah Hymanson in *Kismet: Bright, Fresh, Vegetable-Loving Recipes* (Clarkson Potter). “Taking a cue from Northern Chinese barbecue, we dust the skewers in a fennel seed–y spice blend when they come off the grill,” and the asparagus-and-fennel salad offers “a fun contrast to the meaty, smoky skewers.”

Feel free to save time by buying boneless, skinless thighs. “But you get extra points for deboning skin-on thighs and getting a little crispy skin in the mix.”

Recipe of the week

Springtime chicken skewers with asparagus and fennel salad

For the fennel sprinkle

- 1 tbsp ground toasted fennel seeds
- ¼ tsp kosher salt
- ¼ tsp sugar
- ½ tsp onion powder

For the chicken

- 1½ lbs chicken thigh meat, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 1 yellow onion, quartered
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled

- ¼ cup olive oil
- 2 tsp kosher salt
- 1 sprig rosemary, leaves picked and stem removed

For the salad

- ¼ cup plus 1 tsp kosher salt
- 1 bunch asparagus, ends trimmed, cut crosswise into ¼-inch rounds
- ½ tsp honey
- Grated zest of 1 lemon
- 2 tbsp lemon juice (about ½ lemon)
- ⅓ cup olive oil
- 1 tbsp capers, drained and chopped
- 1 bulb fennel, shaved thinly on a mandoline
- ¼ cup chopped fennel fronds

Make the fennel sprinkle:

In a small bowl, combine ground toasted fennel, salt, sugar, and onion powder. Mix to combine. Store, covered, until ready to use.

Marinate the chicken:

Place chicken pieces in a sealable container. In a blender,

combine onion, garlic, olive oil, salt, and rosemary leaves and blend on high until smooth, about 1 minute. Strain through a fine-mesh sieve into chicken container and toss to coat. Cover and marinate in fridge for at least 2 hours and up to overnight. Before cooking, load about five pieces of chicken onto each skewer, for a total of eight skewers, and return to fridge until ready to grill.

Prep salad: In a medium saucepan, combine 4 cups water and ¼ cup salt and bring to a boil. Add asparagus and blanch for just 5 seconds. Drain in a colander and set aside.

In a medium bowl, combine honey, lemon zest, lemon juice, olive oil, capers, and remaining 1 tsp salt. Whisk together and set aside.

Preheat a grill to medium-high heat. (Before grill is hot, use a rag or paper towel to oil the grates to avoid sticking.) Grill skewers, turning, until cooked through, 3 to 4 minutes per side, 12 to 15 minutes total.

Place cooked skewers on a platter and, using a fine-mesh sieve, dust on all sides with the fennel sprinkle. Add asparagus, shaved fennel, and fennel fronds to bowl of dressing and toss. Spoon salad over dusted skewers. Serves 4.



Ashland, Ore.: Where dinner and theater meet

Ashland, Ore., a pretty little city just north of the California border, is “the theatrical gateway to the Northwest,” said Susanne Robertson in *Eater*. For eight months each year, the college town set in the foothills of the Siskiyou and Cascade mountains hosts the world-famous Oregon Shakespeare Festival and visitors flock in for the top-flight productions of the Bard’s best. But “there’s plenty to keep palates entertained,” too, including these top spots for pre- and post-curtain meals.

MÄS Josh Dorcak’s multicourse tasting menus “tease, challenge, and entertain.” Secure a seat at his small restaurant in a quaint alley and your meal might include grilled lobster chawanmushi or aged duck breast with acorn miso and maple blossoms. Dorcak calls it Cascadian cuisine, and it’s made him a finalist for the 2024 James Beard Award for the best chef in Oregon or Washington. *141 Will Dodge Way*

Cocorico Located steps away from the Shakespeare Festival, the bright bistro created by husband and wife Nat and Grace Borsi mixes locally sourced ingredients and Southern European inspiration. Try the campanelle with pickled turnips and confit cherry tomatoes, or the house burger made with Umpqua Valley lamb. The braised lamb, another standout, “gets a floral touch from rose harissa.” *15 N. First St.*

Alchemy Restaurant Long ensconced at the historic Winchester Inn, Alchemy has earned “a well-deserved reputation as the de facto choice for any special-occasion meal.” The wine program is award-winning, and inventive starters include kuri squash gnochetti in saffron broth and local mushrooms prepared three ways. “It’s impossible to have a mediocre meal here, but get the duck confit fettuccine to be sure.” *35 S. 2nd St.*



Chef Dorcak, the MÄS maestro

Lambrusco: Summer’s red

Forgive us if we repeat ourselves, but “lambrusco is one of the best wines to drink in the summer,” said Lucy Simon in *Food & Wine*. The sparkling red from Italy’s Emilia-Romagna region is ideally served chilled, “undeniably refreshing,” and “pairs well with everything from cheeseburgers to a spicy tuna roll.”

Medici Ermete Quercioli Secco (\$15).

Produced by a fifth-generation organic family winery, this lambrusco balances “jammy” fruit with “just enough tannins”—“making it a perfect pairing for grilled sausages.”

Paltrinieri ‘Solco’ (\$20). This “brooding” frizzante, made from the fruit-forward salamino grape, “begs to be paired with barbecued ribs, smoked chicken wings, and pulled pork.”

Fiorini Lambrusco Sorbara Rosé ‘Corte degli Attimi’ (\$24).

This “bone-dry” lambrusco “has fairy-like florality, cherry-berry flavors, and gentle bubbles,” making it a go-to with summer salads.



This week's dream: Driving the Alaska Highway

Road trips don't get much more scenic than a springtime drive along the Alaska Highway, said Elaine Glusac in *The New York Times*. The nearly 1,400-mile roadway that connects Alaska to Canada "takes motorists through some of the most stunning landscapes in North America." Last year, my family drove all the way from Alaska to Idaho, passing through British Columbia, Alberta, and a total of five national parks on a trip "so packed with sights that I never cracked the novel I brought." The Alaska Highway got us roughly two-thirds of the way there, and photo ops continued to pop up as we headed southeast into the Canadian Rockies and onward to the Lower 48.

Our nearly 2,200-mile journey began in Alaska's Wrangell-St. Elias National Park, which at 13.2 million acres is as large as Yellowstone, Yosemite, and Switzerland combined. Upon entering Canada, we then crossed 600 miles of Yukon territory,



Jasper National Park's Maligne Canyon

"passing yawning valleys with snaking streams and long, glacier-fed lakes." Because cell service was spotty, we relied on a 1972 road map to guide us to Kluane National Park, which is home to Canada's tallest mountain and more than 2,000 glaciers. After several days of driving and camping in picturesque places, we explored Whitehorse, the walkable capital of the Yukon, where I splurged on a dinner of bison Bolognese.

Driving through British Columbia "felt like a safari." We saw black bears, caribou, wood bison, and thimblehorn sheep as we made our way to Dawson Creek, the town that marks mile zero of the Alaska Highway. From there, we crossed into Alberta and drove south until "rising mountains, immense river valleys, and herds of elk" welcomed us to the Rockies. In Jasper National Park, we peered into the river-carved depths of Maligne Canyon, and on the road to Banff National Park, we took in "spectacular views of waterfalls and peaks winking in and out of the clouds."

A double rainbow arched overhead as we entered the picturesque mountain town of Banff for a night's stay, after which we detoured to nearby and relatively uncrowded Kootenay National Park. We had Marble Canyon to ourselves, and as we crossed the roaring river gorge, ruby-crowned kinglets surrounded us with song. *The Milepost (themilepost.com)* offers a detailed guide to the Alaska Highway.

Hotel of the week



Farmhouse style meets luxury.

The Weston Weston, Vt.

The Weston opened late last year, and already it's "the best little thing going on in Vermont," said Tori Latham in *Robb Report*. Operated by a hotelier family that once owned the Carlyle in New York City and the Beverly Wilshire in L.A., it combines five star-level service with New England village charm. All eight rooms and suites, many with gas fireplaces, are luxuriously furnished with art and antiques. A small gym, spa, and yoga studio sit on site, and the inn's "quintessential" French restaurant "roars with activity," because it's already become a favorite dinner destination of many locals and weekenders. westonvt.com; doubles from \$405

Getting the flavor of...

The Texas-New Mexico borderlands

To see three wildly different Western landscapes in four or five days, fly to El Paso, said Graham Averill in *Outside*. West Texas' largest city is "an ideal starting point" for a 300-mile road trip that loops in a trio of national parks, each with its own climate and terrain. Texas' tallest peaks can be found at Guadalupe Mountains National Park, and from the windy 8,751-foot summit of Guadalupe Peak, "the views stretching east over the plains are endless." Across the New Mexico border, Carlsbad Caverns National Park leads visitors out of the desert scrublands and into "the cold, dark underground." You'll feel the temperature plunge if you descend via switchbacks to the Big Room, the largest cave chamber in North America. Spelunkers can venture deeper to see the bizarre rock formations called cave pearls in the Lower Cave. Finally, White Sand Dunes National Park preserves an enormous gypsum dune field that "rolls toward the horizon in a series of white tidal waves." You can buy sleds to slide down the 60-foot slopes as you explore.

The road from Nashville to New Orleans

For history buffs, there's nothing like the Natchez Trace Parkway, said Jessica Chapel and Mark Ellwood in *Condé Nast Traveler*. The scenic road follows a 444-mile travel corridor used by Native Americans as long as 10,000 years ago. Subsequently used by European settlers, slave traders, and soldiers, it passes numerous museums and historic monuments as it tracks southwest from Nashville to Natchez, Miss., bringing New Orleans-bound road trippers right to Louisiana's doorstep. Music enthusiasts will want to detour to Oxford, Miss., where the Blues Archive at the

University of Mississippi houses 60,000 recordings, as well as to the famous crossroads in Clarksdale where, legend tells, Robert Johnson sold his soul in exchange for blues guitar mastery. Natchez's Museum of African American History and Culture and the Smith Robertson Museum and Cultural Center in Jackson, Miss., offer deeper dives into Black America's past, and Civil War buffs should stop in Vicksburg, which was the site of a 47-day Union Army siege. It's also home to the Biedenharn Coca-Cola Museum, where, in 1894, Coke was first bottled.

How to avoid travel scams

"Travel scams are often hiding where you least expect them," said Serena Tara and Opheli Garcia Lawler in *Thrillist*. Scams are forever evolving, but knowing the most widespread can help. Cash App and other money-sharing apps are being exploited by scammers who take payment for home rentals they never intend to honor. Hotel guests, meanwhile, should double-check the property's URL when booking online and pay with a credit card, rather than a debit card, for added protection. Be equally vigilant about checking airlines' URLs and beware of online offers of free flight credits that require you to share personal information. The rideshare business is rife with scams, too. To avoid phony websites, use only official apps to book a ride. And never agree to pay your driver in cash, because the rideshare app will charge you as well.

This week: Houses in Connecticut coastal towns

1 **Branford** Belden Island is part of the Thimble archipelago in Branford's Stony Creek harbor. The property includes a circa-1912, fully furnished four-bedroom house with original hardwood floors and wainscoting, stone fireplace, and country kitchen with butler's pantry. The island is irrigated, solar-powered, and walled in native pink granite, and includes 2 acres of shellfish beds, a big lawn, trees, and a dock; the mainland is seven minutes by regular ferry. \$2,750,000. Kiara Rusconi, William Raveis Real Estate/Luxury Portfolio International, (860) 573-3382

2 **Fairfield** This restored Queen Anne Victorian in Stratfield Village is 10 minutes' drive from Seaside Beach and 30 minutes from New Haven. The 1907 five-bedroom house



has rich period details, including two ornate fireplaces, a parlor, dining and living rooms, and award-winning chef's kitchen with copper and slate counters, tin ceiling, and floor-to-ceiling oak cabinetry accessed by a library ladder. Outside are a wraparound porch, lawns, trees, and perennial, vegetable, and herb gardens. \$1,195,000. Pam Foarde, William Raveis Real Estate/Luxury Portfolio International, (203) 257-9110



3 **Madison** The wraparound deck and many of the rooms of this waterfront home offer generous ocean views. Built in 1900 and entirely rebuilt in 2021, the five-bedroom house features a shake-clad exterior, mansard roof, coffered ceilings, chef's kitchen, walk-in pantry, formal dining room, and living room with oversize windows and fireplace. The grassy lot is steps from a sandy beach, five minutes from the town center, and two hours from Manhattan. \$5,250,000. Loretta Walz, Coldwell Banker Realty, (203) 619-4029

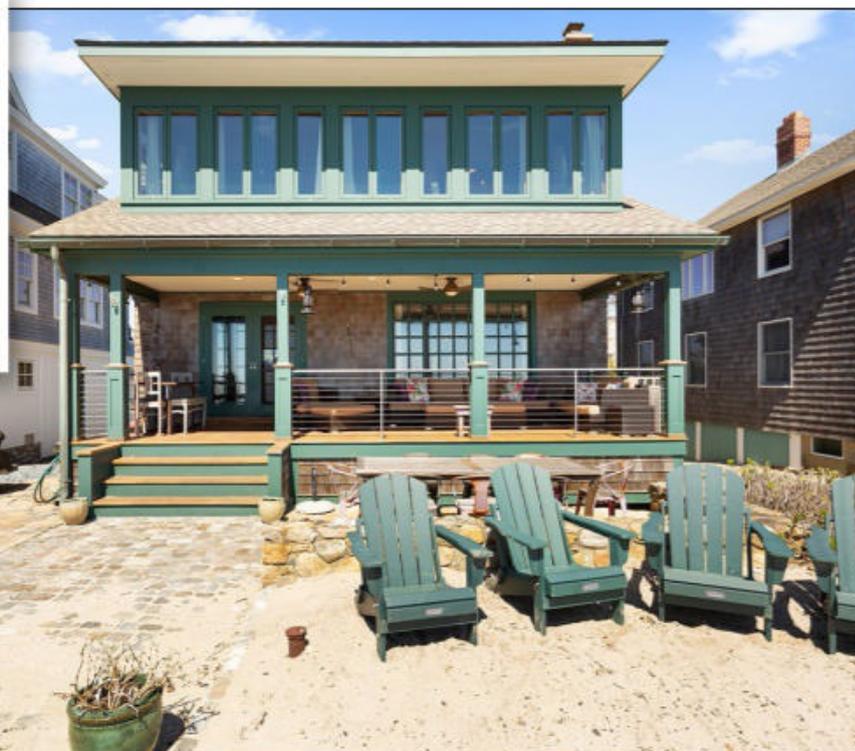
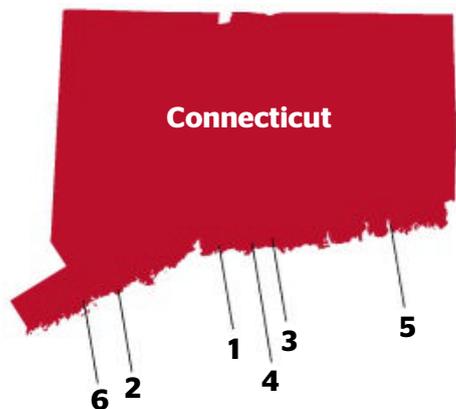
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4 ◀ Guilford
Leetes Island's Pelatiah Leete House sits on a hill overlooking Shell Beach lagoon. Built circa 1710 and on

the National Register of Historic Places, the restored American chestnut post-and-beam, two-bedroom saltbox has four fireplaces, original wood floors, and built-ins; modern kitchen and bathroom with soaker tub; living, dining, and family rooms; library; attic; and attached garage. The property is landscaped with lawns, hedges, flower beds, gravel paths, and a stone patio. \$975,000. Carol Mancini, William Pitt Sotheby's International Realty, (203) 710-6405

Dennis Carbo



5 ▶ Groton This 1928 cedar-shingled beach house on Groton Long Point's boardwalk is steps from sand and sea. The updated four-bedroom home features wood paneling, floors, and cabinets; oversized windows; open main floor including dining and living areas, wood-burning stone fireplace, and gourmet kitchen with eat-in island; and primary suite with sunroom-office. Outside are an ocean-facing covered deck, patio, and landscaped yard; Mystic is a 20-minute drive and Boston about two hours. \$2,750,000. Katie O'Leary, Gay Tyler Gallagher Real Estate, (860) 961-4357

Steal of the week



6 ◀ Norwalk
The river and harbor are just blocks from this 1982 condominium in South Norwalk. The renovated two-story,

two-bedroom loft has an open layout, double-height ceilings, wood floors, a wood-burning stove with brick surround, a spiral staircase, a chef's kitchen, a primary-suite bath with terrazzo walls and slate floor, an office, and an in-unit laundry. Dining, shopping, and the train are walking distance; ocean beaches are eight minutes' drive and midtown Manhattan is an hour. \$550,000. Max Dober, Keller Williams Prestige Properties, (203) 767-2486

The news at a glance

The bottom line

■ About 4 in 10 recent college grads are currently “underemployed,” meaning they’re working in a job that doesn’t require a college degree, according to data from the Federal Reserve. *CBSNews.com*

■ The Bureau of Labor Statistics recorded 440,000 full-time real estate agents and brokers in 2023, about 72,000 less than the year before. As of mid-April, the National Association of Realtors had about 1.5 million agents registered. That’s down more than 100,000 from 2022. *The Washington Post*



■ TSA officers screened 2,951,163 people at checkpoints nationwide the Friday before Memorial Day, surpassing the previous single-day record from Thanksgiving 2023. Five of the top 10 busiest travel days in TSA history have already occurred in 2024. *CNN.com*

■ T-Mobile announced a deal to buy most of U.S. Cellular’s wireless business for \$4.4 billion. The deal gives T-Mobile access to U.S. Cellular’s 4.5 million customers, and reach in rural areas where it has been weak. *The Washington Post*

■ More than \$3 billion in Israel Bonds—Israeli government debt issued in the U.S.—have been sold worldwide, three times the annual average, since Oct. 7 last year. One of the largest buyers is an elected municipal comptroller for Palm Beach County in Florida, which holds \$700 million out of its \$4.6 billion portfolio in Israel Bonds. *Financial Times*

■ With 16.3 percent of downtown office space sitting vacant, Chicago is offering new subsidies to make new use of the space. Property developers will get \$150 million to convert four buildings into 1,000 living units. *The Wall Street Journal*

Music: U.S. files suit against Live Nation

Antitrust enforcers says it’s “time to break up Live Nation–Ticketmaster,” said Stefania Palma and Anna Nicolaou in the *Financial Times*. A landmark suit, filed last week by the Department of Justice and joined by 29 states, aims to unwind the concert empire, which it says has “a chokehold on the live entertainment ecosystem” since a 2010 merger.

Live Nation owns hundreds of concert venues and “locks up” artists in exclusive promotion deals, while its subsidiary Ticketmaster controls more than “80 percent” of the ticket-selling market. Its system has come under fire from fans frustrated by “exorbitant fees” and service fiascos.



Music fans are furious at Live Nation.

The case against Live Nation isn’t just about disgruntled music fans, said Alex Kirshner in *Slate*. The Biden administration’s antitrust approach concerns “a much more sprawling group of stakeholders than just consumers.” The DOJ is scrutinizing “how Live Nation’s control of a ticketing giant contributes to its control of venues.” That hurts artists, who have “less freedom

to promote their work and perform in ideal venues.” It harms promoters “who don’t play by Live Nation’s rules.” And it pressures concert venues to work within Live Nation’s ticketing system if they want good acts. The only solution here “is to stop letting Live Nation be so many things at once.”

AI wars: Musk raises \$6 billion for xAI startup

Elon Musk’s artificial-intelligence startup raised \$6 billion in a new funding round, said Berber Jin in *The Wall Street Journal*. “Musk has been playing catch-up” with AI rivals, most notably OpenAI, the non-profit startup he co-founded but left in 2018. But he’s gained ground quickly, with the just-ended fundraising round last week valuing the company at \$24 billion. “He launched xAI publicly in July,” and the startup released its first chatbot, Grok, in November. “One selling point for xAI, according to investors, is Musk’s other businesses, which collect valuable data that could be used to train” the AI models.

Oil mergers: ConocoPhillips bids for Marathon

A deal frenzy continues in the U.S. oil sector, said Ben Geman in *Axios*. ConocoPhillips said this week it will acquire Marathon Oil in a \$17 billion all-stock agreement (\$22.5 billion including debt). Marathon holds some of the most desirable land in the oil-rich fields of New Mexico and Texas’ Permian Basin; companies are “scrambling to snap up remaining prime acreage” in those regions. Also this week, Chevron shareholders approved a \$53 billion deal for Hess that was signed last year, though the acquisition is still “snagged in a dispute” over “an Exxon-run project off Guyana.”

Chips: Nvidia climbs as investors await stock split

Nvidia is close to overtaking Apple as Wall Street’s second-most valuable company, said Zaheer Kachwala in *Reuters*. Shares of the chipmaker “have more than doubled so far this year after more than tripling last year,” bringing the company’s market cap to \$2.8 trillion, just shy of Apple’s \$2.9 trillion and not far from Microsoft’s \$3.2 trillion. Nvidia “reported a five-fold jump in revenue at its data center segment last week.” It also excited investors with the announcement of a 10-for-1 stock split coming in June.

Hostile investor: Ramaswamy asks to remake BuzzFeed

BuzzFeed is at odds with investor Vivek Ramaswamy, said Benjamin Mullin in *The New York Times*. The conservative businessman, who ran an unsuccessful campaign for the Republican nomination for president, “has amassed an 8.3 percent stake in BuzzFeed,” setting up a “clash” with Jonah Peretti, BuzzFeed’s founder and CEO. In a letter to the board this week, Ramaswamy pushed for staff cuts, three board seats, and changes in the site’s editorial direction, asking BuzzFeed to “consider moves like hiring the former Fox News host Tucker Carlson.”

Big Fruit bets big on a \$400 pineapple

After a decade and a half of growing and experimentation, Del Monte may have achieved the ultimate in “luxury fruit,” said Danielle Wiener-Bronner in *CNN.com*: the \$400 pineapple. Fruit growers have been trying to move up in price since the introduction of the honeycrisp apple three decades ago proved there was a market for premium fruit. While the honeycrisp now sells for a reasonable \$1.70 a pound, pricy offerings have gone way, way beyond. Oishii introduced specialty strawberries “grown indoors in a climate-controlled vertical farm” in 2018. Priced at \$50 for a pack of just eight, the berries gained cult status and the waitlist for the carefully constructed packages grew into the thousands. But even that’s peanuts compared with Del Monte’s Rubyglow red pineapple currently priced at \$395.99. So far, the supply is still small—as is the market; Melissa’s Produce, a California distributor, says it has sold about 25 of the 50 Rubyglows it had on offer.

Real estate: A plan to unlock home equity

Freddie Mac's plan to buy up second mortgages could be a trillion-dollar boon to homeowners, said **Felix Salmon** in *Axios*. The government-backed mortgage guarantee agency is appealing to regulators to let it backstop second mortgages, which it believes "could stimulate more lending and funnel more money to consumers" looking to tap the equity in their homes. A second mortgage is useful for homeowners who have significant equity but don't want to refinance their entire mortgage, especially if they locked in attractive terms when mortgage rates were close to rock-bottom. Second mortgages apply the new interest rate "only to the increase in principal amount," leading to lower payments than refinancing. Freddie's plan would apply only to homes for which Freddie already holds a first mortgage, limiting its reach. But extended across the entire housing market, a comeback for second mortgages could add up to a big economic stimulant. One foe: consumer lenders offering higher-rate loans, who already seem "worried this will be a success."



Freddie Mac wants to offer second mortgages.

Homeowners need ways to loosen the "golden handcuffs," said **Aarthi Swaminathan** in *MarketWatch*. Many people have resisted selling because they're locked into a mortgage rate that's well below current offerings. At the same time, home values have soared since the pandemic. A recent report from Intercontinental Exchange determined that homeowners are sitting on \$11 trillion

in "tappable" equity, or about \$206,000 per homeowner. But "refinancing is unattractive because they would have to give up their low mortgage rate." Selling shouldn't be the only way to cash in on your house, said **Ron Lieber** in *The New York Times*. We have "tipped too far into seeing homes as totems of a financial life well and conservatively lived." Their equity is a tool that could help a lot of Americans save for retirement.

A mortgage-gobbling Freddie risks a repeat of the conditions before 2008, said *The Wall Street Journal* in an editorial. The banks got blamed, but they were "responding to incentives created by the government and Fannie and Freddie." The Federal Housing Finance Agency—which regulates the two mortgage companies—wants to boost the housing market, but in doing so it's "putting taxpayers on the hook" less than a generation after they "had to bail out Fannie and Freddie." There's another way to tap home equity that's "having a moment right now," said **Molly Grace** in *Business Insider*. Home equity lines of credit, or HELOCs, give you "a line of credit that borrows against your home equity." They work "similarly to credit cards," in that homeowners don't need to borrow the full amount they're allotted. Rates have been hovering around 8.5 percent, but unlike a second mortgage, they are variable. However, "rates are expected to drop this year, which means getting a HELOC might be the smarter move."

What the experts say

Betting on AI energy needs

Utilities have been an unlikely stock market winner, said **David Uberti** in *The Wall Street Journal*. "The S&P 500's typically staid utility sector has advanced 18 percent over the past three months," widely outpacing the broader index (up 12 percent). One power product, *Vistra*, has surged 145 percent this year, making "Nvidia's much-celebrated 93 percent increase look pedestrian." But the two are closely related. The computing needed to produce artificial intelligence is expected to vastly increase the demand for electricity. That means "more plants, transmission lines, and other infrastructure—and more returns for the companies that build them." This has turned utilities, traditionally seen as "defensive stocks" because of their steady dividends, "into a surprising bet on growth."

Home sellers willing to settle for less

Nearly a quarter of home listings cut their prices in April, said **Pete Grieve** in *Money*, a sign that sellers might have gotten overzealous with their "unrealistically high asking prices." Home values continue to touch new record highs, but *Zillow* found an increase in listings discounted from the month before. It's unusual "at this time of year when the housing

market is often in overdrive." *Zillow's* chief economist, **Skylar Olsen**, says sellers may be going through "a feeling-out process," adjusting prices more frequently to keep pace with seesawing mortgage rates. Demand may also be cooling as more buyers wait to see if the Federal Reserve begins cutting interest rates later this summer. The number of active listings increased 6.4 percent in April compared with the previous month.

Savers have too much in bonds

Most ordinary investors have too much tied up in bonds, said **Charley Ellis** in the *Financial Times*. When assessing their portfolio "they look only at their formal bond investments." They're not considering "two important bond-equivalents: future Social Security benefits and the equity value in their homes," which both generally rise with inflation and are insulated from the stock market's gyrations. When there is a substantial cash expenditure on the near horizon—like a child's college tuition—bonds "make great sense." However, investors should know that returns on bonds are lower than those for equities in the longer term. The standby wisdom of a 60-40 portfolio is leaving seniors with "less than they would like to have when they get to retirement."

Charity of the week

Rehabilitation Through the Arts (rta-arts.org) was founded in New York's Sing Sing prison in 1996. Now serving hundreds of inmates across six New York state prisons, the nonprofit seeks to unlock inmates' creative potential and



abilities through the transformative power of art. RTA workshops—including dance, music, creative writing, visual arts, and theater—are led by professional artists who teach life skills and prepare inmates for the social and emotional challenges of re-entry. RTA is known for theater programs that involve inmates in everything from improvisation to Shakespeare, and dance performances that fill prisons with visitors. Participation in the program has been shown to dramatically reduce recidivism. Alumni of the program include **Lawrence Bartley**, host and executive producer of *The Marshall Project's Inside Story* video series.

Each charity we feature has earned a four-star overall rating from *Charity Navigator*, which rates not-for-profit organizations on the strength of their finances, their governance practices, and the transparency of their operations. Four stars is the group's highest rating.

NCAA: The end of the amateur sports charade

It's about time college athletes started getting paid, said the *Houston Chronicle* in an editorial. College sports haven't been the "paragon of amateur endeavor" for decades, and the NCAA is finally admitting it. The NCAA and its five most powerful conferences agreed last week to a proposed settlement of a class-action suit that pays \$2.8 billion to college athletes from past years, and lets each Division I school pay athletes about \$20 million a year in the future. Here in Texas, gargantuan stadiums and state-of-the-art gyms are the pride of the universities.



Programs like Texas A&M will likely soon pay players.

They were constructed for paying fans to watch the "ambitious, hardworking employees who are selling tickets and generating revenue for their university." That student athletes are employees has been clear for years; only the 118-year-old governing body of college sports was unwilling to say so. The NCAA is "sloughing off the cloak of hypocrisy" that has long enfolded college sports.

Yes, the NCAA gave us "decades of condescending greed," said Gregg Doyel in *The Indianapolis Star*. But now the NCAA—which has never "been interested in being fair"—is giving us more of the same. The settlement, which will be split between about 14,000 athletes, was negotiated with the so-called Power 5 conferences in secret, without including the other 27 smaller leagues. Now the NCAA is handing those 27 most vulnerable leagues 35 percent of the \$2.8 billion bill. For beloved but struggling programs at schools like Valparaiso and Indiana State, the math doesn't add up. For teams outside the biggest conferences, this is game over.

Who cares about fairness to programs? asked Kevin Blackstone in *The Washington Post*. What about fairness to athletes? The NCAA has built a billion-dollar "athletic-industrial complex on the backs of a labor pool" of young Black males, who make up 50 to 60 percent of the athletes on college football and basketball teams. While "their coaches, athletic directors, and conference commissioners were adding millions to their household incomes," those players got nothing beyond tuition, room, and board. "That \$2.8 billion can more accurately be called reparations."

And there are plenty of ways for the NCAA to make up the cash, said Adam Minter in *Bloomberg*. More than 92,000 paying fans attended a volleyball match between Nebraska and Omaha last summer. Getting more for media rights for sports like volleyball can "keep athletic departments afloat" while "enhancing the status of long-overlooked sports."

College sports will "never be the same," said Jason Gay in *The Wall Street Journal*, but they've been heading this way for years. "There will be casualties in nonrevenue sports, and likely women's sports, but let's not act like those parties hadn't already been trampled" by football and basketball. Some fans will decry the end of amateurism, but athletes are already getting money from name, image, and likeness deals, and those didn't lead to a fan exodus. College sports tried to hang on to the comical notion that it was "precious, singular," and not to be confused with "professional sports," but our eyes told us a different story: College sports "is a business, and always has been."

'Nonprofit' doesn't mean 'doing good'

Jonathan Ireland
American Affairs

Whoever came up with the term "nonprofit" was a marketing genius, said Jonathan Ireland. It leads to the assumption that an organization "is trustworthy and the people running it are driven by a charitable agenda." Please. There is a notorious organization in San Francisco called the Tenants and Owners Development Corp., or TODCO, supposedly devoted to "helping poor people afford housing." But in the past 20 years, it has "produced no additional units of affordable housing." In fact, it has spent millions lobbying *against* the construction of affordable units, shaking down actual builders of housing for "donations" to end its obstruction. Tenants at

the properties TODCO manages are plagued with vermin, while TODCO's executive pay quadrupled in just over a decade. Another San Francisco-based affordable-housing nonprofit was run by "a woman with a proven history of stealing from government agencies." Sure enough, she was caught again stealing from the government. One nonprofit in Seattle has an unlicensed accountant and a homeless treasurer living in a tent. An "anti-violence" nonprofit in Chicago employed an active gang leader and several felons. Let's call it like it is: Under the guise of the "nonprofit" label, taxpayers' "hard-earned dollars are being effectively stolen from them."

A riptide of economic ignorance

Catherine Rampell
The Washington Post

Americans can't possibly be this ignorant about the economy, can they? asked Catherine Rampell. According to a recent Harris-Guardian poll, most Americans (55 percent) think that the country is currently in a recession. The poll "also found that roughly half (49 percent) of Americans believe the unemployment rate is at a 50-year high," and that the stock market is down since the beginning of the year. On all three issues, the truth is almost completely the opposite. The economy isn't shrinking; "by virtually every benchmark, we're exceeding growth expectations" and outperforming most other advanced economies. Unemployment hasn't been

this low for this long since the Nixon administration. And the S&P 500 is up more than 10 percent this year. Why are the bad "vibes" still here? Commentators are quick to "blame the media for the public's economic illiteracy," and I agree that journalists "generally give more play to bad economic numbers than good ones." But if the media has a bad-news bias, it's because our audiences do, too. "People are more likely to click, watch, listen to, and share content that induces outrage"—a bias for negative news amplified by social media. The most useful thing you can do to help the general public grow more informed is to reward good news with your attention.

The damaged author who wrote *The Alienist*

Caleb Carr

1955-2024

Caleb Carr wrote about human darkness because he'd grown up steeped in it. The novelist and military historian was the son of Lucien Carr, a poet and journalist who was a catalyzing force in the 1950s Beat movement—but was also a violent drunk who'd done time for manslaughter and repeatedly beat his son, often knocking him down flights of stairs. That abusive past drove Carr to interrogate the origins of violence and cruelty through his fiction and nonfiction works, most notably *The Alienist*, a best-selling 1994 historical thriller about a forensic psychiatrist investigating the murders of young male prostitutes in 19th-century New York. Other books include the sequel *The Angel of Darkness* (1997) and *Surrender New York* (2016), a crime novel about the deaths of four teens. "I write out of outrage," he said in 1994. "I'm afraid of what happens the day I wake up and find I'm no longer angry about anything."

Carr grew up in downtown Manhattan in "bohemian chaos," said *The New York Times*. A hangout for Beats like Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac, the household was "the scene of drunken revelries." Carr attended a Quaker school "where his interest in military history



made him an outlier and a misfit." After graduating from New York University, he published a coming-of-age novel, *Casing the Promised Land*, in 1980. He then "bounced through an eclectic period," said *The Washington Post*, playing guitar in a punk band, writing for a military-history journal, screenwriting, and publishing a biography of a 19th-century American mercenary that drew "modest acclaim." Fame arrived when he was nearly 40 with the release of *The Alienist*, which proved "an immediate best-seller."

A self-described misanthrope, Carr lived alone "for much of his adult life," said the Associated Press. He spent his later years isolated in a huge stone house on a 1,400-acre property in upstate New York, while he taught military history at nearby Bard College. His final book, *My Beloved Monster*, was a tribute to Masha, a pet cat he called his soulmate, who died in 2022. Completed as he battled metastasizing cancer, the memoir became "a kind of dual elegy." Pets "fulfill something that was damaged in all of us when we were very young and can't be fixed by people," he said. "No woman ever did for me what [Masha] did, which sounds crazy even to me. But it's really true."

The songwriter who made the medicine go down

In writing songs, Richard M. Sherman focused on the three S's: "simple, singable, and sincere." Those tenets, taught to him and his older brother

Richard M. Sherman

(1928-2024)

Robert by their songwriter father, gave rise to a catalog of

classics. In a career spent mostly at Walt Disney studios, the Sherman brothers wrote hundreds of songs for films such as *Mary Poppins*, *The Aristocats*, and *The Jungle Book*, as well as songs used at Disney theme parks. Each song both moved the plot along and stood on its own. In "A Spoon Full of Sugar," for instance, "we were saying that a happy attitude makes a difficult job easier, but we said it with a metaphor," Sherman said. "That's what Walt loved about the way we wrote."

Born into a New York City showbiz family, Sherman was by raised an actress mother and a father who worked in Tin Pan Alley, said *Variety*. Inspired by their dad, the brothers started writing "straightforward, unfussy lyrics with an upbeat attitude" right after college, and within a decade had scored top-10 hits—including Johnny Burnette's "You're 16, You're Beautiful (and You're Mine)"—that drew Disney's attention. Sherman knew that many of their songs, like "It's a Small World," or "The Wonderful Thing About Tigger," were earworms. "People either want to kiss us," he said, "or kill us."

Outside of songwriting, the brothers weren't close and "never saw each other socially," said *The New York Times*. Robert died in 2012, leaving Richard to accept late-in-life honors alone. These included being portrayed in 2013's *Saving Mr. Banks* and getting a cameo in the 2023 Disney documentary *Once Upon a Studio*. Robert "was an introspective individual, and I'm very effervescent and jump up all over the place," Sherman said. "Between the two of us, we had a wonderfully different look at things."

The *Super Size Me* director who fell from grace

Morgan Spurlock

1970-2024

Documentary filmmaker Morgan Spurlock had a hunger for the spotlight. He rose to fame in his 30s with 2004's *Super Size Me*, chronicling a full month in which he ate nothing but McDonald's and said yes whenever asked if he wanted to "supersize" the meal. By the end of the 30 days, he was puffy, depressed, and 25 pounds heavier, with a low sex drive and a damaged liver. The film, which made \$22 million and earned an Oscar nomination, sparked a backlash to the fast-food industry. Yet Spurlock's acclaim proved fleeting: Researchers couldn't replicate his health results. His career disintegrated in 2017, when he revealed he'd been drinking heavily during the filming—which likely contributed to his poor health—and admitted he'd once committed rape. But he said he had to confess. "There was a moment of realization, as somebody who is a truth teller, of recognizing that I could do better in my own life," said Spurlock, who died of cancer at 53.

Born in West Virginia, where his father ran an auto shop, Spurlock studied film at New York University. He "first gained notice as a playwright," winning an award at the 1999 New York



International Fringe Festival, said *The Washington Post*. The following year he launched *I Bet You Will*, an online show that dared guests to do disgusting things for money. The idea for *Super Size Me* came soon after, when he learned that McDonald's was defending itself against a lawsuit by insisting that its food was nutritious. The

documentary was "an early entry into the genre of gonzo participatory filmmaking," said *The New York Times*, and Spurlock continued in that style for the rest of his career, heavily influenced by filmmaker Michael Moore and by reality TV.

"A smart, gregarious, and ebullient figure," he was willing to hurl himself into absurd or dangerous situations for his work, said *The Telegraph* (U.K.). In the TV show *30 Days*, he spent a month in a Virginia prison; in the 2016 documentary *Rats*, he followed rat killers into areas teeming with vermin. But he never repeated his early success—his 2008 film *Where in the World Is Osama Bin Laden* was lambasted for trivializing terrorism—and he knew he'd forever be associated with *Super Size Me*. "I'll be that guy till I die," he said in 2012.

The 269-269 scenario

An Electoral College tie in November would likely put Donald Trump in the White House, said Joshua Zeitz in Politico. In 1824, a similar outcome changed American politics forever.

SIX MONTHS OUT from the presidential election, voters are caught up in what-ifs. What if Joe Biden proves the pollsters wrong and clinches a second term? What if Donald Trump retakes the White House, squashes his criminal charges with the power of the chief executive, and rewrites the strictures of American government in the image of MAGA?

But there's one what-if Americans aren't paying enough attention to: What if they tie?

It sounds outlandish. It was literally a plot point in HBO's political satire, *Veep*. It hasn't happened for 200 years, not since the House clawed the presidency from Andrew Jackson, who won the popular vote but didn't manage to win over the Electoral College, and elected his opponent, John Quincy Adams—prompting a massive populist backlash that remade American politics.

And yet it's an entirely plausible outcome once again, thanks to recent efforts that could lead to a scenario in which neither candidate makes it to that golden number of 270. If that comes to pass, the fallout could be just as existential as it was in 1824.

In Nebraska, Republicans are attempting to change the way the state awards its electoral votes; it's one of only two states, along with Maine, that allocates electors by congressional district—meaning both candidates can pick up electoral notches in their belts. The liberal stronghold around Omaha reliably delivers one vote to Democratic candidates, but that would change if Republicans get their way; all of the bright-red state's electors would go to Trump, tipping the already delicate Electoral College balance ever so slightly in his favor.

Adding to the equation, Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s campaign threatens to pull just enough votes to tip states like New Hampshire, Nevada, and Michigan into Trump's column. A 269-269 tie is not impossible to imagine, and for a party that has lost the popular vote in seven of the past eight presidential elections, it may be the best avenue to victory, if the already uneven



An 1824 cartoon of Jackson surrounded by dogs stealing his victory

scales in the Electoral College don't deliver a sufficient edge.

In the case of a tie, which hasn't happened in exactly 200 years, the House decides the election, per the 12th Amendment, with each state delegation allotted one vote. Republicans currently control 26 House delegations. Democrats control 22, and two others are tied.

We could be on the road to an unthinkable scenario: Democrats win the popular vote for the presidency and House, but Republicans return Donald Trump to the White House through the 12th Amendment mechanism.

If history is a guide, it would have profound implications for the future of American democracy. To understand why, we need to wind the clock back, to the hotly contested presidential election of 1824.

ON FEB. 9, 1825, members of the House of Representatives met in an extraordinary session to elect the sixth president of the United States. Washington, then still in its infancy—barely a city, with large tracks of muddy swamp-land dotted with half-finished, marble buildings—was blustery with snow.

By the terms of the 12th Amendment, since no presidential contender had attained a majority of the Electoral College in the

prior year's election, the choice would fall to the House.

In 1824, the four leading candidates for president were all Democratic Republicans—the party descended from Thomas Jefferson's political organization: Adams, the secretary of state; Jackson, a former senator for Tennessee; Treasury Secretary William Crawford of Georgia; and House Speaker Henry Clay of Kentucky. The opposition Federalist Party had long been in steep decline and scarcely existed outside a small number of pockets on the East Coast. The question wasn't whether a Republican would win. Rather, which Republican.

In the preceding elections that had delivered the White House to James Monroe and, before him, James Madison, the Republican

congressional delegation had met in a joint House-Senate caucus to nominate the party's official candidate. That process fell apart in 1824, as all four contenders enjoyed sufficient regional support to make a nominating process all but impossible. Instead, they fought it out with the voters. And that was itself an innovation.

As recently as 1816, during the last contested presidential election, the vast majority of states had still empowered their legislatures to elect presidential electors. But in 1824, 18 out of 24 states empowered voters to make that choice directly. In effect, a republican system that once favored elite control over political affairs was slowly but surely evolving into a mass-participation democracy.

The reasons for this shift were complicated. In large part, colonial-era patterns of deference and elite control over politics and the economy had been unspooling for decades, owing to the democratic forces the American Revolution had unleashed. In addition, new Western states seeking to attract settlers found that offering broader white male suffrage and political participation was a powerful recruitment tool; in turn, older Eastern states felt obliged to democratize their governments to retain population.

The chief beneficiary of this shift was

Jackson, whose checkered relationships with elite politicians in Washington belied his broad popularity with the white male electorate. While Adams, Crawford, and Clay played an insider's game—glad-handing and horse-trading with members of Congress, whom they expected might end up selecting the next president—Jackson's supporters launched broadsides in the growing regional press and urged voters to support the only candidate who understood “honest yeomanry” and embodied the “virtue,” or political integrity, required to save the capital from corruption.

In what was essentially the first presidential election where we can glean the popular vote, Jackson won 42.5 percent to Adams' 31.5 percent. Clay and Crawford ran far behind, each garnering 13 percent. No one enjoyed an Electoral College majority, though Jackson led Adams, 99 votes to 84.

Unlike the presidential election of 1800—the only other time then or since in which the election fell to the House—the 1824 contest was never particularly close. It had taken Thomas Jefferson 36 ballots to beat Aaron Burr. It took Adams only one. After sitting down for three hours with Clay, the two men agreed to forge a coalition. Clay delivered three key delegations (Kentucky, Missouri, and Ohio) to his former rival, and with those, the presidency. He later accepted the position of secretary of state in the Adams administration, seen as a stepping stone to the presidency.

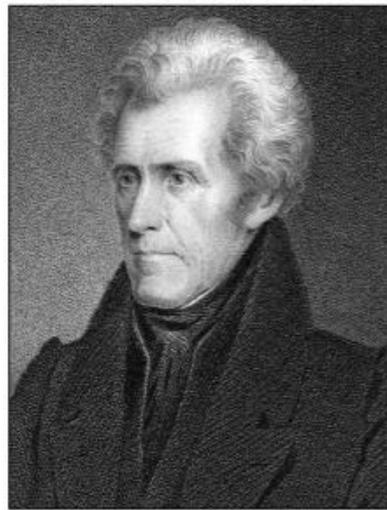
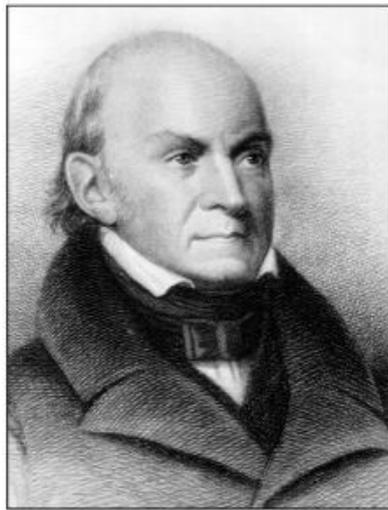
Whether Clay and Adams explicitly struck a “corrupt bargain” has long been a matter of intense speculation. But the truth hardly mattered. Perception was everything. “The Judas of the West has closed the contract and will receive the 30 pieces of silver,” Jackson fumed. “His end will be the same.”

ADAMS WAS THE last person to win under the old rules. Though he was, like Clay, an ardent modernizer who supported government investments in science, infrastructure, and education, he governed in an age that straddled the Early Republic and the Age of Jackson. His predecessor, outgoing President James Monroe, had been on the boat with George Washington as they crossed the Delaware River to Trenton on Christmas Eve in 1776. He still wore knee breeches, shoe buckles, and a powdered wig. He echoed earlier presidents in bemoaning the influence of “factions” and parties, and heralded his administration as an Era of Good Feelings in which men of upbringing and stature governed by consensus, in harmony.

But that world—one in which a handful of elite actors arrogated most political power to themselves, in the belief that only the elite could act in a disinterested way—was gone. A new world rooted in mass democracy was on the rise, and the election of 1824 did much to accelerate it.

Almost from the moment he took office, Adams had a target on his back. Under the leadership of rising political talents like New York's Martin Van Buren, Jackson's supporters created the first real presidential campaign: mobilizing newspaper editors; using patronage to win the support of state legislators, who in turn “nominated” the former general for president; creating state and local organizations that would prove critical in turning out the vote in 1828.

Both Adams, whose supporters would eventually coalesce under the National Republican banner, and Jackson, whose partisans called themselves Democratic Republicans, embraced new methods of communication, including partisan newspapers, handbills, and even songs (Jackson's official campaign ballad was “The Hunters of Kentucky”). It ended up being the filthiest presidential campaign to date. The Adams press enthusiastically pressed rumors (probably true) that Jackson's wife had still been married to another man when he took up house with her. Jackson men,



Adams' 1824 victory set the stage for Jackson (r.) in 1828.

in turn, cast the incumbent president as an effete intellectual, unequal to governing a country that was fast extending its frontier. They drew the choice as one “Between J.Q. Adams, who can write / And Andy Jackson, who can fight.”

Ultimately, Jackson's popular appeal eclipsed that of Adams, whom many people regarded as cold and patrician. By 1828, every state except Delaware and South Carolina selected electors by popular vote. In that new electoral regime, Old Hickory swept the Electoral College by 178 votes to 83. It was the birth of the antebellum party system, one in which the object of a

campaign was not so much to convince the small sliver of undecided voters as to drive turnout among the party faithful.

The steady expansion of the franchise in the first decades of the 19th century, and the new electoral style that Jackson ushered in, would soon inspire new mechanisms to stir popular passions, including party clubs, rallies, campaign songs, pole raisings (a throwback to England's Maypole rituals), and torchlight processions meant to inspire awe and fervor among ordinary voters. Democrats were first to adopt these practices, but the Whig campaign of 1840, in which young men flocked to the banner of the war hero and everyman William Henry Harrison, set a new standard for democratic electioneering.

In effect, Adams and his supporters won the election of 1824, but the backlash to their victory opened the floodgates to a wave of democratic participation.

FAST FORWARD 200 years, and the United States is arguably at a precipice.

On two occasions over the past 25 years, Republicans have lost the popular vote, only to win in the Electoral College, where small-population states enjoy a broad electoral advantage—an advantage they similarly enjoy in the Senate, where the 39 million residents of California have the same representation as the 584,000 residents of Wyoming.

Now, Republicans, who could well lose the popular vote again, having won it only once in the past 32-plus years, may try to engineer a Trump win in the House.

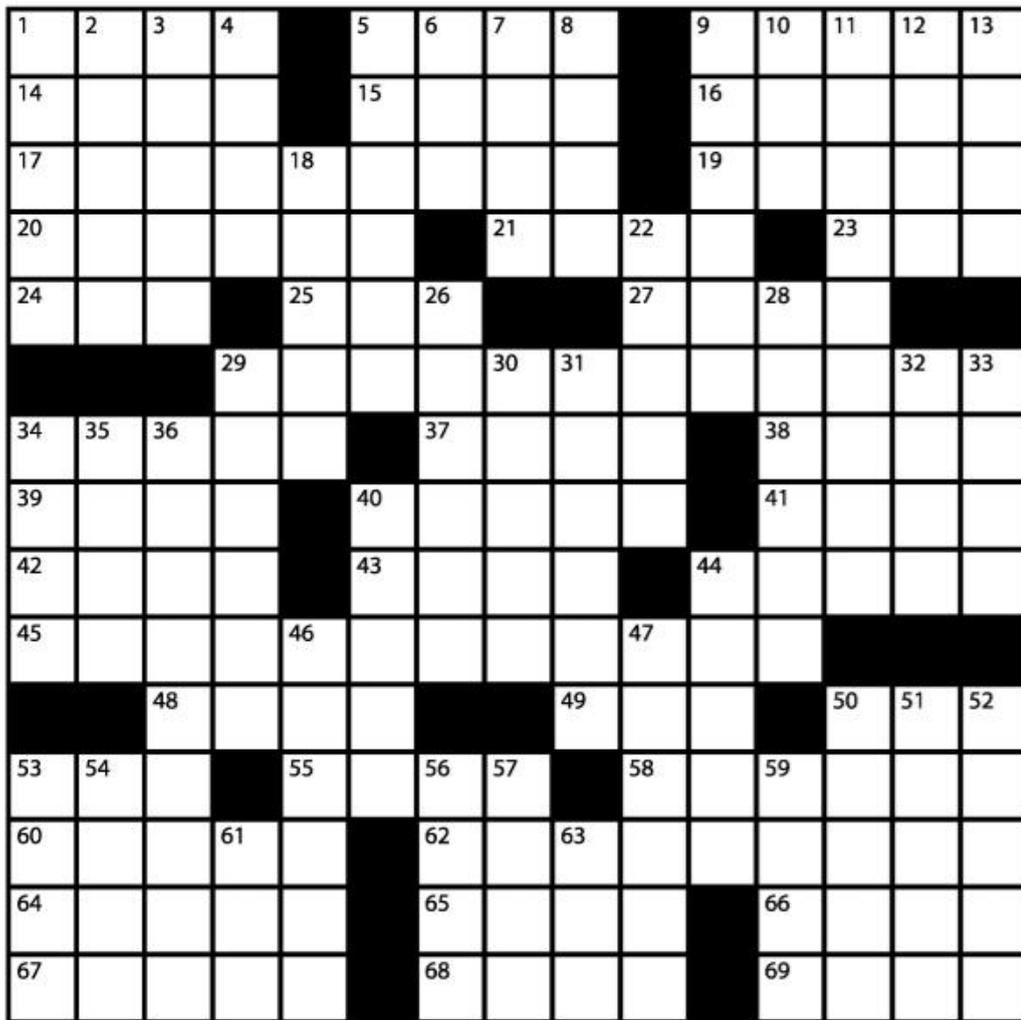
In short, by playing the inside game, and using a vote in the House to decide the outcome, Republicans could perpetuate their power. A democratic system that is no longer responsive to the will of the majority could very well break. But it could also create unintended consequences.

As in 1824, if the election is thrown to the House, 2024 could turn out to be a watershed year for American democracy. Long-stalled political reforms—from introducing Supreme Court term limits to abolishing the Electoral College—could finally sail through atop a wave of populist democratic outrage.

In 1824, Adams won the battle but lost the war. In 2024, Trump could find himself in a similar situation.

This article was originally published in Politico. Used with permission.

Crossword No. 747: Tourists Welcome...ish by Matt Gaffney



ACROSS

- 1 Trail mix
- 5 It may turn or recede
- 9 It may be upright or grand
- 14 Neck of the woods
- 15 Field for P. Krugman
- 16 Choose not to forbid
- 17 A Japanese town recently put up black mesh fencing beside a convenience store to block its perfect view of this; overwhelming numbers of tourists had been stopping there to take pictures
- 19 Give a hard time to on the playground
- 20 Make public, as records
- 21 Skunk's giveaway
- 23 Affable Affleck
- 24 Stubbable body part
- 25 Wad of gum on the sidewalk, e.g.
- 27 Guest bed, in a pinch
- 29 A recent piece in this American city's largest paper lamented the 334 percent increase over the past 30 years in cruise ship traffic
- 34 Make sense, as an excuse
- 37 Genre for Prince
- 38 Thing
- 39 Garlands worn in Manila and Maui
- 40 Press
- 41 He guest-hosted for Carson
- 42 "___ that right?"
- 43 Encouraging words
- 44 Alternatives to Altoids

- 45 Barcelona has seen a huge spike in this kind of worker; a coffee shop owner there recently lamented, "They pay for a coffee and occupy a table for eight hours"
- 48 Unsigned, briefly
- 49 Pen part
- 50 Chance at an Oscar or Emmy, for short
- 53 Animation frame
- 55 Catch on camera
- 58 Sordid behavior
- 60 Stress, from the Italian
- 62 Feeling overtouristed, this European city passed a law in April that bans construction of a new hotel unless another one closes first
- 64 Group of experts
- 65 Company famed for its ads
- 66 Suffix with Frigid or billion
- 67 Beats by 1 point, say
- 68 Ruckus
- 69 Fifth Avenue store

DOWN

- 1 Entire range
- 2 University of Maine town
- 3 Find another job for
- 4 Small window in a door
- 5 Non-stick material
- 6 Hosp. area
- 7 Studio with bowing and kicking
- 8 Oklahoma city
- 9 Keep watch over
- 10 Ending for project or infant
- 11 Rock often used for carvings
- 12 Frontmost part of an airplane
- 13 Actor Wilson or Teague
- 18 Prepare to advance on a pop fly
- 22 Naomi at the net
- 26 Happened to
- 28 Couldn't say "Mission accomplished"
- 29 Bieber about to become a father
- 30 "Funeral Blues" poet W.H. ___
- 31 Lack of dissent
- 32 ___ Brockman (*The Simpsons* newscaster)
- 33 Famous ___ cookies
- 34 "Put ___ on it!" ("Silence!")
- 35 From Kolkata or Karachi, say
- 36 Nitwit
- 40 Disney seafarer
- 44 High car carrier
- 46 Sums
- 47 Gardener's tool
- 50 Ferreira or Comaneci
- 51 TV show named for a U.S. region
- 52 Viral posts may feature them
- 53 What a hero may wear (or not)
- 54 "My heavens!"
- 56 Chef's supply
- 57 Give off
- 59 The ___ Tour (Taylor Swift will be on it for another six months)
- 61 Casual shirt
- 63 Glide using gravity

The Week Contest

This week's question: A luxury airline catering to dogs has taken its inaugural flight, with owners paying \$6,000 each to have their pooches ferried from New York to Los Angeles by BARK Air. In seven or fewer words, come up with a job listing for a flight attendant at this high-class canine carrier.

Last week's contest: An attempt to break the world record for the largest gathering of people with the same name failed when only 706 Kyles congregated in Kyle, Texas—far short of the 2,325 Ivans who got together in Bosnia in 2017. In seven or fewer words, come up with a caption for a mass selfie of disappointed Kyles.

THE WINNER: Next time, go the extra Kyle
Krista Primrose, Avon, Ind.

SECOND PLACE: We joined the Kyle sigh club
John Parry, Eldersburg, Md.

THIRD PLACE: Kyle, though your heart is breaking
Jesse Rifkin, Arlington, Va.

For runners-up and complete contest rules, please go to theweek.com/contest.

How to enter: Submissions should be emailed to contest@theweek.com. Please include your name, address, and daytime telephone number for verification; this week, type "Pet flights"

in the subject line. Entries are due by noon, Eastern Time, June 4. Winners will appear on the Puzzle Page next issue and at theweek.com/puzzles on Friday, June 7. In the case of identical or similar entries, the first one received gets credit.



◀ **The winner gets a one-year subscription to *The Week*.**

Sudoku

Fill in all the boxes so that each row, column, and outlined square includes all the numbers from 1 through 9.

Difficulty: *hard*

				1				
	7							6
2		9				4		7
	1		6		4		5	
		6		5		2		
				3				
			7		3			
4		7				8		3
	5			9			4	

Find the solutions to all *The Week's* puzzles online: www.theweek.com/puzzle.

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MADDY TURNED HATE

Maddy Park
Founder,
@CafeMaddyCab

INTO HOPE

AND STARTED A MOVEMENT

In 2021, the rise of violence against the Asian community made even the simple act of taking public transportation unsafe. So, Maddy started a fund to pay for cab rides for those in the Asian community that needed it most, including women, the elderly, and the LGBTQ+ community. With over \$100,000 raised in just two days, she started a movement based on love that lives on today.



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- 99% cotton canvas/ 1% spandex - Double vented
- Peter Christian hares lining - 2 patch & 2 inside pockets
- 2 button front - 3 button working cuff

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Long not available in 36"

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