



Rural Communities Face Primary Care Physician Shortage

While rural areas do better at training and retaining a primary care workforce, the growing demand for healthcare still outpaces the supply of doctors.

By LIZ CAREY, The Daily Yonder

A new study from the American Academy of Family Physicians' Robert Graham Center (AAFP), co-funded by the Milbank Memorial Fund and The Physicians Foundation, has found that communities across the country are struggling to meet the demand for primary care physicians, as well as to retain those physicians in their communities. While it's difficult all over, Dr. Yalda Jabbarpour, lead researcher on the study, said, it is more difficult for rural communities.

"Ten years ago, we knew we had a problem with primary care physician density," Jabbarpour said in an interview with the Daily Yonder. "Today, even though people are older, and therefore sicker, and the population is growing and the demands are higher, we actually have less physicians to fill that need."

Rural communities tend to depend more on primary care clinicians, Jabbarpour said, especially family physicians.

In 2021, 37% of all physicians in training (residents) began training in primary care, yet only 15% of all physicians were practicing primary care three to five years after residency, the study found.

More than half of those residents with the potential to enter primary care subspecialized or became hospitalists instead, research showed. And only 15% primary care residents spent a majority of their time training in outpatient settings where a majority of the US population receives their care and fewer than 5% of primary care residents spent time training in rural and other underserved communities, the researchers found.

The AAFP study also found that there is a slightly higher density of primary care providers in rural and underserved areas. Looking at social drivers of health – like housing, transportation, income and education – and how they affect residents' health status, the study found that people in areas that have more social disadvantages (less adequate housing, barriers to transportation, and lower income, for instance) had higher rates of chronic disease and worse health outcomes.

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Medicare Advantage reimbursement delays put a financial strain on rural hospitals, with 50% in the red.

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A strategy for building a rural-urban working-class coalition is needed to spark a progressive renaissance.

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AN EDITORIAL

Gaza Gang: Don't Help Trump

Supporters of Palestine in Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza have gotten in the news with their contentious protests on college campuses, but they should temper their anger about President Joe Biden's support for Israel, when the alternative is Donald Trump, who undoubtedly would make things much worse.

Pro-Palestinian protesters have been calling Biden "Genocide Joe" for his role in arming the Israel Defense Forces, which reportedly have killed more than 34,000 Gazans since Oct. 7, when Israel declared war in retaliation for the surprise attack by Hamas fighters who killed 1,143 people in southern Israel, including 695 Israeli civilians (36 children and 270 fans at a music festival), 71 foreign nationals and 376 members of Israeli security forces, and left 3,400 wounded. Sexual assaults of Israeli women also were reported. Hamas took 252 hostages from Israel (including 30 children) across the border into Gaza.

Arguably, Hamas would have caused more civilian casualties if they had an air force, but they got the disproportionate response they expected from Israel. Hamas, supported by Iran, continues to fire missiles into Israel, and retaliation after the Hamas attack succeeded in sidelining the normalization of relations between Arab nations and Israel, which had started under the Trump administration when the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain signed the Abraham Accounts, bilateral agreements with Israel, in September 2020. Sudan joined in October 2020 and Morocco joined in December 2020.

Biden's Secretary of State Antony Blinken was working on normalizing relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel, but in June 2023, Blinken warned Israel that rising tensions with the Palestinians, including settlement of Israelis in the West Bank, threatened the expansion of normalization agreements with Arab nations. Speaking alongside Blinken earlier in June 2023, the Saudi Foreign Minister had stated that "without finding a pathway to peace for the Palestinian people ... any normalization will have limited benefits."

After Oct. 7, the Saudi demand for a pathway to a Palestinian state, as a condition for normal relations with Israel, threatens to put the United States on a collision course with Netanyahu, who has said he opposes any postwar plan that includes a Palestinian state, Isaac Stanley-Becker noted in the *Washington Post* Feb. 10.

The Abraham Accords represented "one of the reasons" for the Oct. 7 attack, which "obstructed and complicated all strategies and agreements ... that deny the freedom and dignity of the Palestinian people," said Abbas Zaki, a member of the Central Committee of Fatah, the political faction that controls the Palestinian Authority. The attack, he added in an interview, "put the Palestinian issue back on the international agenda," Zaki told the *Post*.

But Biden has been urging Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who leads a right-wing coalition, to moderate attacks against purported Hamas targets in Gaza and focus on negotiating with Hamas to free the hostages Hamas is still holding.

Trump is a longtime ally of Netanyahu, and in March he called on Israel to "finish up" the war in Gaza, mainly because it was bad PR.

In an interview with *Time* magazine in April, Trump said he was "not sure a two-state solution anymore is going to work." He also said he wouldn't hesitate to use the National Guard against pro-Palestinian protesters, while also leaving open the possibility of using the broader US military against them and deporting Muslims when possible.

Seeking to take advantage of domestic unrest, Trump recently said the neo-Nazi violence in Charlottesville, Va., in 2017 was "like

a peanut compared to the riots and the anti-Israel protests that are happening all over our country," Dana Milbank wrote in the *Washington Post*. In recent months, Trump said Israel should be allowed to "finish the job" in Gaza and boasted about cutting off aid to Palestinians. And he has vowed, if elected, to reimpose his travel ban on predominantly Muslim countries and "expand it even further."

So it's entirely consistent that, in Wisconsin on May 1, Trump said he's "restoring the travel ban, suspending refugee admissions and keeping terrorists the hell out of our country." He went on: "We've seen what happened when Europe opened their doors to jihad. Look at Paris, look at London. They're no longer recognizable."

Trump, on Sean Hannity's show, called the demonstrators at Columbia "paid agitators" and "brainwashed." At his Wisconsin rally, he condemned the "raging lunatics and Hamas sympathizers" at Columbia and other colleges. He called for authorities to "vanquish the radicals," many of whom "come from foreign countries," Milbank noted.

This is the same guy who called thousands of National Guard troops to Washington and federal police to Oregon in 2020 to combat racial-justice demonstrators after the George Floyd killing; who held a Bible-wielding photo op in Lafayette Square after authorities cleared a peaceful demonstration with tear gas; who, according to his own former defense secretary, suggested to military leaders that they shoot demonstrators; who calls the free press the "enemy of the American people"; who defended the "very fine people" among the Nazis in Charlottesville; and who called those convicted of attacking the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, "hostages," Milbank noted.

The pro-Palestinian protesters' disdain for Biden is reminiscent of the antipathy of protesters against the Vietnam war to Hubert Humphrey, who was to be nominated at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in 1968. Humphrey was a liberal, but as Lyndon Johnson's vice president he was reviled by antiwar leftists — who were unaware that Johnson's efforts to end the war were sabotaged by Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger. The chaotic protests outside the convention hall, magnified by the notorious Chicago police and televised nationwide, undermined the Democratic nominee and gave Nixon a head start going into the general election.

In late October 1968, as Johnson was nearing a deal to end the war, Nixon ordered H.R. Haldeman, his chief of staff, to find ways to sabotage Johnson's peace talks, so a frustrated American electorate would turn to the Republicans as their only hope to end the war. Anna Chennault, a Republican fundraiser, became Nixon's back channel to the South Vietnamese government, and was heard telling the South Vietnamese ambassador to Washington to "hold on ... We are gonna win." — but Johnson hesitated to expose it because he had no proof Nixon had personally directed her actions.

Nixon narrowly won the presidency, and the Vietnam war went on four more years, costing 24,000 more American lives, for a total of 58,220 US military fatalities, 500,000 more Vietnamese lives (Vietnam's estimate), and hundreds of thousands in Cambodia and Laos. The Paris Peace Talks finally called the end of the war in January 1973, along pretty much the same lines as the Johnson administration could have gotten in October 1968.

Trump operatives will surely be encouraging, and perhaps ensuring, a replay of chaos in Chicago in August to undermine Biden.

Don't be fooled. Biden will try to do what's best for Israel and Palestinian statehood. Trump will do what's best for himself, and send in the National Guard to clear out protesters, while his son-in-law is looking forward to developing beachfront property on the Gaza Strip as soon as Netanyahu can clear out the Gazans. — JMC

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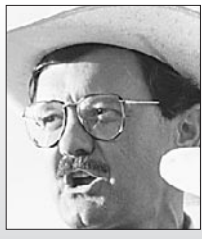
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JIM HIGHTOWER



Losing in politics is sometimes a prelude to winning, calling not for despair, but a doubling down on principle and organizing.

Hey, Democrats: Find the Party's Future in Its Populist Past

A farmer friend of mine once bemoaned the fact that the Democrat we'd both supported for president, Bill Clinton, was hugging up Wall Street and stuffing family farmers. "I don't mind losing when we lose," my friend said, "but I hate losing when we win."

Agreed. Yet, losing in politics is sometimes a prelude to winning, calling not for despair, but a doubling down on principle and organizing. Take the revolutionary presidential platform put forth by the upstart, unabashedly progressive People's Party in 1892. It was stunning in its little-d democratic boldness, directly challenging corporate power. The populists became the first to support an eight-hour day and minimum wage for labor, women's suffrage, graduated income taxes, government farm loans to bypass bank monopolies, veterans' pensions, direct lawmaking by citizen initiatives, etc.

Wall Street and the two-party duopoly soon conspired to crush the People's Party. But they could not stop its ideas, which grew in popular support and were largely enacted by state and national governments. This democratic reformation occurred because (1) the populists were unabashedly bold, (2) their ideas were solid, benefitting the common good, and (3) their political heirs were organized and persistent.

That same rebellious spirit remains at the heart and soul of today's people's politics. For example, while 2011's Occupy Wall Street uprising was autocratically crushed, resurgent labor progressives are now carrying its ideals forward — and winning! Likewise, America's scrappy democratic soul is being expressed every day by grassroots groups of rural poor people battling corporate polluters, child care workers struggling for decent pay, local people standing up to Silicon Valley arrogance and Wall Street greed, etc.

Americans are on the move against plutocratic and autocratic rule. They need a party to move with them.

What Should Politics Do? Ask Woody Guthrie

Woody Guthrie's prescription for inequality in America was straightforward: "Rich folks got your money with politics. You can get it back with politics."

For Guthrie, "politics" meant more than voting, since both parties routinely cough-up candidates who meekly accept the business-as-usual system of letting bosses and bankers control America's wealth and power. It's useless, he said, to expect change to come from a "choice" between Tweedledumb and Tweedledumber. Instead, common folks must organize into a progressive movement with their own bold change agenda, become their own candidates and create a politics worth voting for.

Pie in the sky? No! Periodic eruptions of progressive grassroots insurgencies have literally defined America, beginning with that big one in 1776. Indeed, we could take a lesson today from another transformative moment of democratic populism that surged more than a century ago, culminating in "The Omaha Platform of 1892." This was in the depths of the Gilded Age,

a sordid period much like ours, characterized by both ostentatious greed and widespread poverty, domination by monopolies, rising xenophobia, institutional racism — and government that ranged from aloof to insane.

But lo — from that darkness, a new People's Party arose, created by the populist movement of farm and factory mad-as-helliers. They streamed into Omaha on July 4 to hammer out the most progressive platform in US history, specifically rejecting corporate supremacy and demanding direct democracy.

That platform reshaped America's political agenda, making the sweeping reforms of the Progressive Era and New Deal possible. As one senator said of the Omaha rebellion, it was the start of robber baron wealth flowing "to all the people, from whom it was originally taken." And that's what Woody Guthrie meant by "politics."

The Big Apple's Mayor Takes a Big Bite Out of Democracy

And now: A special report from the Department of Really Bad Ideas. And this one is a doozie.

It comes from Hizzoner Eric Adams, the present mayor of New York City. Like mayors everywhere, Adams is routinely expected to respond to city council members, state reps, members of Congress and other elected officials who ask for help on city issues and problems affecting the people they represent. After all, that's how it's supposed to work — local folks have an issue needing city attention, so they go to officials in their local community who can carry this issue to the top level. Most of these matters are resolved by — hello — relevant officials simply having a phone call, a quick meeting or even an email exchange.

But no — the Big Apple's mayor has decreed that elected officials needing to discuss concerns of their constituents may NOT speak directly to him. Nor may they simply speak with his staff, meet with or engage with agency heads, or other mayoral personnel who could help the people. Rather, Adams has decreed that supplicants wanting to approach the city's public servants must submit a seven-page, online "engagement request." The mayor's intergovernmental office will review each one and then decide whether to grant or deny any official engagement.

An Adams gatekeeper hailed this bureaucratic intake process as a "new and exciting tool" to "improve operational efficiency and streamline requests." Golly — even George Orwell couldn't have conjured up a statement as soul-sucking as that!

Streamlined efficiency is the ultimate virtue for automatons and authoritarian regimes — NOT for public officials in a democratic society. Democracy is necessarily slower-paced, deliberative and inclusive. And it does not require — or accept — filling out a seven-page form to "engage" with your mayor.

The True Story About Coca-Cola's Plastic Fairy Tale

Years ago, Coca-Cola excitedly debuted a new formula for its soda, dubbing it "New Coke." Consumers hated it, and sales plummeted — a marketing fiasco.

But here comes Coke again, pushing an even worse product: "a better plastic bottle," trumpeting it as "100% recycled." Coke really needs an environmental PR goose-up, because today's consumers know and care a lot about the massive plastic contamination of our planet — and Coke has been ranked as the globe's number one plastic polluter for six years in a row!

Problem is, the corporation's recycling hype is a fraud, for plastic is a fossil fuel polymer that essentially is forever. Even though most of us dutifully put throw-away containers in recycling bins, the industry's dirty secret is that 95% of plastics can't be recycled, so they're simply burned, dumped in landfills or tossed "away." In a February report, The Center for Climate Integrity re-

veals that the plastics-industrial-complex has been like Big Tobacco and Big Oil — intentionally fabricating, promoting and profiting from a mass-market scam for decades. As the Climate Center commented, "The only thing the plastics industry has actually recycled is their lies over and over again."

But, taking another lesson from tobacco and oil, Big Plastic figures that if one lie stops working, tell a bigger one. So, Coca-Cola is presently gushing about "better" plastic bottles, while plastic manufacturers are so desperate to keep peddling environmental contamination that their new media blitz frantically insists, "Recycling is Real!" Do they think we have suck-

erwrappers around our heads?

Of course, their "new" claims are nothing but re-fabricated prevarications. Meanwhile, the industry is planning to dump 300% more plastic on us. Hello, let's get real — the only way to stop planet-choking plastic contamination is to stop making the stuff.

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UN Plastic Conference Bows to Lobby

By FRANK LINGO

OMG, not another essay on plastic poisoning the planet!

Afraid so. Back in March 2022, 175 countries including the United States, signed an agreement at the United Nations Environment Assembly in Nairobi to end plastic pollution and forge an international legally binding agreement by 2024.

Guess what, they didn't do either one. The United Nations just ended its latest conference on the issue in Ottawa, Canada and an April 30, 2024 headline in *The Guardian* says it all: "Developed countries accused of bowing to lobbyists at plastic pollution talks."

The US did not support a conference proposal to cut plastic production. In fact, we are on track to build 42 new plastic manufacturing plants, 24 of them in Texas alone. Would that have any connection to Texas being a huge producer of petroleum, which plastic is made from?

Let's do a quick review of the reasons to stop producing plastic. There is the disgusting Great Pacific Garbage Patch (primarily plastic), that is twice the size of Texas and causes the death of many fish and aquatic mammals, such as whales and dolphins. There is the degradation of plastic into micro-particles which have insidiously spread into the bloodstream of every animal on Earth, including humans. There is the extraction and production of oil which produces poisonous pollution and is a cause of the climate crisis. And there is the extreme fraudulence of plastic recycling. Of the 7 billion tons of plastic that humans have produced so far, under 10% has been recycled, according to the UN.

The petrochemical companies knew all along that plastic recycling wouldn't work. A February 2024 article on Com-

monDreams.org detailed a report by the Center for Climate Integrity entitled "The Fraud of Plastic Recycling: How Big Oil and the Plastic Industry Deceived the Public for Decades and Caused the Plastic Waste Crisis."

Still, the plastic industry doubles down their defense. In Sept. 2023, they launched an expensive public relations greenwashing campaign called "Recycling is Real." Only problem is it's not and they've known it doesn't work since at least the 1980s.

The pity of it is that plastic alternatives made from biodegradable vegetation, including hemp, have been available for years, yet are only sparingly used. Instead, plastic bottles are used around the world at the rate of ONE MILLION PER MINUTE!

The failure to find an agreement in Ottawa coincided with a record number of petrochemical lobbyists attending. As the conference ended, the frustration of participants was palpable. "The United States needs to stop pretending to be a leader and own the failure it has created here," said Carroll Muffett, president of Center for International Environmental Law.

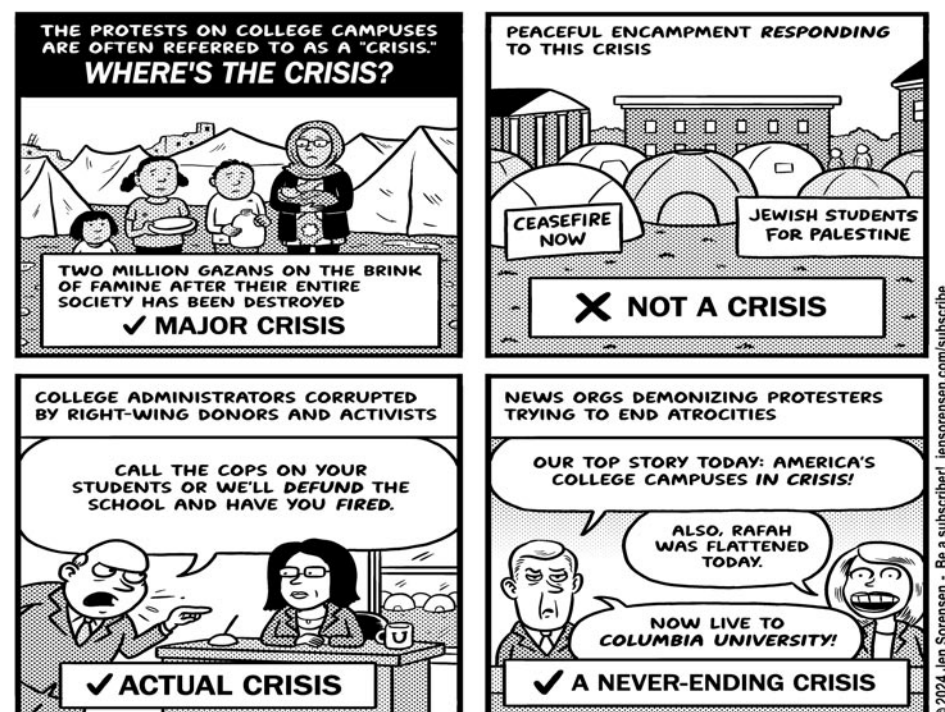
But as usual, money talks and protection of the planet gets silenced. The plastic industry's revenue exceeds \$700 billion per year.

CNBC reports that only 20 companies are responsible for over half of single-use plastic items thrown away globally. If our government represented the people and not the profiteers, we could crack down on these titans of trash and force them to switch to sustainable packaging.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The DeSanctimonious Manifesto

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis recently used the anniversary of the failed Cuban Bay Of Pigs fiasco as a photo-op for signing The Anti-Communist Bill, his latest school requirement for teaching the evils of Marxism K-12. Kindergarteners? Marxism? This right-wing directive includes a “Victims of Communism Day” and emphasizes personal freedom restrictions in communist nations. “The truth will set us free,” boasted Desanctimonious.

Not if you use his MAGA slanted version of the truth.

In Marx’s “Communist Manifesto,” communism can only succeed in highly developed capitalist countries. The reality is the total opposite. Primitive agrarian societies are the breeding ground for anti-capitalist propaganda, with Russia, China and Cuba as the poster children. Pay attention, Governor.

DeSantis, an Ivy League history and law grad with an Animal House mentality, will skip the main reason these countries fell into the communist trap, instead blaming liberal “woke” distortions. This triad was victimized by Western imperialist expansion searching for riches from the time of Columbus.

Russia, not colonized but backward and isolated by their corrupt Romanov dynasty, witnessed Lenin and his Bolsheviks overthrow and execute the czarist regime, promising “peace, land and bread” to the impoverished masses. Instead they got Stalin and now Putin.

China was ravaged for centuries by brutal warlords, then suffered British humiliation in the Opium Wars (1839-42) and further Western subjugation with the US Open Door Policy (1899). The Red Chinese under Chairman Mao promised freedom from Western hegemony, then enslaved the helpless populace.

The Spanish-American War (1898) liberated Cuba from Spain’s tyranny, only to find itself ensnared by the American sugar industry and later the Mafia, who made Havana their personal playground with casinos, brothels and other Mob pleasure trappings. Puppet President Fulgencio Batista was ousted by Fidel Castro, who then forced his communist yoke on the hapless island.

If DeSantis desires to show off his Ivy League credentials, he would have his Manifesto explain the native hatred to these past transgressions created by the Western powers’ colonial stranglehold on the locals, making them ripe for rebellion against their masters and easy prey to disingenuous communist promises. That would require a critical assessment of capitalist intentions. DeSantis, eyeing the White House in 2028, won’t risk offending MAGA loyalists.

Add this “woke” agenda and students would be much closer to the historical truth — even the kindergarteners.

ED ENGLER, *Sebring, Fla.*

Don’t Let the Nuclear Clock Run Out

Americans oblivious or indifferent to the staggering and approved US military budget for 2025 would benefit from reading Daniel Ellsberg’s “The Doomsday Machine: Confessions of A Nuclear War Planner.” Ellsberg’s book should be required reading for all Americans. It is indeed a hard book to read, as Ellsberg outlines with clarity the “acceptable” and civilization-ending ramifications of a successful US nuclear war.

A successful nuclear attack that we initiated would annihilate hundreds of millions of people, effectively ending life on Earth as we know it. It would be easier to digest or come to terms with this evil if the unimaginable horrors that Ellsberg outlined had been denounced, discredited, and abandoned with finality. Such is not the case.

The United States is currently spending billions of dollars on “Nuclear Modernization.” A key component of “Nuclear Modernization” is maintaining our steadfast commitment to nuclear first-strike options. Consider that one Ohio Class submarine in the Arabian Sea and Atlantic, within range of Rus-

sia, can unleash 192 nuclear missiles in one minute. Jonathan Schell was prophetic when he wrote, “The birth of Nuclear Weapons in 1945 opened a wide, unobstructed pathway to the end of the world.”

The Nuclear Clock is moving ever closer to Midnight. Regional wars like Russia’s attack on the Ukraine could easily escalate into Armageddon. The survival of humanity and Mother Earth should be the number one priority for all reasoned people. A first and needed step that deserves stand-alone prioritization is a critical review of US military spending — what Dwight Eisenhower called “The Military Industrial Complex” in his the most important presidential farewell address in world history. The U.S. military juggernaut has eclipsed anything that Ike could have ever imagined. Our greatest hope and strength are the collective and organized response of caring citizens globally. To say that this effort and work is a priority is indeed a profound understatement.

Our children, future generations, and all life on Earth deserve this effort.

JIM SAWYER, *West Edmonds, Wash.*

Peace with Empathy

On April 23, NPR reported on-the-ground observations from Gaza. Rafah resident Ahmed Barhoum’s wife and 5-year-old daughter were killed when Israelis bombed his house. Saqer-Abd el-Aal’s wife and six children were bombed in their home.

What happens when a man loses all his possessions, his wife, and his children? His future taken, he has nothing to live for, nothing to build a future for. Perhaps the only thing giving his life meaning is dedication to revenge and retribution.

While Israel’s government contends it is destroying Hamas, it is also creating more enemies, dedicated with nothing else to live for, to Israel’s destruction.

One shouldn’t conclude, however, that Palestinians are innocent and only Israel is evil. Hamas’ extreme brutality on Oct. 7 sparked Israel’s over-reaction, by design. Now, more civilians are dying, along with some militants. Meanwhile, partisan protesters are polarizing our sensibility.

Can peace and empathy return? Yes! Starting with each of us.

BRUCE JOFFE, *Piedmont, Calif.*

Trump Should Claim Divine Immunity

You know, since Trump MAGA zealots believe that Trump was anointed by God as the new Jesus and sent to save America. I have a great idea on how Trump can prove his mettle about his newfound Christianity.

In order to emulate Jesus and have all of America’s sins be forgiven, Trump could volunteer to be crucified and die at the hands of the Woke Socialist Left, using divine intervention from God, mediated through Lauren Boebert and Marjorie Taylor Greene, in order to secure God’s blessing and approval. Then, Trump could rise from the dead three days later and truly start to make America “really” great again.

Also, at the time of Trump’s resurrection, there will be souvenir crowns of thorns, miniature replica crucifixes and orange “I resurrected America” t-shirts, available for sale at \$299 each, but only for 40 days, at which time Trump would then ascend up to Heaven and govern America from above forever, with absolute and total immunity.

MIKE EKLUND, *La Porte, Ind.*

Trump Stirs Up Too Much Spite, Not Enough Conversation

“Malice sucks up the greater part of its own venom,” wrote Montaigne, “and poisons itself with it.” This incisive truism is patently obvious in our times, as we witness the vicious political divisiveness sweeping through our land.

Lacking the essential civility taken for granted in contemporary society, slogans are shouted instead of decent converse, and prejudice is enunciated instead of cordial converse.

There’s a dangerous drift toward fanaticism and spite in lieu of necessary dialogue and compromise. Such circumstances harbor potential mischief, lawlessness and widespread violence.

WILLIAM DAUENHAUER, *Willowick, Ohio*

We Must Progress Past the ‘Con Men and Cult Heads’

“We” have regressed to a state of “mammalian origin,” with a state of violence imbued and a “cult-sized mentality” that has historical significance that has been destructive to our humanity in every conceivable context imaginable. I’ve cited it in past writings regarding the ability of many amongst us to allow their biases to easily “stupidify” facts, truth and empirical information in lieu of emotional defiance that defies “logic and reason.” In retrospect, we can all look at our past “con men, cult heads,” like Hitler, Mussolini, Jim Jones, David Koresh and a litany of despicable, hateful characters who’ve “stupidified their flock of believers” who later in their lives admitted to their gullible “stupidity” after their purported “savior,” God’s chosen one and all the other falsified titles his/her bogus B.S. portended.

This is exactly where we are today (2024) with our politicians spewing lies and spending millions of dollars on useless wasteful taxpayers money for their “childish tit for tat, kids in the sandbox gotcha politics.” It’s an absolute disgrace and substantiation that our nation is long overdue for a 21st century Era of Enlightenment, whereby centuries of lies, propaganda and feudalistic dictates associated with the aforementioned were exposed for their falsified “flat earthers” assumptions and propositions behaviors with the ability to instill fears and pillage at will. Those same lies (Genesis, “Superior Being” B.S.) still prevail today (2024) in greater ways than prior generations. Our purported demise by AI’s creators, inclusive of our greater world violence, mass killings and loss of democracies worldwide, is a definite threat to our own nation that requires expedited actions to thwart our purported demise, via “AI’s misinformation” pandemic that’s facilitating the hate, hell and harm the world is encountering dangerously.

FRANK C. ROHRIG, *Milford, Conn.*

Just Start a ‘War’ and Use ‘Appropriate Force’

How can “wars” be so easy to create, because armed conflict alone can start a “war” and then the “laws of war” give “all parties in a conflict defined as a ‘war’ the right to use appropriate force to achieve their aims.” This means you can get the freedom to kill from just killing people. You can acquire the legal right to kill people if you use “appropriate force,” from just provoking people into armed conflict.

This Gaza “war” is no different than the US-Dakota “War” [of 1862]; both “wars” are products of the same thing — encroaching upon indigenous people — but then how are the encroachers “in war,” where they can kill using “appropriate force”?

How does “war” become available to the encroachers who then use “war” to crush the indigenous people, so they can never rise up again. How do the encroachers acquire access to the “right to defend themselves,” why do the encroachers and their overwhelming firepower get to be in charge, instead of truth and logic? “War” cannot exist by itself.

How is “warring” using “appropriate force” at your disposal while you are in the process of committing the crime of encroaching, the “war” cannot be a “war” from just the violence.

And if Hamas is responsible for all the death and destruction in the Gaza “War,” because Hamas started the “war,” who’s responsible for all the death and destruction in the Iraq “war,” because the US started it.

FRANK ERICKSON, *Minneapolis, Minn.*

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The Coal Baron Who Would be a Democrat

By DON ROLLINS

Seems like West Virginia’s Democrats just can’t catch a break as Election 2024 bears down. First, room-temperature Democrat Joe Manchin announced he would be vacating the US Senate seat he’s held since 2010. Then, Trump enabler Gov. Jim Justice became (and remains) the distant frontrunner for Manchin’s old job. Soon, the downstream races began trending predictably MAGA red, dampening progressives’ hopes well ahead of the November general elections.

It’s so far been a rough haul for the Mountain State’s outnumbered and out-funded Dems. Add to those woes, the nagging charlatan’s charlatan that’s been

parading as one of their own - a distraction few could conceptualize, let alone counter.

It was April 2010 when 29 coal miners perished at the Upper Big Branch mine near Montcoal, WV, the worst such explosion in over 40 years. Four independent investigations found the company operating the mine, Massey Energy, was at fault. Then CEO, Don Blankenship, was found guilty of conspiring to violate safety standards, served one year in prison, and fined \$250,000.

Released in 2017, the disgraced former executive declared as a partyline GOP candidate for the 2018 US senate race - the first of Blankenship’s three unsuccessful federal campaigns spread across an equal number of political parties. (Republican, Constitution and of late, Democratic.)

Blankenship lost the first two races by huge margins, and will most certainly continue that pattern come the May 14 Democratic primary. If there’s a God in heaven, West Virginians will have finally seen the last of the man who describes himself as

“Trumpier than Trump”.

But while Blankenship’s corruption, delusions and worship of power are well established, West Virginia’s Democratic and union officials have nonetheless been forced to give air time and print space to distance him from their ranks.

In a statement issued just days after Blankenship filed as a Democratic candidate for the seat, United Mineworkers of America President Cecil E. Roberts made clear his disdain for Blankenship and his politics:

“Don Blankenship does not care about working families. He does not care one second about labor laws, health and safety laws, environmental laws — anything that can help ordinary people improve their lives, he is against it. I don’t agree with the positions Democrats have on several issues, but also don’t know a single Democrat in West Virginia or anywhere else who shares Don Blankenship’s worldview. If he’s a Democrat then I’m Batman.”

When interviewed about Blankenship’s

claims to candidate status, 2nd West Virginia Democratic Party Vice Chair, Sam Petsonk was similarly blunt:

“More than almost anyone, he created the monstrosity that is the intensely radicalized GOP of today. He made that bed, and he should have to lie in it. He will find no friend or favor among Democrats.”

Having endorsed Wheeling’s Democratic mayor, Glenn Elliott, Manchin has publicly sidestepped Blankenship’s latest bizarre antics. But the two have tangled before: Manchin was in the senate when the coal baron was found guilty, and stated then “no sentence is severe enough.”

West Virginia’s Democrats deserve better than having their proud boilerplate commandeered by a brazen pretender with coal dust all over his stock portfolio. Blankenship fell from their grace many years ago. Soon he’ll be off their ballots, too.

Don Rollins is a retired Unitarian Universalist minister in Jackson, Ohio.

Abortion Rights: Men Must Make a Choice



Missourians are lucky to have the right to put issues on the ballot, and men as well as women need to step up and vote for the right to abortion.

A few weeks ago, a friend from another state dropped by for a visit. When she was sated with the pleasures of life on the farm, we drove to town and, strolling into the farmers' market, were immediately approached by fellows with petitions. One guy wanted to fund early childhood education with proceeds from sports betting. Another wanted to get RFK Jr. on the ballot. Another wanted to support abortion rights with a constitutional amendment.

I was accustomed to these initiative petition drives but my friend is from one of the 24 states that don't have the right for citizens to gather signatures and vote for change in the state constitution. Missourians are lucky to have this right and every year it is under attack by lawmakers in Jeff City. If abortion gets on the ballot, men as well as women need to step up and vote for the right.

Right to abortion means that doctors and patients are free to make decisions that can alter health outcomes for women. In Missouri, the right to abortion has been abridged to the point that it is never performed legally, so it's not tracked here.

In 2023, according to Guttmacher Institute, tracking abortion numbers since 1973, there was a 10% increase in the number of abortions in the United States with a national total of at least 1,026,690. This means that health services in states without bans were overwhelmed with women from states that needed care but couldn't get it at home.

Guttmacher reported that Missouri's neighboring state of Illinois hosted 72% more women seeking abortions in 2023 than in 2020 and that 68% of those women were from out-of-state. Virginia had an increase of 76%, North Carolina had an increase of 41% and New Mexico had an increase of 253%.

These numbers show that choice continues despite the extra expense. For those who don't believe that women should have rights, we have to wonder how they'd treat the more than million unwanted citizens that might have been born and grow up in their midst. Abortion is a poor plan for birth control but last year there were more than

a million reasons for someone to need one.

Some reasons for abortion have been with us since the dawn of time: Rape, incest, mental illness, addiction or other inability of a woman (or pregnant girl) to care for a child. When Guttmacher asked women to explain changes in childbearing desires during the pandemic, those wanting fewer babies cited financial concerns, fear of the pandemic, work and career, being overwhelmed with care for others. These are perennial concerns but some women reported worries more related to COVID-19: "It didn't seem like a good time to bring kids into the world" and "It made me re-evaluate my priorities."

The concerns have been seen as female but these reasons should be male concerns as well as women's.

The media has carried a lot of stories about women seeking help, but as I looked for information regarding men's opinions, there was nothing. Even though men are at least half the problem, they've rarely been asked their opinions on the dangerous solution. This is at a time when paternity is ridiculously easy to discover—a baby's spit and a few dollars to Ancestry.com can reveal the truth. Once discovered, Dad's in a bind for child support.

According to Google and US Health and Human Services, there were no US studies, except one privately-funded study of 75 men in 1999. "The male partner involved in legal abortion" is included on a US HHS website with nothing about its funding or origins. It found that "More than half clearly stated that they wanted the woman to have an abortion while 20

stressed that they submitted themselves to their partner's decision. Only one man wanted the woman to complete the pregnancy ..."

I suspect this study was funded by a pro-life group as one conclusion was, "Obviously, men must constitute a target group in efforts to prevent abortions."

Targeting men with arguments worked to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. Four male and one female justice voted to overturn and three female and one male justice voted for women's rights.

One sweeping study—a "scoping review"—of other studies revealed that most research on men's opinions has been done in the global south, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa. "Men's involvement in abortion is significant, intersecting across the individual, community and macro factors that shape abortion-related care pathways" intone the authors. Men deny or affirm paternity and men control the resources to obtain an abortion. The study goes on to reveal that men are sometimes left out because of women's fears of repercussions. "This scoping review demonstrates the need for better understanding ..."

Indeed. And to get the right back, men need to speak up and support Choice.

Margot Ford McMillen farms near Fulton, Mo., and co-hosts "Farm and Fiddle" on sustainable ag issues on KOPN 89.5 FM in Columbia, Mo. Her latest book is "The Golden Lane: How Missouri Women Gained the Vote and Changed History."

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DISPATCHES

MEDICARE, SOCIAL SECURITY FUNDS ARE DOING BETTER, BUT MUST BE PROTECTED. Trustee reports show Social Security is projected to be fully funded until 2035, a year later than previously thought, while Medicare is expected to be fully funded until 2036, five years beyond the earlier projection, but advocacy groups say the reports are proof the programs must be protected from Republican attempts to scale them back. Jessica Corbett reported at CommonDreams.org (5/6).

Former President Donald Trump, the presumptive Republican nominee to face President Joe Biden in November, "proposed cutting Social Security and Medicare every year he was in office, he's said repeatedly he would cut them, his allies openly plan to target them, and just [the weekend before the report] he dismissed them as bribes," noted James Singer, a spokesperson for Biden's campaign.

Richard Fiesta, executive director of the Alliance for Retired Americans, said May 6 that "current and future American retirees should feel confident about both Medicare and Social Security, which [are] stronger due to the robust economy under President Biden. But the future of these earned benefit programs depends on who is elected this fall—both as president and to Congress."

Fiesta highlighted that Biden's latest budget "calls for strengthening" the programs whereas Trump recently said "there is a lot you can do ... in terms of cutting' them" and the Republican Study Committee (RSC), which includes around 80% of House Republicans, stands ready to make cuts as well."

Nancy Altman, president of Social Security Works, similarly declared that "today's report shows that our Social Security system is benefiting from the Biden economy. Due to robust job growth, low unemployment, and rising wages, more people than ever are contributing to Social Security and earning its needed protections ..."

"That said, Congress should take action sooner rather than later to ensure that Social Security can pay full benefits for generations to come, along with expanding Social Security's modest benefits," she argued, noting various plans from Democrats in Congress that "are paid for by requiring millionaires and billionaires to contribute more of their fair share."

Max Richtman, president and CEO of the National Committee to Preserve Social Security & Medicare, also asserted that "Congress must act NOW to strengthen Social Security for the 67 million Americans who depend on it. We cannot afford to wait to take action until the trust fund is mere months from insolvency, as Congress did in 1983."

"We strongly support revenue-side solutions that would bring more money into the trust fund by demanding that the wealthy pay their fair share. Rep. John Larson (D-Conn.) has offered legislation that would do just that—by maintaining the current payroll wage cap (currently set at \$168,600), but subjecting wages \$400,000 and above to payroll taxes, as well—and dedicating some of high earners' investment income to Social Security. Rep. Larson's bill also would provide seniors with a much-needed benefit boost."

Larson was among the lawmakers who responded to the Social Security report by demanding urgent action. The Democrat also called out his Republican colleagues for pushing cuts and trying to "ram their dangerous plan through an un-

democratic and unaccountable so-called 'fiscal commission,' which critics have dubbed a "death panel."

"The Social Security 2100 Act is co-sponsored by nearly 200 House Democrats and would improve benefits across the board while extending solvency until 2066, while Donald Trump and House Republicans continue their calls to slash Americans' hard-earned benefits!" Larson said. "By contrast, President Joe Biden and Democrats are working to strengthen Social Security, not cut it."

Co-sponsors of Larson's bill include Congressman Brendan Boyle (D-Pa.), ranking member of the House Budget Committee.

US BILLIONAIRES PAY LOWER TAX RATE THAN WORKING CLASS FOR FIRST TIME. US billionaires paid a lower effective tax rate—23%—than working-class Americans for the first time in the nation's history, a data point that sparked a new flurry of calls for bold levies on the ultra-rich. The bottom half paid 24%.

Economist Gabriel Zucman's analysis, published in the *New York Times* (5/3) with the headline "It's Time to Tax the Billionaires," notes that billionaires pay so little in taxes relative to their vast fortunes because they "live off their wealth"—mostly in the form of stock holdings—rather than wages and salaries.

Stock gains aren't taxed in the US until the underlying asset is sold, leaving billionaires like Amazon founder Jeff Bezos and Tesla CEO Elon Musk—a pair frequently competing to be the single richest man on the planet—with very little taxable income.

"But they can still make eye-popping purchases by borrowing against their assets," Zucman noted. "Mr. Musk, for example, used his shares in Tesla as collateral to rustle up around \$13 billion in tax-free loans to put toward his acquisition of Twitter."

To begin reversing the decades-long trend of surging inequality that has weakened democratic institutions and undermined critical programs such as Social Security, Zucman made the case for a

minimum tax on billionaires in the US and around the world.

"The idea that billionaires should pay a minimum amount of income tax is not a radical idea," Zucman wrote. "What is radical is continuing to allow the wealthiest people in the world to pay a smaller percentage in income tax than nearly everybody else. In liberal democracies, a wave of political sentiment is building, focused on rooting out the inequality that corrodes societies. A coordinated minimum tax on the super-rich will not fix capitalism. But it is a necessary first step."

Responding to those who claim a minimum tax would be impractical because "wealth is difficult to value," Zucman wrote that "this fear is overblown."

"According to my research, about 60% of U.S. billionaires' wealth is in stocks of publicly traded companies," the economist observed. "The rest is mostly ownership stakes in private businesses, which can be assigned a monetary value by looking at how the market values similar firms."

Since 2018, the final year examined in Zucman's analysis, the wealth of global billionaires has continued to explode while worker pay has been largely stagnant. As of last month, there were a record 2,781 billionaires worldwide with combined assets of \$14.2 trillion.

The US has more billionaires than any other country, with 813 individuals worth a combined \$5.7 trillion, Jake Johnson noted at CommonDreams.org (5/3).

"The ultra-wealthy are paying less in taxes than the bottom half of income earners. That's absurd!" Rakeen Mabud, chief economist at the Groundwork Collaborative, wrote in response to Zucman's analysis. "We've got to raise taxes on the wealthy and large corporations. Enough with the wealth hoarding. It's past time for us to take back what's ours."

Continued on page 22



FROMA HARROP



There is an element of White privilege in cries of resentment at being hauled away from private property after trespassing during a protest.

Protests, Privilege and Hypocrisy

This is not directly about the issues animating the “pro-Palestinian” demonstrations at many colleges. Rather it’s about the air of privilege filling the sails of hypocrisy on which many ride.

Start with the masks that protesters use to hide their identities. And from whom? In many cases from future employers who may object to their singling out of Israel for

charges of genocide — or who simply would rather not hazard hiring someone arrested for trespassing.

Civil disobedience is the refusal to obey laws deemed unjust. With that, though, comes the obligation to accept the consequences of that lawbreaking. Martin Luther King Jr. said those who engage in civil disobedience “must do it with a willingness to accept the penalty.”

Getting arrested at an unruly demonstration while being associated, fairly or unfairly, with a terroristic death cult might pose a barrier to lucrative employment at a top law firm. Fear of reprisals in polite society is why members of the Ku Klux Klan hide their faces under hoods.

Do some of these demonstrators have a justifiable fear of being doxed? That is, might their opponents harass them by publicizing personal information? That could happen. There is stalking behavior that victims can cite to obtain restraining orders. But displaying one’s opinions before the nation’s cameras makes them TikTok public.

There is an element of White privilege in cries of resentment at being hauled away from private property. Consider the response of Emory University economics professor Caroline Fohlin to getting tackled by Atlanta

police. The CNN video showed students, some in keffiyehs, peacefully accepting the zip ties and being taken off. Not the nice White lady.

She not only refused to leave the encampment but resisted efforts to stop her interference with police. Fohlin is heard screeching, “Oh, my God!” then shouting, “I am a professor!” in the same sort of voice as, “Do you know who my father is?”

Some demonstrators say they are opposing the horror in Gaza. But it’s pretty clear that the focus of many is to make Israelis the designated White villains while placing the suffering residents of Gaza in a supporting role.

That could explain why far worse bloody conflicts throughout the Muslim world draw little notice by this crowd, much less active protest. That’s business as usual, right?

“More than 300,000 civilians have died since (Bashar al-)Assad turned his guns on Syria’s 2011 Arab spring pro-democracy uprising,” *The Guardian* reported last year. An estimated half a million Muslims perished in the Iran-Iraq War.

In the 1980s, according to Genocide-Watch.com, “(Somaliland dictator) Siad Barre launched a genocide against the Isaaq tribe, one of the largest in Somalia. The genocide ...

killed an estimated 200,000 people.” The father of Minnesota Rep. Ilhan Omar was a colonel in Barre’s army.

Go ahead and criticize Israel’s conduct in this latest Gaza war. But Omar’s labeling some Jewish students “pro-genocide” while portraying her family as righteous refugees from Somalia is hypocrisy on a grand scale.

As for the agony in Gaza, coverage of how the residents feel about Hamas — when Hamas doesn’t have a gun to their heads — has been sparse. But now that the group’s internal enforcers are hiding from Israeli troops, residents of Gaza have started openly criticizing Hamas. *The Financial Times* spoke to several. They didn’t object so much to attacks on Israel’s military as to the massacre of ordinary Israelis that set off the bloodbath, as Hamas planned.

“I pray every day for the death of Sinwar,” a Gazan named Mohammed told the *FT*. That was a reference to Yahya Sinwar, mastermind of Hamas’ Oct. 7 barbaric attack on Israeli civilians.

Now, this man has guts.

Froma Harrop is a columnist with Creators Syndicate, formerly with the Providence (R.I.) Journal. Follow her on Twitter @fromaharrop. Email fharrop@gmail.com.

Iowa Law: If You’re Brown, Get Out Of Town

Latinos hearing the message that they are not welcome

By ART CULLEN

Storm Lake will be a hot mess if local police are bound by state law to arrest and deport undocumented immigrants.

Presumably, it’s the direction we’re headed since the legislature passed a law to that effect. Latinos who have been anxious for decades about their place here will feel like targets, if they already don’t.

If you are Brown, you would be well-advised to find the fastest route to Minnesota. Worthington is looking for help. Profiling will be the only way to find out who is undocumented.

“I no longer want to live in a state where I feel like I’m not valued,” Enya Cid, a senior at Grandview College in Des Moines, told CNN.

She is a Dreamer, brought here as a toddler, caught in the limbo of not knowing Mexico, but not allowed to be a US citizen. Her status is temporary, until it is revoked.

The Iowa law takes effect July 1. Until then, local law enforcement authorities are vague about what they intend to do. They do acknowledge that they are required to enforce state law but are awaiting guidance from the Iowa Department of Public Safety, or somebody.

Perhaps the US Supreme Court. A similar law in Texas is bouncing between the high court and a federal appeals court, which has issued an injunction from the law taking effect. At issue is whether states can take on immigration enforcement, a role reserved for the federal government.

The Supreme Court is closely divided on the issue. Justice Amy Coney Barrett, a conservative, may be the swing vote.

Suits will be filed against the Iowa law, probably by the American Civil Liberties Union’s Iowa Chapter. Spokesperson Veronica Fowler said she could not comment on pending litigation.

The Storm Lake Police Department has not sought to detain people for being undocumented because it is a federal law enforcement function. They do arrest undocumented people for other crimes. If someone gets jailed for OWI, the Buena Vista County Sheriff will hold them on a detainer from Immigrations Customs Enforcement.

Police chiefs in Marshalltown and Atlantic spoke against the law. Former Storm

Lake Police Chief Mark Prosser said the local system is not equipped to deal with it.

As a practical matter, if police are expected to vigorously enforce clearing out “illegals,” then every Latino becomes suspect. If you are Latino, you should carry a birth certificate or naturalization papers with you. You should not have anything on your vehicle that expresses your Latino pride.

Once police start sweeping up Latinos, they will clear out. Even if Storm Lake doesn’t press it, maybe the heat gets put on someplace else in Iowa. The message spreads fast — get out of town.

Tyson insists that its workers are documented. But even those with papers can’t be certain that they will not be caught in a dragnet. We have seen it happen before in Storm Lake. Remember 1996. The meat-packing worker might have papers, but if her husband gets deported, she will not be far behind him.

We do not know if police and prosecutors will treat the crime like jaywalking or more seriously than that. If they fail to arrest undocumented, they are patsies. If they go after them, we risk losing our workforce.

Storm Lake is majority “minority.” We can barely get the eggs cracked and the hogs slaughtered with Latino help. Lots of it. Without them, we’re screwed.

The town will empty out. Why stay in Storm Lake when you can go to Illinois,

Wisconsin or anywhere but this cold, hostile place that puts a target on your forehead? The authorities will know who the Dreamers are. They come after their parents first. That will be fairly easy. The rest will get the signal: You are not welcome in Iowa. We do not need your help. Hasta la vista, baby.

Major employers, the city council, the board of supervisors and law enforcement didn’t raise a stink with the legislature, not that we heard. Not exactly a profile in pragmatism. Maybe they think it will just go away. They better pray that the Supreme Court asserts federal authority over immigration, or local law enforcement will be knee-deep in a quagmire and Storm Lake will have a full-blown crisis.

This is nothing new to Latinos, who have been living in fear for generations as we invite them in to work and then terrorize them later. I used to think Iowa was better than that — to terrorize people who just want to feed their families in a place that needs their labor. We wouldn’t know shame if it slapped us in the face.

Art Cullen is publisher and editor of the Storm Lake Times Pilot in northwest Iowa (stormlake.com). He won the Pulitzer Prize for editorial writing in 2017 and is author of the book “Storm Lake: A Chronicle of Change, Resilience, and Hope from America’s Heartland.” Email times@stormlake.com.

How to Win the SAF Game: Part 2

By ALAN GUEBERT

Federal policymakers and their Big Ag friends have a problem: Their hope to make corn and soybeans the feedstock for sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) hit a wall when the aviation industry ruled that biofuel from either crop did not meet its “sustainable” guidelines. As such, there would be no corn- or soy-based SAF.

That’s not the news the biofuel lobby, farm and ag commodity groups, and the Biden Administration wanted. All quickly joined forces to “encourage” the “use of updated scoring by the US Department of Transportation’s GREET model,” not the aviation industry’s “greener” yardstick, to make sure “the carbon intensity” of “corn-based ethanol SAF” met aviation’s benchmarks

It’s not some minor bureaucratic tiff. Billions of federal SAF tax credits, promised under the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act, are on the table.

Switching to GREET, (or Greenhouse Gases, Regulated Emissions, and Energy use in Technologies) all hoped, would deliver a burgeoning new market to ethanol just as electric vehicles are cutting into its government-mandated gasoline market.

Better yet, the Department of Agricul-

ture (USDA) could keep an eye on the approval process and, if necessary, put its green thumb on the GREET scale.

At a Washington, D.C. press conference March 21, USDA boss Tom Vilsack pretty much did just that when he noted that farm practices like “no-till, cover crops and energy-efficient fertilizer... ought to be included” in determining any SAF winner.

Then he leaned in even more overtly: “I am confident we’re going to send the right signal,” said Vilsack.

The clear implication was that USDA would be only too happy to apply pressure to any more-art-than-science model ethanol faced to get it into today’s 16-billion-gallons-a-year aviation fuel market.

But just adding green-sounding farm practices like no-till—while stirring in carbon credits from controversial technologies like carbon pipelines and methane-making manure digesters—won’t make ethanol green or SAF sustainable, environmental experts point out.

In fact, when ag land use researchers at the universities of Wisconsin, California, Kentucky, and Kansas State measured ethanol’s economic and environmental impact after the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS) steeply increased its production in 2007, they found a very mixed, decidedly not-green bag.

Their 2022 joint study revealed that over its first 15 years, the RFS boosted corn prices 30%, expanded corn production 6.9 million acres, and added 5.2 million acres to

total U.S. cropland base.

As much as those new acres and higher prices pleased US farmers and made ethanol a rural industrial giant, all came with a very high environmental cost.

“This increased agriculture,” notes the report that includes the following parenthetical notations, “has been accompanied by more fertilizer use (3-8% each year), more water quality degradation (3-5% increases in nitrate leaching, phosphorus runoff) and more carbon emissions attributable to land use changes.”

“This one policy”—the RFS—“effectively bumped up pollution from the entire agricultural industry by several percent,” noted one co-author, Wisconsin’s Tyler Lark.

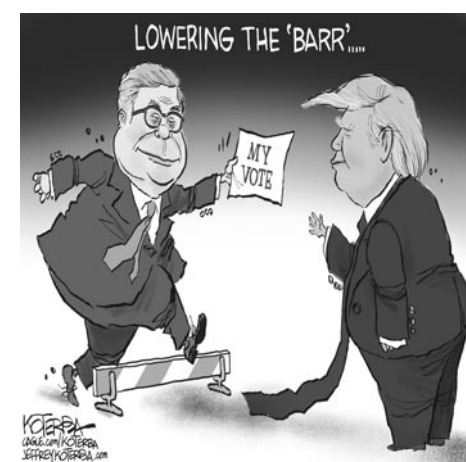
And, adds the University of California analysis of the report, those RFS-added acres “are responsible for 62% of the estimated increased greenhouse gas emissions” due to a “loss of biomass”—carbon captors like pastures and forests—and increased fertilizer use.

Land Grant researchers aren’t the only carbon worriers blowing the whistle on ethanol. Two climate change experts from the World Resources Institute offered an even darker biofuel/SAF assessment this past December.

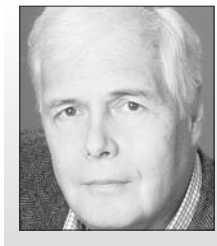
If the Biden White House follows the science “rather than bowing to pressure from the biofuels industry,” they wrote, “it will find that instead of being a climate solution, crop-based aviation fuels are even worse than their fossil fuel alternative.

Which suggests—again—that the “green” in most farm-directed carbon credit schemes really means more money for its schemers, not a healthier, more sustainable world.

Alan Guebert is an agricultural journalist who was raised on an Illinois dairy farm and worked as a writer and senior editor at Professional Farmers of America and Successful Farming magazine and is now a contributing editor to Farm Journal magazine. Guebert and his daughter Mary Grace Foxwell co-wrote “The Land of Milk and Uncle Honey: Memories from the Farm of My Youth” [University of Illinois Press, 2015]. See past columns, supporting documents, and contact information at farmandfoodfile.com



GENE LYONS



The most remarkable thing about Kristi Noem's story of killing the family dog with a shotgun is she doesn't understand it was a political suicide note.

Kristi Noem's Sad Tail ... Er, Tale

Probably by the time this column appears in print, Donald Trump will have made some sort of tone-deaf remark about his would-be running mate's bizarre story about executing the family dog with a shotgun. As near as I can tell, South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem's qualifications for the job began, and ended with her being eager to parrot MAGA catchphrases anyway. So, it's no big loss.

I use the past tense because she's finished. Her career is over. To me, the most remarkable thing about the entire affair is that

Noem appears not to have understood that she had basically written a political suicide note. There's definitely something missing from her emotional tool kit.

Meghan McCain summed things up succinctly on X: "You can recover from a lot of things in politics, change the narrative etc. — but not from killing a dog. All I will distinctly think about Kristi Noem now is that she murdered a puppy who was 'acting up' which is obviously cruel and insane."

Noem presents the tale as an example of her tough-minded ability to make hard choices and do something "difficult, messy and ugly" that simply must be done. Stung by criticism from soft-handed city folk who read a pre-publication account in *The Guardian*, she played the South Dakota rancher card.

"We love animals," she said, "but tough decisions like this happen all the time on a farm. Sadly, we just had to put down three horses a few weeks ago that had been in our family for 25 years."

Been there, done that. But I hated every minute of it. Putting down gravely ill or injured animals is a sad reality of life on a ranch or farm — a brutal, shocking business. My neighbor brought over his backhoe, dug a grave and offered to finish the job for me. But I thought it was my personal duty. I learned that there is nothing quite so dead as a dead horse. A gentle, sweet-natured horse named Lucky that I used to love.

Problem is, Noem appears to have rather

enjoyed herself. So much so that she followed up shooting a misbehaving young bird dog with executing a rambunctious pet goat that ought to have been gelded in the first place.

"I hated that dog," Noem writes of Cricket, the ill-fated wire-haired retriever. At 14 months old, the dog was basically still a puppy, and according to her owner, an "untrainable" mess, "dangerous to anyone she came in contact with" and "less than worthless ... as a hunting dog."

According to the governor, she took Cricket along on a pheasant hunting trip with older dogs, hoping they'd teach her something. Instead, the puppy ran wild, going "out of her mind with excitement, chasing all those birds and having the time of her life."

Noem tried to bring the dog under control with an electronic shocking collar — which, unless she's an experienced dog-trainer, was certain to backfire. (Actually, no real trainer would attempt such a thing. But some people imagine that they can hurt or frighten a dog into behaving.)

Then on the way home, Noem stopped to visit a family with a yard full of chickens. She failed to secure Cricket, who went wild at the sight of the birds, "grabb[ing] one chicken at a time, crunching it to death with one bite, then dropping it to attack another." When she tried to restrain the dog, Cricket snapped at her.

That did it. Writing a check to her horrified friends for the dead chickens, the governor decided that Cricket had to die. She led

the family dog to a gravel pit near her home and shot her in the face. Then she decided to finish off the unruly goat that she says bullied her children. "It was not a pleasant job," she writes, "but it had to be done."

No, it did not.

It's basically Noem's own damn fault. A responsible dog owner would have prevented an excitable young bird dog from getting anywhere near those chickens.

But who am I to talk? The best dog I've ever owned — a Great Pyrenees named Jesse who loved and protected us country and city, for 16 years — killed a bunch of another neighbor's prize chickens at about Cricket's age.

I, too, paid for the birds, and the neighbor, also a dog lover, decided that "free-range" chickens weren't an option with all the coyotes, coons, hawks, eagles and farm dogs down our road.

Between us, we fixed things so it never happened again. You know, like adults and friends.

A compassionate person would have found Cricket a new home — or even surrendered her to a shelter. But Noem hated her, and she's the kind of person who brags about shooting a goat.

No wonder she and Trump were allies.

Gene Lyons of Little Rock, Ark., is co-author of "The Hunting of the President" (St. Martin's Press, 2000) and received the National Magazine Award. Email eugenelyons2@yahoo.com.

House Progressives Unveil 2025 Agenda to Inspire Action for a More Equitable Nation

With more than 100 members, the Congressional Progressive Caucus has a track record of pushing the policy debate towards bold solutions.

By SARAH ANDERSON

The Congressional Progressive Caucus has released a sweeping domestic agenda for 2025. Why pay attention to the policy platform of a Caucus that represents a little less than half of House Democrats?

Even without a majority, the Progressive Caucus has flexed considerable muscle on Capitol Hill and in the White House. To mention just a few examples:

- They've demonstrated the power to block votes on bipartisan bills until they win concessions — as they did twice in 2021 on the infrastructure bill.
- Their doggedness on taxation contributed to progressive provisions in the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act, including a corporate minimum tax and the first tax on CEO pay-inflating stock buybacks.
- Their longstanding vocal support for student debt cancellation contributed to White House efforts that have relieved debts for 4.3 million Americans.

Caucus leaders, many of whom are former community organizers, amplify their power through effective inside-outside strategies with progressive movement and policy groups. As with all of their key platform documents, they solicited

input on this one, released on April 18, from a broad range of organizations.

Caucus Chair Pramila Jayapal says the focus with this new agenda is on "popular, populist, and possible solutions" that could become law in the short term if Democrats win a trifecta in November. That, of course, is a big "if." But in Jayapal's view, the way to motivate people is to offer a positive vision of what they're fighting for. And in this case, the vision is of a dramatically more equitable nation.

With a huge tax fight looming in 2025, fair tax proposals are high on the Caucus wish list. Many of the tax cuts in the Republicans' Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 are set to expire by the end of next year, setting up a major fight in 2025 — no matter who wins the White House.

The Caucus would like to see the 2017 tax cuts for the rich and big corporations die a quiet death. To raise new — and hopefully more revenue than under the pre-2017 tax regime — they plug several of President Joe Biden's favorite ideas, including a billionaire minimum tax and increased taxes on stock buybacks.

The House progressives' agenda also touts increased taxes on corporations with "excessive CEO to worker pay gaps." While the Biden administration has not yet jumped on board, three Senate committee chairs have expressed support for this idea.

Budget Committee Chair Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse and Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee Chair Sen. Bernie Sanders have introduced bills tying the corporate tax rate to the size of a company's CEO-worker pay gap, with House companion bills championed by Progressive Caucus members. Finance Committee Chair Sen. Ron Wyden floated the idea during the 2021 budget negotiations.

In a few other areas as well, the agenda promotes policy innovations the Biden administration has not yet embraced. For example, the Caucus calls for low-cost public

banking options, including postal banking. This would address the high fees millions of American families now have to pay to access their own money for paying bills, cashing checks, remittances, rent, and ATM withdrawals.

The US Postal Service offered banking services for more than 30 years until private competitors squashed the program in 1967. With big Wall Street banks largely abandoning low-income communities, today's vast postal network is still well-positioned to meet the need for affordable and trustworthy financial services.

The Progressive Caucus agenda includes scores of additional proposals for reversing inequality, many of them aimed at building on the momentum of the successful union contract fights in 2023 and the recent UAW election win in Tennessee. For instance, they endorse the idea of offering unemployment insurance for striking workers, as well as labor law reforms to ensure that all U.S. workers have the right to unionize and bargain collectively.

To combat corporate greed, the Caucus pushes numerous options, such as excess profits taxes on "Big Oil," cracking down on private equity vultures in our health care system, and expanding the provisions they won in the Inflation Reduction Act to negotiate lower Medicare drug prices.

"Progressives are proud to have been part of the most significant Democratic legislative accomplishments of this century" Jayapal said in a statement. "We have made real progress for everyday Americans — but there's much more work to be done."

Jayapal will be continuing that work, but not at the helm of the Congressional Progressive Caucus. After serving as chair since 2021 and as co-chair for the two prior years, she'll be stepping down to make way for new leadership in 2025.

Sarah Anderson directs the Global Economy Project and edits Inequality.org at the Institute for Policy Studies.

'Fake News' Fable: The Liar and the Enquirer

By JOHN YOUNG

"Fake news." How many times? How often has Donald Trump used that throw-away slur to deflect news coverage he doesn't like? Hundreds? Thousands?

It's an effective dodge for questions from actual reporters for actual newsrooms for whom credibility and accuracy are their coin of existence.

"Fake news."

For the right audience, it has a "Seig, heil" intonation. Raise that right hand. Puff out that chest. Point threateningly at truth-seekers with press badges.

So, here's this guy, a media creation unto himself: He goes around denouncing the news media at every turn, and it turns out that he's involved in a pseudo-contractual agreement with a veritable, certifiable, undeniable factory of fake news. He and his sleaze-merchant buddy: partners in crapola and cover-ups

"I have nothing to do with the *National Enquirer*," said Trump in 2016 when the tabloid concocted a tale linking Ted Cruz's father somehow to John Kennedy's assassination.

No, nothing at all — except what former *Enquirer* CEO David Pecker testifies now. He told Trump he'd buy and bury incriminating stories about him. He'd also fabricate screaming front pages to harm political opponents. The better to draw eyes in America's check-out counters.

"Hillary is dying!" "Biden's secret breakdown!" "FBI plot to impeach Trump!"

This is the nation-harming result of what Pecker acknowledges to be "checkbox journalism" (insulting anyone who actually does journalism).

"Catch and kill."

We don't know if Trump actually fathered a "love child" as alleged to the *Enquirer* by a Trump Tower doorman. We do know the magazine paid the doorman \$30,000 for the story, then sat on it.

Trump says he didn't have affairs with porn star Stormy Daniels and cover-girl Karen McDougal. Testimony in this trial lays waste to that lie.

Nothing illegal about those dalliances.

Nothing illegal to lie about them.

[Editor's Note: Adultery was, and remains, a misdemeanor in New York.]

What's illegal is business fraud — papering over the hush money, a shell company created for the ruse.

Making it a felony: Pecker admitted on the stand that the arrangement was an illegal campaign contribution.

No, it's not just about sleeping around. It's not just about records askew. It's about the 2016 presidential campaign.

Sorry, MAGA; when your guy runs to govern us all, all of us are in on, or should be in on, on his machinations to gain favor and finances.

To those who seek to downplay this: Where were you when Michael Cohen went to prison for helping facilitate all that Trump wanted regarding his sexcapades?

That Cohen broke the law, while "the boss," a.k.a. "Individual 1" remained in charge of enforcing our laws, is a monumental scandal.

Later, Cohen would tell Congress about the illegal things he knew of or helped facilitate for Trump — including inflating property values for better loans and deflating them for tax and insurance purposes.

Congress should have begun impeachment proceedings right then and there.

Instead, it took a politically motivated extortion effort — Trump's bid to get Ukraine's president to make a fake statement that a fake investigation had been launched based on fake allegations about Joe Biden — to impeach Trump.

The truth is out there. An indictment in Manhattan is helping put the lie to he who every day runs from the truth.

Whatever Trump might say about his inquisitors, the truth is succinctly stated by former federal prosecutor Andrew Weissman:

Trump's relationship with a reprehensible tabloid is "the ground zero of fake news."

Now we know exactly why Trump calls the news media "the enemy of the people." He detests reporters who can't be bought or cowed by him.

In his transactional world, he just can't handle the fact that reporters would be independent and inquiring, not fawning and Enquire-ing.

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Cover Story...

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In 2021, the overall density of primary care in areas that had more social disadvantages was 111.7 per 100,000, while the density of areas with fewer social disadvantages was 99.5 per 100,000. However, researchers said, while those measures are hopeful, they still are insufficient.

"This finding may be attributed, in part, to the success of the community health center movement, which aims to place clinicians in areas of highest social need," researchers said. "Still, this promising finding needs to be tempered by the reality that even this higher density of primary care clinicians may not meet patient demands given that people living in high-need areas tend to have higher levels of medical need."

"Rural areas do much better at training and retaining a primary care workforce, but at the same time, it's still not enough to meet

the growing demand," Jabbarpour said.

Family medicine, like any other medical specialty, she said, distributes itself the same as the U.S. population. Rural areas across the country, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, are home to 19.88% of the total U.S. population. Jabbarpour said that a correlating percentage of primary care physicians would be located in a rural area. But because rural communities tend to be statistically older and sicker, the need in rural communities is greater.

One way to resolve the issue would be for more investment into primary care, the study found. Changing the overall portion of health care spending done by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) on primary care would help invest more federal dollars into primary care, as would investment by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) into new rural health clinics, health centers and Indian Health Service (IHS) facilities in shortage

areas, the report said.

"The United States is underinvesting in primary care, and Medicare's fee schedule — which lists fees for services — is the chief culprit," the report said. "It undervalues primary care services relative to specialty services and pays on a per visit basis, discouraging non-visit services like emails and phone calls as well as care from other members of the primary care team."

Jabbarpour said another key to getting more primary care physicians into rural communities is for colleges to recruit from rural communities.

"Medical schools should be recruiting from those communities because people tend to go home to practice," she said.

Bringing doctors into rural areas means helping their spouses find work as well.

"There are physicians who want to go into rural areas, but their partners don't have opportunities for work in rural areas if they're not also in medicine," she said.

The biggest way to bring primary care physicians into rural areas, she said, was to expose them to it. The research has found that physicians who train in Teaching Health Centers and rural training tracks are more likely to practice in those communities.

"I know not every rural area is the same. In some rural areas, it's probably an area that physicians would love to live and grow their families in if they knew about it," she said. "I know that's hard because that takes hospital systems really doing active recruitment or setting up rural training tracks, and reaching out to medical schools around the country and saying, hey, send your students here, we'll give them housing and they can get exposure to this beautiful slice of heaven that we have and then they'll want to come here."

Liz Carey is a contributing writer for DailyYonder.com, where this originally appeared.

Privatized Medicare Is Putting Financial Strain on Rural Hospitals

Besides Medicare 'Advantage,' other threats include the possible expiration of new programs that address Medicare reimbursement and low-patient volume. A new report says half of all rural hospitals are operating in the red.

By LIZ CAREY, The Daily Yonder

For more than a dozen years, leaders in the rural health care field have issued strong warnings: Rural hospitals are struggling financially.

Despite public attention and some changes in federal policies, difficulties continue. A new report from a private health-care consulting company has found that nearly 20% of all rural hospitals are at risk of closing.

The report, issued annually by the Chartis Center for Rural Health, said the percentage of rural hospitals operating in the red jumped to 50%, up from 43% last year. Of the independent rural hospitals across the country, 55% were operating in the red. More than 60% of rural hospitals are affiliated with larger health-systems. Of those, 42% were operating in the red.

All told, Chartis identified 418 of the 2,115 of the rural hospitals as "vulnerable to closure." Since 2020, 35 rural hospitals have closed, including nine last year. Nearly 200 rural hospitals have closed since 2005.

"I think we're in a much, much worse situation," Michael Topchik, national leader for the Chartis Center for Rural Health said in an interview with the Daily Yonder. "I mean, more than 15 years ago, I remember sharing some of these statistics... and there was a little bit of 'Chicken Little' in the air with a third of rural hospitals operating in the red... Now, to see half of rural hospitals operating in the red... in the absence

of something being done, things have just gotten more challenging."

Those increased challenges include changes to Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement rates, changes to how hospitals are categorized, and what services hospitals are able to provide, among other things.

One federal program, the Rural Emergency Hospital (REH), provides rural hospitals with larger payments from Medicare and Medicaid, as well as a \$3.2 million annual stipend, but eliminates a hospital's ability to offer in-patient services.

Passed as a way to prevent the loss of emergency services in communities at risk of losing their hospitals, the new designation for hospitals within the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services went into effect in 2023. Eighteen hospitals chose to become an REH, Topchik said. While the program is new, he anticipates more rural hospitals will make the change.

"For many hospitals on the edge, Congress certainly saw it as a solution to maintain those vital services," he said. "The verdict is still out though... I think we'll easily see 300 to 400 rural hospitals who take up REH."

Still more is needed, he said. One issue to be addressed is how Medicare Advantage programs affect rural hospitals' bottom line, he said.

Medicare Advantage plans offer privatized versions of Medicare that are often less expensive for consumers and provide more benefits than the government-run program. Enrollment in these plans has more than doubled over the last 10 years. Enrollment in rural communities has increased over the last four or five years, he said.

And that's a problem for rural hospitals, he said. Medicare Advantage takes longer to pay than traditional Medicare and is more likely to deny claims or prior authorizations. That change has up-ended rural hospitals' bottom line, he said.

"Traditional Medicare is very predictable about what's allowed and what's not allowed, and they pay promptly on a monthly basis," Topchik said. "If your biggest payer is Medicare, which for most rural hospitals it is, and now more than a third, and in many states it's more than 50% of your patients are on Medicare Advantage, well, then, all of a sudden, your entire financial foundation has just shifted, like an earthquake, and it's just really hard to make up for that."

Harold Miller with the Center for Healthcare Quality and Payment Reform (CHQPR) said his organization's look into the situation found worse results than Chartis. CHQPR estimates the number of hospitals vulnerable is closer to 600, with 300 at immediate risk of closing.

He said the federal government needs to further regulate Medicare Advantage plans.

"Even if they didn't deny the claim, the amount that they would pay for the claim might not be adequate to cover the cost," he said. "What is the federal government doing to ensure that Medicare managed care plans in particular, are paying the hospitals an adequate amount?"

Additionally, he said, the federal government should require insurance companies to negotiate with smaller rural hospitals.

"Many of the hospitals tell me they can't even get the plans on the phone," he said. "These are all things that the federal government could be doing to try to solve the problem and they're not."

Existing programs that were designed to help keep rural hospitals in better financial condition are in danger of being eliminated, officials said.

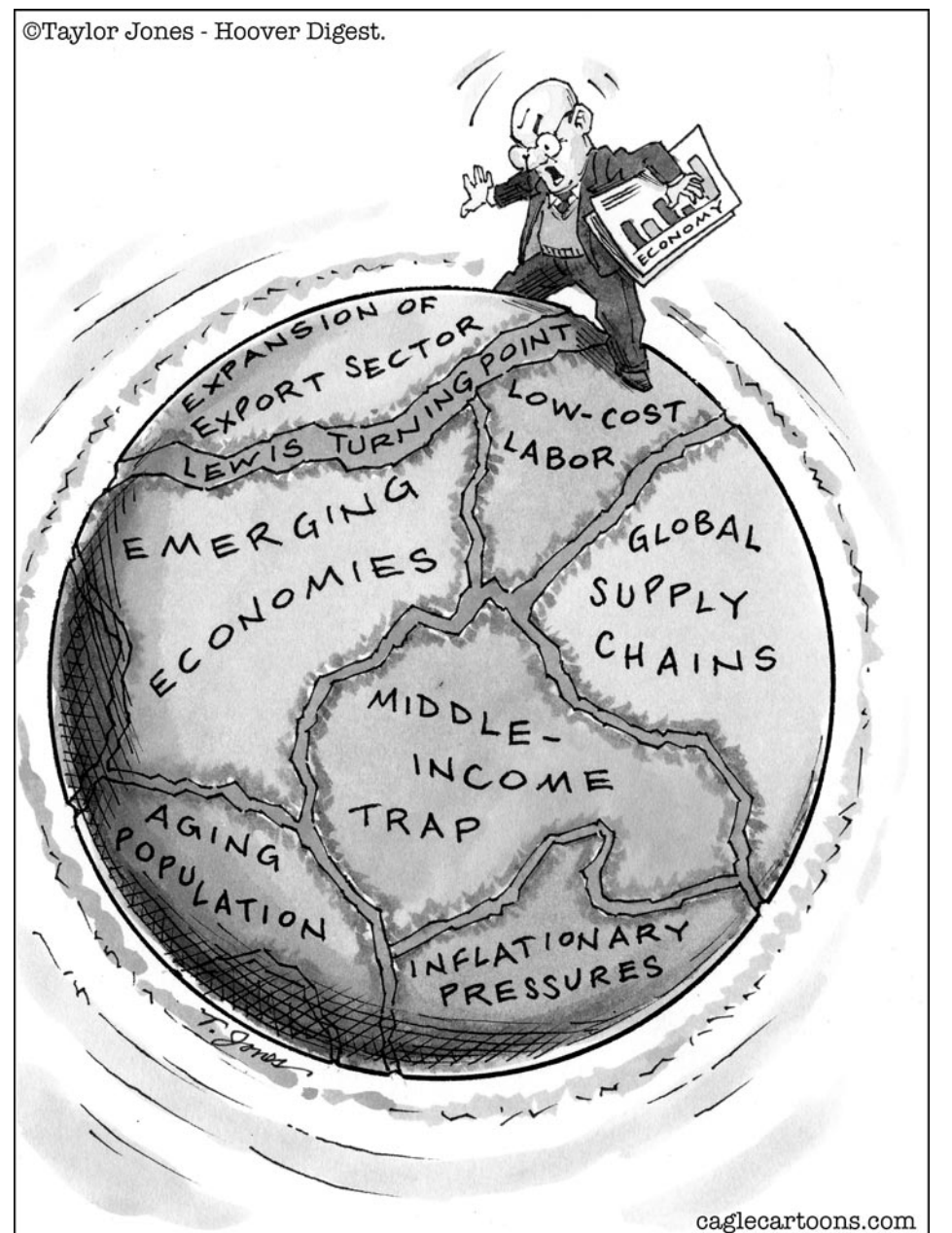
According to the American Hospital Association (AHA), two programs that cur-

rently benefit rural hospitals could expire this year. The Medicare-dependent Hospitals (MDH) program that provides higher payments small rural hospitals where Medicare patients are at least 60% of their admissions, and the Low-volume Adjustment (LVA) program that helps rural hospitals with low patient volumes to cover the cost of providing services, are both in danger of expiring on Sept. 30, the AHA said. The programs are necessary to keep the hospitals open, it said.

In February, the organization urged Congress to support the Rural Hospital Support Act S. 1110) and the Assistance for Rural Community Hospitals (ARCH) Act (H.R. 6430) that would extend those programs.

"The network of providers that serves rural Americans is financially fragile and more dependent on Medicare revenue due to the high percentage of Medicare beneficiaries who live in rural areas," the AHA said in a statement. "Rural residents also on average tend to be older, have lower incomes and higher rates of chronic illness than urban counterparts. This greater dependence on Medicare may make certain hospitals more financially vulnerable."

Liz Carey is a contributing writer for the Daily Yonder, where this appeared.



The Supreme Court, Its Credibility In Tatters, Is Goose-Stepping for Trump In Slow Motion

By DICK POLMAN

Way back when I was a boy, the US Supreme Court was so revered as an institution that my fourth-grade teacher required us to learn the names of all nine members. We kids could never have imagined that there'd come a day when the highest bench in the land would be so widely reviled.

And deservedly so, because no matter what its MAGA-infested majority ultimately concocts for Donald Trump's bogus "immunity" case, enormous damage has already been done. By slow-walking the criminal defendant's last-ditch appeal to escape accountability, by bending over backwards to entertain fake "immunity" arguments that are found nowhere in the history, text, or structure of the Constitution, the corrupted court has already postponed the long-planned federal trial – virtually ensuring that voters will not know, prior to the balloting, whether Trump is guilty of sabotaging the peaceful transfer of power.

I won't numb you by highlighting the low moments in the April 25 oral argument session, except to point out that the

majority's contemptible attempts to hold Trump weasel out of his criminal predicament clashed directly with the court's own long-held principles. Here's how the previous supremes ruled in a case back in 1882: "No man in this country is so high that he is above the law. No officer of the law may set that law at defiance with impunity. All the officers of the government, from the highest to the lowest, are creatures of the law and are bound to obey it. It is the only supreme power in our system of government, and every man who by accepting of-fice participates in its functions is only the more strongly bound to submit to that supremacy."

Conservatives, true conservatives, take pride in respecting judicial precedent. There isn't a scintilla of evidence in case law or in our founding document that a criminally indicted ex-president should be magically shielded, but the current court majority is so radicalized that judicial precedent is consigned to the toilet. A true conservative, former federal appeals court judge J. Michael Luttig, listened to the MAGA justices' oral arguments and warned in a tweet: "If a president cannot be held accountable under the Constitution for having to attempted to overturn an election that he lost fair and square, remain in power, and all the while preventing the peaceful transfer of power, then that is to cut the heart and soul out of America's democracy and the rule of law."

We're being goose-stepped in slow motion toward home-grown fascism, and if that reality seems hard to fathom, we need only remember the sleazy ways this court came

to be.

This court does not represent the will of the people. That's the bottom line.

Of the nine justices currently sitting, five were named by presidents – George W. Bush and Trump – who got the job despite losing the popular vote. If the 5-4 Republican majority in 2000 hadn't summarily halted the Florida election recount and dragged Bush across the finish line, there may have been no Bush presidency, no John Roberts, and no Sam Alito.

Trump, another popular vote loser, gave us a MAGA trifecta. Neil Gorsuch got his seat only because Senate leader Mitch McConnell refused for a year to let President Barack Obama fill a vacancy. Then came accused rapist Brett Kavanaugh. Then Amy Coney Barrett was sped onto the bench on the eve of the 2020 presidential election, even though McConnell had previously insisted that no justice should ever be confirmed on the eve of a presidential election. All three Trump nominees were confirmed by Republican senators who represent only a minority of Americans.

And the sixth member of this gang, Clarence Thomas, is participating in the immunity case despite the fact that his wife was a well-documented player in Trump's fake "Stop the Steal" movement. Thomas, the well-financed pet of right-wing billionaires (as is Alito) will be free to wield his key vote next month (or in June, however long they wish to delay) because the court's conflict-of-interest rules have more holes than a slice of Swiss cheese.

All told, says former federal prosecutor Dennis Aftergut, these six justices are po-

tentially "creating the conditions to let the man who nearly destroyed the Constitution get off scot-free. All while setting the stage for him to complete the task."

And according to a journalist who interviewed Trump at length earlier in April for a *Time* cover story, here are some of the criminal defendant's intended tasks: "He would let red states monitor women's pregnancies and prosecute those who violate abortion bans. He would, at his personal discretion, withhold funds appropriated by Congress, according to top advisers. He would be willing to fire a US Attorney who doesn't carry out his order to prosecute someone, breaking with a tradition of independent law enforcement that dates from America's founding. He is weighing pardons for every one of his supporters accused of attacking the US Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, more than 800 of whom have pleaded guilty or been convicted by a jury ... He would gut the US civil service, deploy the National Guard to American cities as he sees fit, close the White House pandemic-preparedness office, and staff his Administration with acolytes who back his false assertion that the 2020 election was stolen."

The moral of the story: Our highest court is not coming to save us. We'll have to do that for ourselves.

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When Moral Hygiene Becomes a Lethal Mistake

By JOE CONASON

Historical analogies rarely carry much weight, especially in a time when so much about politics has changed so rapidly. To compare what is happening in 2024 to events that occurred over half a century earlier hardly seems useful.

It mostly isn't. And yet the election of 1968, whose outcome proved disastrous for America and the world, looms over the coming months like a foreboding specter.

Despite all the obvious differences in personalities, issues, technologies and ideologies, there is a haunting parallel between then and now in the increasingly fraught debate among Democrats and progressives over a divisive war – and the alienation of younger and minority voters from the party they would otherwise support.

By the spring of 1968, the movement against the Vietnam War had sparked a sense of furious frustration among young Americans who saw it causing tens of thousands of pointless deaths with no justification or end in sight. Massive antiwar protests swept across the nation's universities and colleges, sometimes resulting in conflict with authorities. Dissent within his own party had inspired not one but two insurgent candidacies against President Lyndon B. Johnson, who declared in late March that he wouldn't seek a second term.

The assassination of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy snuffed hopes for a fresh Democratic ticket. The nomination fell to Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey, Johnson's personally anointed successor, at the Democratic National Convention

in Chicago. While the antiwar movement was generally peaceful and orderly, the student left had spawned a revolutionary wing whose leaders aimed for confrontation in the streets. The Windy City's conservative mayor, Richard J. Daley, was only too eager to answer them with billy clubs and tear gas.

Chaos and violence outside the convention, instigated by a rampaging police force, deepened the party's split and left millions of young voters vowing to support a third-party candidate or simply abstain.

Flash forward to the lawns and quadrangles of American academia today, where laudable protest over Israel's long, bloody incursion into Gaza is giving rise to a movement against the very existence of the Jewish state, marred by an undertone of antisemitism as well as anti-American ferocity. Leaders of this movement are poised to bring a rerun of 1968 to the streets of Chicago, which will again host the DNC this summer. They're vowing to shun President Joe Biden as retribution for his support of Israel in its war against the Hamas terrorists, who brutally murdered more than a thousand innocents last Oct. 7.

Although I was too young to vote in 1968, I still recall my own passionate revulsion against the Vietnam War and how bitterly I argued with my father – an Army veteran who also opposed the war – over his determination to vote for Humphrey. The consequence of any alternative, he warned, would be the election of Richard M. Nixon, a perfidious character who could never be trusted with the presidency.

He was right and I was wrong, as history revealed all too starkly. Nixon lied about a phony "peace plan," won the election and rapidly escalated and expanded the war to a degree that could rightly be deemed genocidal. To win a second term, he embarked on a crime spree the nation had never seen in the White House – at least until the advent

of former President Donald Trump. Nobody thinks Humphrey would have perpetrated those atrocities and felonies.

Whether or not one agrees with Biden on Israel versus Palestine – and I don't – he has done nothing that remotely approaches the criminal destruction of the US against Vietnam. Indeed, he has sought to mitigate the reckless and murderous approach of the Israeli government while recognizing its right to defend itself. Refusing to vote for him as "a message" is an act of purist vanity that could lead to consequences as dire as the Nixon victory. Rather than the "lesser of two evils," Biden is a good president coping with a world of difficult and sometimes terrible choices.

The alternative is Trump, a dictator in waiting who has already mounted a coup and openly aspires to locking up his adversaries. He is an exponent of extremism on every front, including the Middle East, where he can be expected to endorse the most vicious repression of Palestinians and may well lead us into war against Iran – a catastrophic error that Biden has successfully resisted. He is reasonably suspected of betraying the nation to hostile authoritarian powers. On every other issue, from abortion rights to climate change, his retrograde views are repugnant to young voters.

A democratic election is not an opportunity to display moral hygiene or an audition to join a cool club. This year, as always, voting will be an exercise of choices that are never perfect – but may just allow us to escape doom.

Joe Conason is the editor in chief of NationalMemo.com and author of several books, including (with Gene Lyons) "The Hunting of the President: The Ten-Year Campaign to Destroy Bill and Hillary Clinton" (St. Martin's Press, 2000). Conason co-produced a 2004 documentary film, "The Hunting of the President," based on the book.

Looking for a Better Job? Good News!

The Biden administration is cracking down on "noncompete clauses," which employers use to bar their workers from finding better opportunities.

By HEIDI SHIERHOLZ

Changing jobs can be the best way to get a raise. But employers often force workers to sign "noncompete clauses," making it harder for them to move to better jobs – and artificially depressing wages.

That will change later this year.

The Federal Trade Commission re-

cently issued a new rule declaring that most noncompete clauses in employment contracts are unfair. The new rule bans employers from requiring workers to sign these agreements and prohibits the enforcement of existing "noncompetes" for workers other than senior executives.

This is an important step toward fostering fair competition and empowering workers.

Noncompete agreements are employment provisions that ban workers at one company from working for, or starting, a competing business within a certain period of time after leaving a job. They're ubiquitous. The Economic Policy Institute finds that more than one out of every four private-sector workers are required to sign one as a condition of employment.

These agreements aren't limited to high-wage workers in knowledge-sensitive occupations and industries. More than a quarter (29%) of private workplaces with an average wage of less than \$13 per hour used noncompete agreements for all their

workers, according to one survey.

The only leverage non-union workers have with their employers is their ability to quit and take a job somewhere else. But employers have been using noncompete agreements to cut that source of worker power off at the knees.

The research on the economic impact of noncompetes is clear: By keeping workers from finding better opportunities, they reduce wages and reduce the formation of new firms. In other words, by restricting employees from joining competitors or starting their own ventures, noncompetes impede not only individual career and wage growth but also the dynamism of the broader economy.

Employers don't need noncompetes to protect their trade secrets, as they sometimes claim. Intellectual property law already provides significant legal protections for trade secrets. Noncompetes have been unenforceable in California for decades without keeping that state from becoming a leader in tech innovation.

Further, noncompetes are often bundled with other anti-competitive employer practices that harm workers.

For instance, over half of firms surveyed that required noncompetes for at least some of their employees also required workers to agree to mandatory arbitration, rather than the court system, to resolve disputes with their employers. This underscores that the purpose of noncompete agreements is to restrict employees' options, not to protect trade secrets.

Noncompetes are about reducing competition, full stop. It's in their name.

Noncompetes are bad for workers, bad for consumers, and bad for the broader economy. By banning them, the FTC's rule will help raise wages for workers and take an important step toward creating an economy that is not only strong but also works for working people.

Heidi Shierholz is president of the Economic Policy Institute. This op-ed was distributed by OtherWords.org.

Building Resilience, Saving Lives

By DAVID MCCALL

Scott Cox sprinted across the field, slogging through ankle-deep water, to where his parents' house stood moments before.

He found a mountain of debris from the EF5 tornado, a milk truck that the unusually powerful twister had flung into the yard, and his parents' horse, bleeding, covered with welts, standing dazed near the remnants of the back deck.

And then Cox, a longtime member of the United Steelworkers (USW), heard his mother's cries. He dug her out of the rubble by hand, saving her, only to lose his father, who was too injured even for CPR and perished along with 15 others in Smithville, Miss., that day.

The people of Smithville opened a domed tornado shelter following the April 2011 disaster, but that merely underscored America's need for a comprehensive, forward-looking approach that empowers communities to fortify defenses, construct new bulwarks and avert climate-related destruction in the first place.

Now, thanks to President Joe Biden's Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), the nation is building that kind of life-saving resilience.

The USW-backed IIJA delivers billions for projects to end droughts, protect the coasts against hurricanes, harden infrastructure, build stronger buildings, and pro-

vide grants for storm-resistant safe rooms.

Mississippi alone received hundreds of millions so far, including \$4.8 million announced just this month to upgrade two hurricane evacuation routes.

"The ultimate responsibility of the government is to keep people safe," observed Cox, president of Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR) Chapter 9-8. "That's the No. 1 priority—and not only safe from enemies foreign and domestic but also from natural disasters.

"Having these resources, I think, is very, very important, especially in rural areas," continued Cox, describing the Smithville disaster as a "traumatic experience that won't end."

Amid the tornado warning that day, he left the sporting goods factory where he worked to pick up his son at school. They arrived home in time for Cox to see the twister form as he stood on the front porch, and the two took shelter against the rain, wind, breaking glass and quaking walls.

After the tornado passed, Cox looked out the front door and saw that "everything that had been there my whole life" was "basically just gone."

He ran across the family farm to his parents' place, so damaged that he walked around wondering, "What part of the house is this?"

Cox discovered the milk truck, its wipers still squeaking back and forth in front of a hole that used to be the windshield, and he saw the driver, severely injured but still living, sprawled on the grass. He found his dad's truck, "turned upside down and just crushed," 100 feet from the garage.

The horse stood near the area where Cox's mother lay buried, and her cries

guided him to the spot where he unearthed her and unsuccessfully attempted to save his dad. Cox's son flagged down an ambulance, which transported his mother and the milk truck driver to the hospital just as other victims began arriving there, some stretched out on doors that had been shoved into the beds of pickup trucks.

"You can read about it," Cox said of a natural disaster.

"You can watch it on TV. But unless you go through it, I don't think you can totally understand how bad it is," he added, noting the investments in resilience will spare others the pain he and his community experienced.

The need for these investments continues to grow as climate change contributes to stronger, more frequent storms as well as a growing number of floods, droughts and other disasters.

The IIJA, for example, invests hundreds of millions in federal, state and local programs for wildfire prevention and control. The funds cover initiatives ranging from remote fire detection to brush-clearing, forest thinning and other kinds of fuels reduction.

"Prevention is huge," said Kevin Cadogan, a member of USW Local 9012 who steps away from his union paramedic job with Frontier Ambulance in Wyoming each summer to work as a wildland firefighter.

"We need to do a lot more fuels mitigation," Cadogan said, noting some communities have little buffer between them and the forests. "We need enough space where we can slow the fire down before it gets to the house."

Cadogan is a "hotshot," an elite type of firefighter known for both skill and fitness who responds to wildfires throughout the

United States and even Canada.

Because of the need for these firefighters, Local 9012 negotiated contract language enabling part-time paramedics like Cadogan to put in their required number of shifts before and after the fire season.

The IIJA also aims to build up and strengthen the firefighter corps. It funds training, furnishes equipment and provides health and safety resources, along with other supports firefighters need.

As part of a 20-person crew, Cadogan builds fire breaks and uses back fires, or controlled burns, to prevent and manage blazes. "It's fighting fire with fire," he said of the latter technique, noting controlled burns consume fuel the wildfires otherwise would use to gain strength.

Cadogan recalled arriving in Northern California two years ago to help fight the massive Mosquito Fire and seeing "the frightened look" in the eyes of residents evacuating one town.

He and his crew ended up helping to save the community, he said, calling it one of his most rewarding experiences as a firefighter.

Cox continues to heal from the Smithville tornado and knows that victims of other disasters bear similar scars. He applauds the IIJA investments because they deliver not only greater safety but peace of mind.

"When you take preventive measures like this, you really don't know how many lives you can save," he said. "It's kind of like a good safety program in the plant. You just keep on keeping people safe."

David McCall is International President of United Steelworkers. See the blog at USW.org.

UAW Organizers Hope Chattanooga VW Win Opens South to Unions

By JOSEPH B. ATKINS

OXFORD, Miss. — Somewhere in heaven Crystal Lee Sutton, the real-life "Norma Rae" of the epic labor war in the Carolina textile industry of the 1970s, has a big smile on her face.

More than anyone, Sutton—the inspiration for the 1979 film "Norma Rae" — would know the joy that the 4,300 workers at the Volkswagen plant in Chattanooga, Tennessee, must feel after their huge victory recently to join the United Auto Workers.

Yet, with that smile comes hard-earned knowledge that the fight is far from over. Sutton, who died in 2009, and her fellow workers in Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina, fought a decade-long war with the giant J.P. Stevens textile company before winning their union. It took the auto workers in Chattanooga three major votes and 10 years to gain the April 20 win. They went from losing their first vote 626-712 in 2014 and second vote 776-833 in 2019, to win this time by an unofficial count of 2628 to 985, a 73% to 23% margin.

Now the fight will turn to the bargaining table to get a union contract with Volkswagen, something that took Sutton and her fellow workers six years after their union victory to get with notoriously anti-union J.P. Stevens.

Beyond Chattanooga, the UAW has set its targets on the deeper South, with a vote coming up at the 5,000-plus-worker Mercedes-Benz plant in Vance, Alabama, May 13-17. Organizers are confident they have the majority support needed for victory.

The UAW, which has pledged \$40 million to unionize auto plants in the South, is also eyeing other non-union, foreign-owned auto plants in the South, such as Hyundai in Alabama, Toyota in Mississippi, and Nissan in Tennessee and Mississippi.

"Being able to have a voice of your own is more important than just letting other people decide for you," worker Manny Perez, 25, told crusading labor reporter Mike Elk of PaydayReport.com just

before the final results came in at Volkswagen.

Elk believes the UAW will secure a contract with Volkswagen without too much resistance, because of the overwhelming pro-union vote at the plant. However, anti-union forces beyond the company, such as former US Senator and Chattanooga Mayor Bob Corker, will do anything they can to stall any more union progress.

Those forces will be much in play at the Mercedes-Benz plant, where management has already held required attendance anti-union meetings with workers despite the fact that such meetings violate the German company's own stated principles of non-interference during organizing efforts.

Prior to the vote in Chattanooga, the governors of six Southern states, including Alabama, issued an ominous warning against bringing unions to the South. Republican Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee told workers they "risk their futures" if they vote union. A so-called "labor" online site called the LaborUnionNews.com pushed anti-UAW propaganda even as it presented itself as a valid source of labor information.

In the 2014 union vote, Corker and then-Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam, both Republicans, essentially lied to the public by pretending to keep their distance while working feverishly to defeat the union behind closed doors. Haslam was part of a scheme to offer Volkswagen \$300 million to expand its Chattanooga plant so long as the company worked with the state in preventing unionization there. Corker worked with LaborUnionNews.com owner Peter List back in 2014 to defeat the UAW.

"You got the whole community against you, the supervisors, the merchants, the newspapers," the late Mississippi labor warrior Ray Smithhart, then-dean of his state's labor organizers, told me back in 2004. "You can't get the message across. What we needed was at least some kind of debate. This would let the employees hear both sides of the issues."

I wish Smithhart had lived to witness the making of labor history at Chattanooga in April.

"This is a defining moment for the workers throughout the South and the rest of the country," the University of California at Berkeley Labor Center Co-Chair Brenda Muñoz said in a statement issued after the victory. "Foreign auto manufacturers can no longer count on the Southern states to provide cheap labor at the expense of working

families."

Several factors contributed to the UAW victory in Chattanooga. A new cadre of young workers have joined the Volkswagen plant in recent years, bringing with energy and a greater willingness to consider the union cause that older workers have had. In a recent Southern Workers Assembly online discussion with workers and activists across the region, veteran organizer Ed Bruno of the United Electrical, Radio & Machine Workers of America (UE) said that young and energized organizers are key to union success today.

Another factor is the success of the UAW's Stand Up Strike campaign in 2023 that led to union victories at General Motors, Ford, and Stellantis. Soon after the vote in Chattanooga, the UAW scored another victory with the Daimler Truck company in Tennessee, North Carolina and Georgia, securing an agreement that included 25% raises for workers and an end to wage tiers.

Volkswagen, unionized everywhere else in the world except in the United States, had to comply with rules from its German base to keep hands-off in the union effort, including forbidding anti-union one-on-one sessions and required attendance at anti-union films.

Workers have complained about safety conditions at the plant and lax efforts to address safety issues even when identified. Company promises of better days to come never materialized. All factors that provide fertile soil for unionization.

Winning the South has been a dream

of organized labor for more than a century. The historic labor battles in the coal mines of Kentucky and West Virginia and in the textile mills of the Carolinas in the 1920s and 1930s led to many heartbreaking defeats, just as did the Congress of Industrial Union's "Operation Dixie" campaign in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Even in victory, Crystal Lee "Norma Rae" Sutton and her fellow workers had to fight 17 years to get both a union and contract, a struggle that included what National Labor Relations Board administrative judge Bernard Reiss called "corporate designed lawlessness."

Today's struggle is no less monumental. "Workers in Michigan are pitted against workers in Alabama, workers in the United States are pitted against workers in Mexico," UAW President Shawn Fain wrote recently in *In These Times* magazine. "A united working class is the only effective wall against the billionaire class' race to the bottom."

In other words, the nation as a whole—and workers everywhere—benefit when Southern workers start carrying union cards.

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MARY SANCHEZ



Many students thought they'd be planning for their spring graduations. Instead, conflicts on the Israel-Hamas war played out in campus protests.

The Challenge to US Universities – Free Speech Can't Lead to Antisemitism

A dual threat is sweeping American campuses.

Antisemitic speech and abuse of students' right to free speech are both escalating, just as Passover, normally a joyous time commemorating Jewish freedom from slavery, began.

Many students, of all faiths or none, thought they'd be planning for celebrations at their spring graduations. Instead, conflicting views on the Israeli-Hamas war are playing out in campus protests nationwide.

Jewish students at Columbia University, Yale, and many other esteemed universities, say they feel unsafe, unwelcome as pro-Palestinian students are protesting, setting up solidarity encampments on campus.

Believe them, even as some Jewish students also support calls for a ceasefire.

City police have been called in on some campuses, arrests have been made,

and suspensions doled out.

The protesting students are not deterred. If anything, they have been doubling their efforts, and will likely continue to do so, in reaction to the pushback from administrators and police.

Classes went online at Columbia University in New York City. The administrators cited student safety.

On the west coast, the University of Southern California landed a trifecta attack on the First Amendment. Administrators at USC managed to elevate, censor, and protect its valedictorian speaker, all in one decision.

The university disinvited the student, Asna Tabassum, to give a short speech at the May 10 graduation ceremony. Her critics pointed to a social media link that she posted three years ago, one that some flagged as antisemitic.

Tabassum claims that she holds less inflammatory views now, and perhaps she does, but she's still banned from the podium.

Further bending to fear, administrators at USC have now decided to rescind invitations to other scheduled speakers: tennis great Billie Jean King and director (and alum) Jon M. Chu, the mastermind behind the film, *Crazy Rich Asians*. The university planned to grant honorary degrees to both.

And yet the fears of university heads aren't necessarily misplaced.

Troublemakers of the worst kind – such as avowed white supremacists who scream antisemitic rants for sport – can be drawn to this sort of discord. They feed off it, giddy for stealthy ways to spread their hatred.

It's not a reach that administrators are fearful of outsiders trying to enter the fray on campuses so they can infiltrate student groups and ratchet up tensions higher than they already are.

As bad as that possibility sounds,

there's one calming note which deserves to be underscored: American institutions of higher learning have been in this delicate spot before. They have had to balance tediously between protecting students, their right to free speech, and their image from news coverage that big donors find scandalous.

With such events, endowments tend to suffer. Some campuses are already hearing from deep pocketed alumni who just want all the noise to go away.

Expect the administrators to make some decisions that keep funders donating. They are more inclined to follow the money than to protect students' rights or Jewish students who are suffering through antisemitism hurled their way.

The universities, challenged, bruised, and perhaps embarrassed by their inability to control media narratives, nevertheless survived similar challenges in the past.

And they will do so again.

Decades ago, the burning issue was student demands for disinvestment of university funds that supported South Africa's apartheid system.

It's similar today, for some protesters. They want academic institutions and the US government to disinvest from anything benefiting Israel, but especially American-supplied armaments.

But what's occurred so far on campuses pales in comparison to the past, thankfully. It's an element of human nature to believe that this moment and the emotions behind the current protests have never been matched before. Younger people are especially prone to this fallacy.

Campuses have been this fraught before, and even for the worse, in terms of how long past protests have lasted – sometimes years.

Beginning in the mid-1960s and continuing through the '70s and '80s, there were long sit-ins, hunger strikes, and shan-

tytowns that students erected on campuses to protest South African apartheid.

There were also student arrests, like what happened recently at Columbia University. Celebrities and international figures participated. Desmond Tutu came to the University of California Berkeley campus for one event.

Eventually, many universities disinvested their funds from South Africa before the country's anti-Black system fell. And this happened despite US political pushback and geopolitical efforts to protect trade with the African country.

A crucial difference today is the role of social media. Dangerous doxing and cyberbullying, which can be used to target just about anyone, has already been reported.

Acts of antisemitism are on the rise, nationally and internationally.

And although most deny it, the threat of antisemitism emanating from protesters and faculty is very real, even if unintended at times.

Some people do begin to lean into antisemitic tropes during times like these. They stray and then cross a line. A person can question the Israeli government and its military operations without aligning with views that demean Jewish people.

For university administrations the stakes are high. Speech, even speech that some find abhorrent, is protected in America, as is the right to protest.

This moment in history will be remembered for what protesters did or didn't accomplish. But it will be judged by how academic deans and their governing boards reacted.

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Our Workforce Needs More Immigrants

Can Biden link good economics with good politics?

By ROBERT KUTTNER

In late April, among a flurry of other important Joe Biden executive orders, the Department of Health and Human Services finalized a long-pending order on standards and staffing ratios in nursing homes. Along with other mandates, the order requires that all nursing homes that participate in Medicare or Medicaid "provide residents with a minimum total of 3.48 hours of nursing care per day, which includes at least 0.55 hours of care from a registered nurse per resident per day, and 2.45 hours of care from a nurse aide per resident per day," and that they "develop a staffing plan to maximize recruitment and retention."

Also in April, Biden came under renewed pressure to extend work permits not just for the several hundred thousand asylum seekers clogging shelters in many cities, as he did earlier in April, but to the much larger number of undocumented migrants, estimated at around 10 million, who are not permitted to work legally.

The American Business Immigration Coalition, representing major associations that rely on immigrant workers, joined by UNITE HERE Local 1, issued a statement calling on Biden to issue permits for all undocumented immigrants. Executive director Rebecca Shi said, "We are inspired by President Biden granting work permits to new migrants and ask that he extends the same dignity of a legal work permit to long term residents, including spouses of US citizens."

These two stories are, of course, linked. The vast majority of nursing home workers, especially nurse aides, are immigrants. There are already extreme shortages, causing some nursing homes to close, even without the new and long-overdue standards.

Some of the shortages are due to the low pay, but even with better pay, nurse aides are in short supply.

The same is true of the restaurant industry, where some restaurants have limited hours or have closed because they can't find enough workers. A survey by the National Restaurant Association earlier this year found that 87% of restaurants say they are operating with insufficient staff. Here too, immigrants make up a high percentage of workers.

The fact is that America needs more immigrants in our workforce, not fewer. Even with the enforcement crackdown, many immigrants work illegally, but they risk being deported.

A more generous and comprehensive policy of work permits for immigrants would be a red flag to all the haters, who blame Biden for America's porous Southern border. But that animus would be offset by support from business and immigrant communities. There are now more than 20 million foreign-born naturalized citizens in the US legally, and they can vote.

The Congressional Budget Office has projected that immigrants will increase GDP by \$7 trillion over the next decade. Work permits for undocumented migrants would be very smart economics. It would provide more workers in occupations experiencing shortages, damp down inflationary pressures, and improve the quality of services. In human terms, it would be the right thing to do.

Netanyahu Ignores Biden's Warnings and Plans an Imminent Operation in Rafah

No sooner did the House approve \$26 billion in military aid for Israel than Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu defied President Biden yet again by resuming air strikes on Rafah and announcing an invasion plan. Attacks April 21 by Israel's air force killed at least 22 Palestinians in Gaza, mostly women and children. That's the kind of loyalty that \$26 billion buys you—*bupkes, gornisht*—complete contempt.

Netanyahu and his military aides have announced an operation to evacuate civilians from Rafah to Khan Yunis, where tent

cities would be set up. This would be followed by a six-week military operation in Gaza against Hamas. Once again, Netanyahu is deceiving himself that Hamas can be wiped out—and playing Biden for a fool.

On April 22, State Department spokesman Matthew Miller declared, "We don't want to see Palestinians evacuated from Rafah unless it is to return to their homes, and we have made that quite clear to the Israeli government." That's nice. The Israeli government doesn't care what the State Department wants. Miller went on to warn that there is no way for a military operation in Rafah to go forward without massive civilian casualties.

Ever since Israel changed the subject by bombing the Iranian embassy complex, US diplomatic pressure has been directed toward constraining the risk of further escalation in the conflict between Israel and Iran. US officials congratulated themselves when Israel's response to Iran's attack of missiles and drones was limited. But meanwhile, Netanyahu is totally blowing off Biden's repeated warnings about Gaza.

It is the destruction of Gaza and the loss of civilian life that has turned world public opinion against Israel—and American public opinion, especially on the part of the young, against Biden. Israeli military operations against Rafah take us further away

from the kind of regional settlement that could bring some stability and calm, and finally make Biden look more like a hero than a goat.

Search the words "Biden warns Israel," and you will find dozens of explicit Biden warnings against a Rafah invasion in recent weeks that Netanyahu ignored. Biden has the power to explicitly condition delivery of military aid. What is he waiting for? Instead, Biden has gotten sidetracked by yet another secondary issue: proposed US sanctions against the Netzah Yehuda battalion for human rights violations in the occupied West Bank, which have infuriated Netanyahu.

The outbreak of civil disobedience on American campuses will only be further energized by another round of Israeli attacks that kill more Palestinian civilians. A war that Biden has the power to stop has come home in a more ominous way. If Biden does lose to Trump this November, the domestic effects of his failure to restrain Netanyahu will be a paramount cause.

Robert Kuttner is co-editor of *The American Prospect* (prospect.org) and professor at Brandeis University's Heller School. Like him on facebook.com/RobertKuttner and/or follow him at twitter.com/rkuttner.



Prison Communications: Increasingly Free, but Prisoners Still Aren't

Regulating prison communications will do very little to change the fact that we keep millions of people physically trapped in conditions that defy imagination.

By SONALI KOLHATKAR

I recently saw the face of a friend whom I had never met before. In a video call to a California state prison facility, I was finally face-to-face—albeit via video chat—with Dominic Williams, who is serving a sentence of life in prison without the possibility of parole, and who has spent the majority of his life behind bars.

Until recently, Williams and I had been corresponding the old-fashioned way, writing letters to one another for about 20 years. Although we spoke on the phone many years ago, I hadn't ever seen his face aside from photos sent by mail. Now, thanks to new regulations of the prison communication industry, we were able to schedule a video conversation with one another.

Prison communication has been a booming business and is part of a web of industries that depends on society's propensity to lock people up. As the advocacy group Worth Rises has documented, "private corporations have fully monetized crime and punishment with the help of their government partners." More than 4,100 corporations extract money from imprisoned people and their loved ones, exploiting a community held hostage by the prison industrial complex.

For decades, profit-based companies leached off of incarcerated people by charging outrageous per-minute rates for phone calls, simply because they could. Communication with family members—a critical aspect of maintaining mental health in the most inhumane of circumstances—can bankrupt families. Given that mass incarceration in the United States disproportionately targets low-income communities of color, this is the same demographic that the prison communications industry routinely fleeces.

In June 2021, Connecticut, whose incarcerated people were among the most exploited by the prison communication industry, became the first state in the nation to make prison calls free. Just over a year later, California followed suit, although advocates pointed out that the state's county jail system was left out (county jail phone calls were separately capped at 7 cents per minute). Several cities have moved to ensure that the state is on the hook for phone calls to and from prisons, and pressure is growing to adopt such standards nationwide.

What's ironic, but unsurprising, is that such regulations are coming too late. Traditional phone calls are already becoming obsolete in the world outside prison walls, and corporations have rapidly moved to control and monetize digital communications that are not as well regulated.

Such corporate monopolies are exceedingly lucrative. Katya Schwenk explained in *Jacobin* that one major corporate player, ViaPath Technologies, "has been tossed between major private equity firms, bouncing from Goldman Sachs and Veritas Capital to, most recently, American Securities, which says its portfolio of companies brings in \$46 billion in annual revenue."

Further, companies like ViaPath are finding creative new ways to exploit the imprisoned population for services such as "music streaming, e-messaging, video calling, and movies, all hosted on tablets, and all monetized."

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) gave out 90,000 free tablet devices to imprisoned people throughout the state to use ViaPath's services. As a result, communication can be tantalizingly instant—however, as I found out in the course of arranging my video chat interview with Williams, it will cost you. People behind bars and their contacts are charged 5 cents for each email, and 20 cents per minute for video calls.

Further, I discovered the hard way that even when charging a premium for its services, ViaPath Technologies, previously called Global Tel Link (GTL), seems to feel little incentive to provide efficient services. After spending several days installing the GTL app on various platforms and devices, depositing money into an account, being caught in endless loops within its buggy and poorly designed systems, and being dropped by customer service calls that went nowhere, I finally got a response from the company via email that was filled with unhelpful suggestions merely copied and pasted from its website.

Take the irritation we have all felt while trying to navigate corporate customer service lines and multiply that by 10 or even 100 to get an inkling of the frustration felt for a system that slowly chokes users who have no other options.

My experience is not out of the ordinary. Olivia Heffernan and Steve Brooks (who is an incarcerated journalist) pointed out in the Appeal, "CDCR and ViaPath have failed to deliver on their promises."

They quote Jesse Vasquez, executive director of Friends of San Quentin News, who said, "Nothing is free in prison. We all know that. So as soon as one good thing is announced, we pretty much know a bad thing is going to follow." And there is the crux of the problem.

We cannot reform our way out of the prison system. Incarceration is inhumane by design, and tweaking the edges of a system designed to dehumanize can end up legitimizing it. Reforming the prison communications industry as a way to make prison more humane is like putting lipstick on a pig. It looks pretty for a time and may have some short-term benefits, but the underlying porcine nature of the system remains intact.

While I was thrilled at the ability to finally communicate in real time with my friend, to actually see his face and have him see mine, a video chat session is a poor substitute for Williams's actual freedom. A brilliant, highly educated thinker, academic, and author, his continued incarceration benefits no one, other than companies like ViaPath.

There are millions of people like him in prisons, jails, and detention centers across the US. Williams apologized for the technical problems we encountered while trying to arrange our video chat. I responded, "Don't apologize. It's not your fault; it's the system."

Abolishing the prison system, and its adjunct systems of policing and criminal justice, needs to remain an overarching goal for anyone appalled by the inhumanity of incarceration. It was nearly four years ago that the racial justice uprising of 2020 centered calls to divest from policing and prisons and invest in things that actually keep us safe.

Just as police reforms like body cameras and chokehold trainings did nothing to reduce police killings, regulating prison communications will do little to change the fact that we continue to keep millions of people physically trapped in conditions that defy imagination.

Sonali Kolhatkar is the founder, host and executive producer of "Rising Up With Sonali," a television and radio show on Free Speech TV and Pacifica stations. Her most recent book is "Rising Up: The Power of Narrative in Pursuing Racial Justice" (City Lights Books, 2023). She is a writing fellow for the Economy for All project at the Independent Media Institute, which produced this article, and she is racial justice and civil liberties editor at Yes! Magazine. This article appeared at LAProgressive.com.

Here's What a 21st-Century Rural New Deal Looks Like

A strategy for building a rural-urban working-class coalition.

By KATRINA VANDEN HEUVEL

Imagine networks of family-owned farms, powered by solar panels, plowed by workers earning a livable wage, all organized around iconic small-town courthouse squares. Imagine students at the local school taking vocational courses to pursue a trade—future carpenters, mechanics, and electricians getting free training that they can supplement with online research via universally available high-speed broadband.

This is what life could look like after a Rural New Deal.

The proposal has been put forward by an organization called the Rural Urban Bridge Initiative, or RUBI. Founded by progressives raised on hay farms and in coalfields, RUBI goes beyond the typical obvious prescriptions to "engage" rural voters. Instead, they offer a strategy for building a rural-urban working-class coalition that's equal parts sensible and ambitious.

Their efforts come at a fork in the poorly maintained road for the Democratic Party. As RUBI's founders pointed out in a midterm postmortem for *The Nation*, Democrats have been hemorrhaging support among rural voters, two-thirds of whom hold them in "low esteem." And an NBC News poll from last September showed that barely a quarter of rural voters approve of the Biden administration. Those are startling numbers in an election year when the president needs electoral votes from Maine, New Hampshire and Nevada, and crucial Senate seats are being defended in Montana and Ohio.

But by heeding RUBI's advice and championing bold solutions to the chal-

lenges faced by rural and urban workers alike, Democrats could inaugurate a progressive renaissance in places that have been misconstrued as irretrievably lost—and bolster enthusiasm among core voters.

The comprehensive strategy advocated by RUBI asks Democrats to "think, talk, and act different"—and the organization offers a clear vision for how that can get done via their Rural New Deal. It consists of 10 pillars of fearless but practical policy proposals, ranging from universal broadband access to support for small local banks to affordable housing and universal healthcare initiatives.

RUBI also counsels progressives to engage rural Americans by learning to "talk like a neighbor." Instead of relying on a single staffer in Brooklyn for rural outreach—as the Hillary Clinton campaign literally did in 2016—they call for sincere consideration of rural livelihoods and understanding the causes of their alienation. If Democrats did this, RUBI's leaders believe, they might realize that rural and urban workers face many of the same problems—from inflation to stagnant wages to union busting—and might be compelled by many of the same solutions.

Already, progressives have used this empathy-plus-action approach to begin bridging the divide. In the Midwest, Jane Kleeb is making crucial inroads as the chair of the Nebraska Democratic Party. Her brand of heartland populism has sought to build common cause on issues like stopping the Keystone XL pipeline. Instead of advancing an environmental argument alone, she has framed the pipeline as a threat to the land rights of rural voters. The result? The number of elected Cornhusker Democrats has nearly doubled since 2016.

Meanwhile, in the most rural state in the nation, one young progressive has managed to do what national Democrats haven't—pass a Green New Deal. Chloe Maxmin grew up on a venison farm in Maine, and, at the age of 26, won election to the state's House of Representatives. As I wrote in 2022, she became the first Democrat to represent her rural district, all the while running as an unabashed progressive

in the mold of Bernie Sanders.

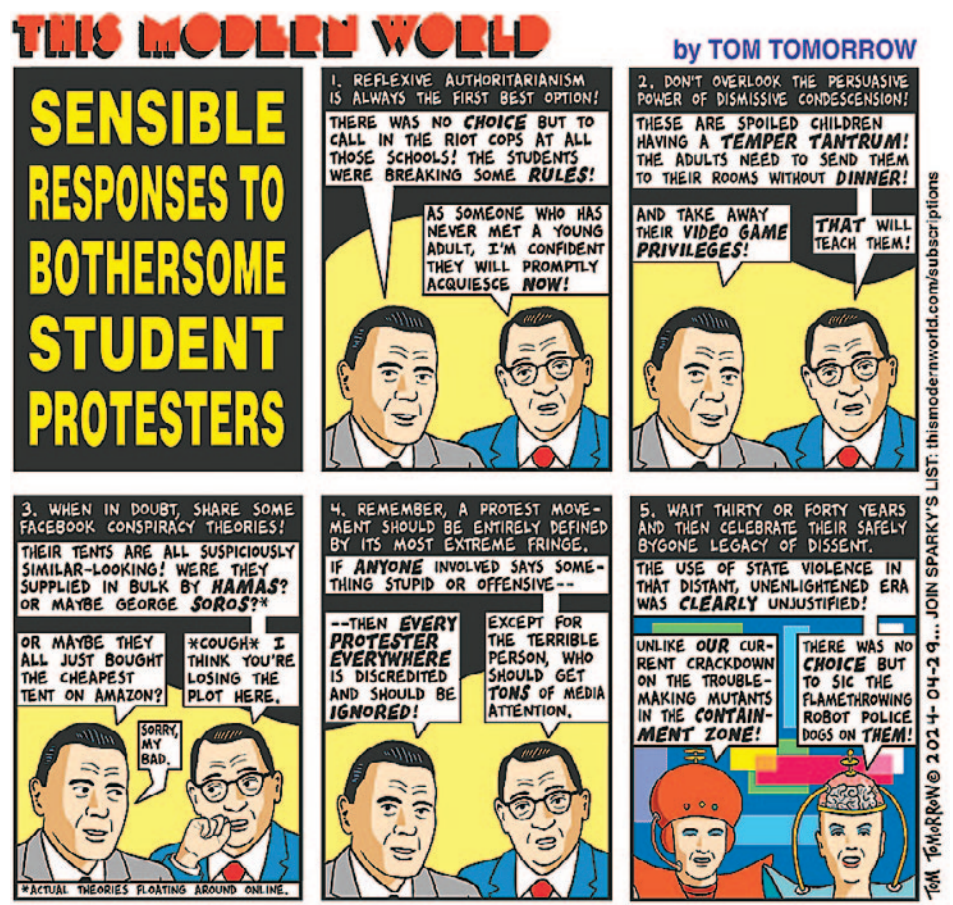
How did Maxmin manage to defy what had been conventionally understood as a fundamental law of politics? She talked to voters, and then she delivered for them. In 2020, she made 90,000 voter contacts, the most of any Senate campaign in the state, and over twice as many as her closest opponent. Once Maxmin arrived in Augusta, she fulfilled one of her keystone campaign promises by helping pass a version of the Green New Deal. The secret sauce isn't so secret: Treat voters with dignity and work hard to solve their problems. Maxmin stepped back from elected office in 2022, but she's still employing the same philosophy to mobilize rural change through her organization, Dirtroad Organizing.

Ahead of (sorry, but what might really

be this time) the most consequential election of our lifetimes, Democrats have an opportunity to follow RUBI's lead, and move from talking about rural voters to knocking on their doors and improving their lives.

Not so long ago, Barack Obama won Iowa by almost 10 points. Today, that may seem unimaginable. But as Chloe Maxmin, Jane Kleeb, and RUBI show, it isn't. With the right mix of pragmatic strategy and visionary solutions, the right leaders could inspire rural Americans to do more than just occasionally support progressivism. They could become its champions.

Katrina vanden Heuvel is editorial director and publisher of The Nation. She served as editor of the magazine from 1995 to 2019. Follow @KatrinaNation.



Would ‘Dictator’ Trump Kill His Rivals?

Trump has unleashed his inner psychopath and if he wins this election it’s going to get uglier here in America than most people today can imagine...

By THOM HARTMANN

TIME magazine reporter Eric Cortellessa spent hours interviewing Donald Trump, producing a shocking cover story April 30. Converting one of his opening paragraphs into bullet points for readability, he summarized that Trump fully plans:

– “To carry out a deportation operation designed to remove more than 11 million people from the country, Trump told me, he would be willing to build migrant detention camps and deploy the US military, both at the border and inland.

– “He would let red states monitor women’s pregnancies and prosecute those who violate abortion bans.

– “He would, at his personal discretion, withhold funds appropriated by Congress, according to top advisers.

– “He would be willing to fire a US Attorney who doesn’t carry out his order to prosecute someone, breaking with a tradition of independent law enforcement that dates from America’s founding.

– “He is weighing pardons for every one of his supporters accused of attacking the US Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, more than 800 of whom have pleaded guilty or been convicted by a jury.

– “He might not come to the aid of an attacked ally in Europe or Asia if he felt that country wasn’t paying enough for its own defense.

– “He would gut the US civil service, deploy the National Guard to American cities as he sees fit, close the White House pandemic-preparedness office, and staff his Administration with acolytes who back his false assertion that the 2020 election was stolen.”

While each and every one of Cortellessa’s points gleaned from Trump’s admissions and brags have the potential to

transform America into a nation more closely resembling Russia or Saudi Arabia than anything seen here since the violence of the Confederacy, the reporter failed to ask Trump about his most troubling threat: to use assassination as a political weapon the way Putin and MBS do routinely.

Along those lines, CNN and the rest of America learned this past weekend that Bill Barr heard Trump repeatedly call for the murder of people he dislikes, but Barr says he thinks it’s all just bluster. Like that Jan. 6th “bluster” that almost led to Mike Pence and Nancy Pelosi ending up dead, and killed at least eight other individuals, including police officers.

Historians will tell you that dictators throughout history started just this same way, making vague threats to whip up their followers and engaging in “bluster.” And then, when the blood starts flowing, people realized, too late, that they should have been taking that all rhetoric seriously.

Killing his political rivals has been a theme with Donald Trump for years, and now that he’s promising to be a “dictator on day one” and to engage in “revenge” and “retribution” it’s past time to take him seriously.

Back in 2016, he bragged that he could shoot somebody on 5th Avenue and his followers would still vote for him.

In 2020, when it was revealed that somebody in the White House had leaked the fact that Trump had fled to the White House bunker when Black Lives Matter protesters were down the street from the presidential residence, Trump flew into a murderous rage. As *Wall Street Journal* reporter Michael Bender wrote in his 2021 book, “Frankly, We Did Win This Election”:

“Trump boiled over about the bunker story as soon as they arrived and shouted at them to smoke out whoever had leaked it. It was the most upset some aides had ever seen the president. ‘Whoever did that, they should be charged with treason!’ Trump reportedly yelled. ‘They should be executed!’”

After calling our soldiers who died at Normandy “suckers” and saying John McCain was a “f***ing loser” for getting shot down over Vietnam, Trump turned on General Mark Milley when he refused Trump’s request for his soldiers to shoot Washington, DC Black Lives Matter protesters “in the legs.” When Milley’s book telling the story was published six months ago, Trump used his Nazi-infested, money-losing social media site to call for Milley himself to be executed, saying he deserved “DEATH!”

In April, before his current New York

trial started, Trump said his supporters would riot and kill people if he were criminally charged for paying off a porn star to hide his moral failings before the 2016 election. He gleefully predicted “death & destruction,” adding that “such a false charge could be catastrophic for our Country.” (Only a tiny handful of people have showed up to support him at his trial.)

Similarly, Trump also tried to get Mark Esper, his acting Defense Secretary, to authorize the military to shoot protestors with live ammunition; Esper, horrified, wrote about it in his book “A Sacred Oath.”

In the few weeks leading up to President Joe Biden’s swearing in, Trump broke a 130-year tradition of not executing people during the presidential transition period: he killed so many federal criminals during those few weeks that the BBC led with the headline “In Trump’s Final Days, a Rush of Federal Executions.”

In a desperate effort to salvage the economy he thought would determine his re-election in 2020, Trump and Jared Kushner decided it would be “an effective political strategy” to let Black and Brown people in Blue states die of COVID while blaming their deaths on Democratic governors.

That “strategy,” according to the British medical journal *Lancet*, led to at least 450,000 unnecessary American deaths from the grisly disease. Trump, in other words, killed almost as many Americans as did the Civil War because he thought it would work to his political advantage. He not only never apologized for all those deaths and shattered families; he continues to claim that his response to the pandemic was “perfect.”

In April, Trump violated his bail conditions by re-posting a video of President Joe Biden hog-tied with an apparent bullet hole in his forehead, laying dead or helpless in the back of a pickup truck. Just a few weeks later, his lawyers told the Supreme Court that he could assassinate his political rivals during a second term. After all, why pass up an opportunity to legally kill people when it’s so much fun?

At least he didn’t have a dog he could shoot in the face.

Levy aside, the issue of Trump wanting to kill his “enemies” came up again when CNN’s Kaitlan Collins interviewed Bill Barr, who’d apparently witnessed several of Trump’s murderous rages.

Barr, who corruptly helped George HW Bush avoid prosecution for Iran/Contra crimes and then buried Robert Mueller’s report on the Trump campaign’s many ties

to Russia, brushed Trump’s threats aside, arguing that Joe Biden’s “socialist agenda” is more dangerous to America than having a man who aspires to be a stone-cold killer in the White House.

Imagining Trump as a murderous dictator is apparently a bridge too far for most of America’s mainstream media: they’re too often busy normalizing him and his campaign. But the simple fact is that every authoritarian in history has not only used imprisonment, torture, and murder as a tool of governance, but most delighted in killing their enemies.

Mussolini brought the death penalty back to Italy specifically for political “crimes against the state,” sentencing 43 people to death by firing squad between 1927 and 1943 (26 executions were carried out).

Hitler delighted in the torture and murder of people he believed had wronged him. Sixteen months into his reign, on the Night of the Long Knives, he ordered the murder, among others, of Ernst Röhm and other leaders of the Sturmabteilung (“Brownshirts”); the last chancellor of the Weimar Republic, Kurt von Schleicher; his own 1932 right-hand-man in the Nazi Party, Gregor Strasser; ; the rightwing former Bavarian Prime Minister Gustav von Kahr; Von Pappen’s speechwriter and conservative firebrand Edgar Jung; and the leader of the rightwing Catholic Action group, professor Erich Klausener.

After several members of his military tried to assassinate Hitler with a bomb, he had them tortured and finally killed by hanging them from meat hooks punched through their flesh while alive and awake. He made a movie of their murder for distribution among his Nazi followers.

Vladimir Putin has anybody he thinks is disloyal executed or thrown out a high window, and most recently murdered his chief political rival, Alexi Navalny. Viktor Orbán tried to defy the European Union and bring the death penalty back to Hungary.

The men Trump most envies and admires — Hitler, Putin, Xi, MBS, and Kim — are all famous for dispatching their opposition with poison, torture, prison, and bullets.

MBS even had an American journalist for the *Washington Post*, Jamal Khashoggi, murdered, hacked into pieces, and his body disposed of. Instead of backing away from the ruthless dictator, Trump’s family took \$2 billion from him and Trump himself is swimming in MBS’s cash from his LIV Golf Tournament.

George W. Bush set the modern prece-

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ROBERT REICH



It’s easy to forget that most current Republican House members, including Speaker Johnson, refused to certify the 2020 election results.

The Most Important Litmus Test of All

If there’s one thing that keeps me up at night, it’s my worry that those of us who are dedicated to democracy and therefore committed to playing by the rules are underestimating the willingness of House Republicans to break the rules to elect Donald Trump.

It’s easy to forget that most current Republican members of the House, including Republican Speaker Michael Johnson, refused to certify the outcome of the 2020 election.

In fact, Johnson helped organize 138 Republican House members to dispute that outcome, despite state certifications and the nearly unanimous rulings from state and federal courts that it was an honest election.

If Johnson and his cronies had so few

scruples then, why should we assume they’ll have more scruples in the weeks following November’s elections?

The specific scenario I worry about is that in the wake of the elections, the House’s election-denying Republicans retain their majority in the next Congress by denying certification of Democratic candidates who have won by close margins. Then, on Jan. 6, 2025, the new Republican House majority refuses to certify Electoral College results from states that went for Joe Biden by close margins — thereby ensuring that no candidate receives an Electoral College majority.

As a result, the decision about who’s to be the next president is made on a state-by-state delegation vote — almost surely delivering it to Trump.

I don’t think this scenario is far-fetched. Good faith can no longer be assumed. Quite the contrary: The current litmus test for Republican lawmakers in the Trump GOP is to say publicly that the 2020 election was stolen from Trump. Presumably they and Trump will do anything to get the White House back.

So what can we do to prevent it?

Long before we reach this constitutional crisis, Speaker Johnson and others in the Republican House leadership must pledge to certify the results of the November elections. They should be asked by the media to make this commitment. If they won’t, Americans need to know — and know why.

It’s worth noting in this regard that Rep. Elise Stefanik, the fourth-ranking Republican in the House, has refused to commit to certifying the results of next November’s elections, saying “we will see if

this is a legal and valid election.”

She then claimed that the 2020 presidential race “was not a fair election” despite multiple legal reviews sought by Trump and his allies confirming that it was.

Why hasn’t Stefanik’s refusal been more widely reported?

Why isn’t the mainstream media requiring House Republicans to commit to certifying the results of the November election?



JESSE JACKSON



"There comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular, but he must take it because conscience tells him it is right."

Demonstrators Have It Right

To the shock of many, demonstrations against the horror in Gaza are spreading across the country, particularly on college campuses. At a time when the young are portrayed as self-absorbed, materialistic, concerned only about getting ahead or hooked on their phones, surprising numbers are putting their bodies on the line to protest the unconscionable violence in the Middle East, even though no Americans are at risk of being drafted to fight or die there.

The demonstrations, overwhelmingly nonviolent, have too often been met with fierce reactions. Campus presidents have called in the police for mass arrests. College donors have cut off all donations and vow never to hire anyone who demonstrates. Classes are being postponed or made vir-

tual; graduation ceremonies are being canceled. In Congress, right-wing legislators have assailed college presidents, and postured about calling in the National Guard. Donald Trump accuses President Joe Biden of fostering the chaos, and is moving to present himself, laughably, as the law-and-order candidate. Millions have been raised to run attack ads against leaders who speak against the war. It's time to cut through the noise to make sense of what is occurring.

First, the demonstrations have been overwhelmingly nonviolent. The protesters are purposefully offending decorum to make a dramatic plea for decency. Incidents of violence have been rare, and perpetrators have been arrested. The demonstrators have often organized to curb the provocateurs. More violence has been inflicted on the demonstrators than has been committed by them. "There comes a time," Dr. Martin Luther King taught us, "when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular, but he must take it because conscience tells him it is right."

The demonstrations represent a moral cause. The Oct. 7 terror attacks by Hamas are indefensible. Israel has every right to defend itself. But Israel is waging a slaughter that has claimed more than 30,000 lives, most of them women and children. Its boycott has reduced the 2 million-plus Gaza residents to the edge of famine. Its bombing of hospitals has savaged medical supplies and capacity across Gaza. In January, the International Court of Justice ruled that Israel's actions put Palestinians in Gaza at an imminent risk of genocide and ordered "im-

mediate and effective measures" to protect them. The horror has only grown worse in the three months that followed.

The demonstrators are calling for an immediate ceasefire, the emergency supply of humanitarian aid, and negotiations for a broader settlement, putting an end to Israel's occupation of Gaza and the West Bank. Many call for universities to divest their endowments from any companies that do business with Israel. This — in the tradition of the divestment campaign that helped end apartheid in South Africa — is a demand that will surely spread if the violence goes on.

The demonstrators have been labeled as antisemitic. Antisemitism is as offensive as racism. Any direct violence against Jews because of their religion constitutes a hate crime that should be prosecuted. It's worth remembering, however, that many of the demonstrators are Jewish, moved to protest Israel's actions personally. Too many critics equate anti-Zionism — the questioning of Israel's actions — with antisemitism, but Zionism has always been controversial in the Jewish community itself. Some of the most egregious instances of antisemitic rhetoric and actions have been perpetrated by provocateurs looking to discredit the demonstrators.

The demonstrations have already had an effect. Press coverage of the war has become somewhat more balanced. More and more legislators have called for a ceasefire, and for conditioning any aid to Israel on an end to the violence. The Biden administration, which continues to arm Israel's disas-

trous course, has begun to push hard for a ceasefire. As this is written, Israel and Hamas seem to be moving toward a 40-day ceasefire and exchange of hostages.

Cynics will dismiss the 40-day ceasefire as a tactical ploy. A pause designed to extend through the end of the school year when students will go home for the summer. For Gazans, however, a ceasefire that allows for massive humanitarian aid is a life-and-death essential. And a revival of the violence will only spark a far greater level of protest.

In reality, the demonstrators represent the best interests of not only humanity but of Israel and the United States which are ever more isolated in the world, shredding any moral authority in the rubble and mass graves of Gaza. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, it is said, can't survive the end of the fighting politically. But Israel cannot bear the political, economic and moral cost of continued war. The demonstrations are messy, loud, disruptive and angry. But the demonstrators represent the best hope for the United States and for Israel. The ultimate measure of a person, Dr. King taught us, is not where he or she stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where they stand at times of challenge and controversy. The demonstrators have it right.

Rev. Jesse Jackson led the Rainbow PUSH Coalition for 51 years; he can still be reached c/o the Coalition, 930 E 50th St., Chicago, IL 60615. Email jjackson@rainbowpush.org. Follow him on Twitter @RevJJackson.

Election Interference

By GENE NICHOL

I'll concede, readily, that in my old age I find it almost unbearable to listen to US Supreme Court arguments. After all, I've been studying them, in one format or another, for many decades. This is the bench of Earl Warren, Thurgood Marshall, William Brennan, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Sandra Day O'Connor, John Marshall Harlan. It's high ground. Or was.

Now there are other occupants. Massively different driving forces. Clarence Thomas, Sam Alito, John Roberts, the three Trump judges. Committed enlistees in a Republican crusade. Untethered to law. Life-long opponents of the high aspirations of independent judicial review. Warriors against the enforcement of the Constitution's obligations to open and secure the channels of democracy.

It's hard to hear them talk. To hear them speak as if they pursued actual inquiry — instead of Federalist Society shop talk. To

see the masquerade. They're delivering gold for Donald Trump in the insurrectionist-immunity case. Like you knew they would.

First, there is no straight-faced claim in the case that Trump is immune from the operation of the criminal law. As Jack Smith put it: "a criminal scheme to overturn an election and thwart the peaceful transition of power is the paradigm example of conduct" that cannot be immunized. And, as the Court of Appeals had held, Trump's actions sought to interfere with "the constitutionally established design for determining the presidential election" — which provides "no role" for the president. Of course it doesn't. The framers weren't nuts.

But Justice Neil Gorsuch said he "wasn't concerned about this case" — he wanted "to write a rule for the ages." Of course he does. Gorsuch, Thomas, Kavanaugh and Alito "for the ages." It makes me nauseous. And it's the literal definition of judicial legislation.

But it does at least distract. They can simply ignore what Trump has done. (That's what Republicans do.) Plus, it'll take forever to craft an unnecessary set of rules. They'll

need more process. Tons of it. They received the memo. Delay, delay, then delay some more. And who knows, presidents may need to stage coups, sell nuclear secrets, assassinate opponents, and pay off porn stars. Judges have to be pragmatic futurists (not originalists, not this day).

A second point. A test of imaginative powers. Imagine that Barack Obama had done what Donald Trump did. (I know that's actually impossible, Obama is the anti-Trump.) But go with me. Assume it was Obama before these faux-judges rather than Trump. Is there any possibility that Thomas, Alito, Gorsuch, Kavanaugh, Barrett and Roberts would declare — even for a moment — that Obama was immune, or might be immune, or that his immunity should be examined, except to throw it on the trash bin of history?

I've been doing this for 40 years, and I promise there would be no possibility of that. None. No honest lawyer in the country would disagree with that assessment. These are partisans in charade. Nothing more. We should expect no more of them than we would Marjorie Taylor Greene or Matt

Gaetz. They do the same work. They just pretend otherwise. They pose. They deserve the same level of respect we afford to the formal nutjobs.

They are also engaged, ironically, in bold, unprecedented election interference. Trumpists, not jurists.

The rest of us need to understand this. Clear eyed. If we are committed to the American democratic experiment, these pretenders need to be disempowered — dismantled as the anti-democratic wrecking ball they've become. Worry not about the institution. There is no institution left to save. Donald Trump, Mitch McConnell, George H.W. Bush and the Republican Party have already done that work. Fully.

Gene Nichol is Boyd Tinsley Distinguished Professor of Law at the University of North Carolina School of Law and in 2015 started the North Carolina Poverty Research Fund after the UNC Board of Governors closed the state-funded Poverty Center for publishing articles critical of the governor and General Assembly.

The Supreme Court Should Lift the Stay in the Trump Immunity Case

By JOEL D. JOSEPH

The Supreme Court recently heard oral argument on Trump's bogus claim of absolute presidential immunity. Donald Trump's own lawyers have privately admitted that they are likely to lose their absolute immunity argument. The Court's conservative justices were exploring wide-ranging hypotheticals about future presidential actions. Constitutional expert Congressman Jamie Raskin said that this was inappropriate because the Constitution limits cases before the court to actual controversies. Congressman Raskin taught constitutional law at American University in Washington, D.C. before he was elected to Congress. Article III of the Constitution states that the "judicial power shall extend to" only certain categories of "Cases" and "Controversies."

During the Earl Warren Court, conservatives claimed the court was a liberal activist court. Now it is clearly a conservative activist court. The justices are helping former President Trump by delaying his trials for the attempted coup d'etat that he engineered. The court issued a stay of the criminal case against Trump. The stay should be lifted immediately because it is abundantly clear that Trump's efforts were far beyond the scope of any immunity that he enjoys. Further, even if convicted, Trump could still raise his immunity claims. Let the trials begin now so that the voters can know if Trump is a convicted felon before the November election.

Justices Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh, two of Trump's three high court appointees, and Justice Alito said their concern was not the case against Trump, but rather the effect of their ruling on future presidencies. Future presidencies can wait. We need a trial now. The court should lift the stay immediately. As British statesman William Gladstone said, "Justice delayed is justice denied."

Each time Justice Department lawyer Michael Dreeben sought to focus on Trump's actions, these justices jumped in and asked hypothetical questions about future presidential actions. "This case has huge implications for the presidency, for the future of the presidency, for the future of the country," Kavanaugh said. The court is writing a decision "for the ages," Gorsuch said.

The oral argument before the court deteriorated with Justices Kavanaugh and Gorsuch pulling absurd hypothetical questions out of their derrieres. The court spent very little argument time on the direct question before them, whether Trump's actions to overturn the 2020 presidential election were immune from prosecution, and too much time speculating about future presidential actions. If the court comes up with a legal ruling concerning further presidential actions it would be *dicta*. *Dicta* in law refers to a comment, suggestion or observation made by a judge in an opinion that is not necessary to resolve the case and as such, it is not legally binding on other courts. The Supreme Court should stick to the case before them and rule quickly that President Trump is not immune from prosecution in the case brought by Special Prosecutor Jack Smith.

And I must add that Jack Smith should have personally argued the case before the Supreme Court to emphasize how important the case is. Smith could have also suggested that the court drop the stay, or decided the case quickly.

Justice Amy Coney Barrett, the other Trump appointee,

seemed less open to arguments advanced by Trump's lawyer, searching for a way a trial could take place. Together with liberal jurists Sonia Sotomayor, Elena Kagan and Katanji Brown Jackson, Justice Barrett and moderate Chief Justice John Roberts have the power to lift the stay that the court imposed on lower courts. If the stay is lifted, the case in Washington, D.C. before US District Court Judge Tanya Chutkan can be set for trial. This case is the primary case against former President Trump that alleges he attempted to overturn the 2020 presidential election. Let the trial begin.

Joel D. Joseph is a lawyer and author of 15 books, including "Black Mondays: Worst Decisions of the Supreme Court" and "Inequality in America: 10 Causes and 10 Cures." Email joeldjoseph@gmail.com.



The Crack that Is a Chasm: Medicaid Unwinding

States have been dropping (a.k.a. “unwinding”) enrollees off Medicaid for the past year. During COVID’s ascendance, Uncle Sam forced states to expand their Medicaid rolls (the Families First Coronavirus Response Act [FFCRA]). Too many people were ill with a contagious sometimes fatal virus. The prudent course was to treat everybody who tested positive, who lived with somebody who tested positive, who was sick, who might become sick. The entire United States population was vulnerable, but especially poor people — many of whom didn’t have health insurance, relied on a porous network of clinics that might have been an hour’s drive away and who needed medications that they could not afford. Add to the mix the workers who lost their jobs, and insurance, during the lockdown. Equity and justice demanded that the country insure their health; COVID forced the move.

As we moved past COVID, states faced the decision: to

drop those “expansion” enrollees? Or to keep them on the rolls? The budgetary hawks opted for “drop.” Conservatives who disliked government programs, (but not Social Security or Medicare), opted for “drop.” For taxpayers who knew no poor people (other than cleaning crews or baristas), the prudent decision was “drop.” States “unwinded” their rolls.

We now see what happened. April 1, 2023, was the start-up day for unwinding. By April 4, 2023, states had dropped 19.6 million enrollees, the Healthcare Financial Management Association reported.

By March 23 of this year, of the 94 million enrollees in Medicaid, 20.3 million had been “disenrolled” — 22% of the total. Another 44.4 million had had their coverage renewed. And 29.4 million — 31% — were awaiting decisions, in bureaucratic limbo. The key reason for the disenrollment: procedural. Applicants were trapped in bureaucratic snafus, including long delays in processing, misplaced forms, incorrect information, no person on the other end of the phone to answer questions. In fairness, some states extended the process, aimed to rectify the snafus. States, moreover, varied in their zeal to “unwind”: Utah “disenrolled” 57% of enrollees; Maine, 12%, KFF Health News reported.

Children fell through the crack-that-is-an-abyss. Seventeen states reported age distinctions: 65% of the disenrolled in Texas were children, compared to 20% in Oregon. Medicaid is a fluid program. Some people will go off the rolls as they gravitate to an employer plan, or to an Affordable Care plan. Yet others will go on the rolls for the

first time.

As predicted, some enrollees signed onto an Affordable Care Plan. Those plans offered an insurance lifeboat, assuming would-be enrollees qualified, assuming that the administrators behind those plans made it happen. Sadly that lifeboat did not save many people. A few states made a herculean effort to smooth a transition: for people eligible for an ACA plan, New Mexico covered the first month and Rhode Island the first two months. Rhode Island, moreover, is one of four states that automatically enroll people “disenrolled” from Medicaid in an ACA plan, yet only 16% in Rhode Island and 9% in New Mexico ended up with ACA coverage, the *Washington Post* reported.

Overall, conservatives can cheer. The rolls dropped. Not surprisingly, states varied: Utah’s rolls dropped by 33%; North Carolina, by 0.9%. Hawaii was an outlier: its rolls rose by 0.8%.

Beyond the statistics are Americans, a lot of them, left without health insurance. We still have communicable diseases (measles is on the rise); we still have accidents; we still have debilitating diseases, like diabetes, hypertension, arthritis . . . Healthwise, we have abandoned many of our fellow citizens.

The question is: does anybody care enough to help?

Joan Retsinas is a sociologist who writes about health care in Providence, R.I. Email joan.retsinas@gmail.com.

Trump’s Deteriorating State of Mind Is an Issue

By SAM URETSKY

On the opening day Donald Trump’s criminal trial in Manhattan on April 15, the *New York Times* reported, “Even as a judge was hearing arguments on last-minute issues in a criminal case that centers on salacious allegations and threatens to upend his bid for the presidency, Mr. Trump appeared to nod off a few times, his mouth going slack and his head drooping onto his chest.” Since then, the various news outlets have kept track of Trump’s afternoon naps, even when his attorneys were passing him notes, and, in one report, had to be shaken awake. The behavior is that of the presumptive presidential candidate who refers to his opponent as “Sleepy Joe.”

Mark Caputo, a political reporter, wrote in X (formerly known as Twitter), “Unable to speak when he wants and lacking a steady stream of Diet Coke, his favorite drink that is served to him constantly by staff at Mar-a-Lago, a decaffeinated Trump is now on Sleep Watch by the nation’s media in court.”

As long as six years ago, the *New York*

Times reported, Trump was known to drink 12 cans of Diet Coke a day. The reporters fixated on the fact that Diet Coke contains caffeine, the stimulant in coffee and tea, and without the caffeine Trump would doze off. More significantly though, Diet Coke is sweetened with aspartame [N-(L-Aspartyl)-L-phenylalanine, 1-methyl ester]. That’s an artificial sweetener. For the record, President Biden is said to drink Gatorade Orange, the original, with sugar — in fact, two kinds of sugar, sucrose and dextrose.

Sugar is a class of chemical compound with the general formula $C_n(H_2O)_n$, where n is usually three or more molecules. This formula reflects the fact that sugars are made up of carbon, hydrogen and oxygen atoms in a ratio of one carbon atom to every n water molecules. On the other, aspartame, a commonly used artificial sweetener, has the formula $C_{14}H_{18}N_2O_5$. In this formula, N stands for nitrogen, and there’s none in sugar. That makes a difference in the way the body responds to the intake of the nitrogen-bearing compound. Aspartame, sold under the brand names Equal and Nutra Sweet, isn’t fattening as sugar would have been, but regular ingestion of aspartame has hardly kept Trump lean.

In 2017, the journal *Stroke* published a study, “Sugar- and Artificially Sweetened Beverages and the Risks of Incident Stroke and Dementia,” which reported that sugar-

sweetened beverages were not associated with stroke or dementia, but higher recent and higher cumulative intake of artificially sweetened soft drinks were associated with an increased risk of ischemic stroke, all-cause dementia, and Alzheimer’s disease dementia. Considering the significance of the conclusions in terms of the American diet, the results, while dramatic, were not conclusive that artificial sweeteners really caused dementia. With a population of about 341 million people, the sample size of 2,888 people represents approximately 0.0008% of the US population, and the number of people who developed dementia, 63 people with Alzheimer’s Dementia, is not large enough to prove anything.

There’s a phrase “Cum hoc, ergo propter hoc,” which translates to “With this, therefore because of this,” or “correlation does not prove causation.” There may be other things that the study missed, and it calls for more study to find out.

A 2023 report from the World Health Organization warned that consuming sugar substitutes for a long period of time correlated with an increased risk of obesity, type 2 diabetes, several cardiovascular diseases—including stroke—and death from any cause. However, the study published in *Stroke* did mention dementia, with the most common form dementia of the Alzheimer’s type. Notably, 70% of dementia cases are of this

type. Further, a report in *Scientific Reports* (August 2023) using rat studies, found that aspartame taken in moderation “for up to 16-weeks at doses equivalent to only 7–15% of the FDA recommended maximum daily intake value (equivalent to 2–4 small, 8 oz diet soda drinks per day) produces significant spatial learning and memory deficits in mice.

Moreover, the cognitive deficits are transmitted to male and female descendants along the paternal lineage, suggesting that aspartame’s adverse cognitive effects are heritable, and that they are more pervasive than current estimates, which consider effects in the directly exposed individuals only.

Consider the quantity of aspartame ingested by Trump, and the symptoms of Alzheimers, which include a gradual decline in memory, thinking, behavior and social skills, which have been noted in Trump. Further, Trump’s father had Alzheimer’s Dementia, which is consistent with the 2023 report. There is strong concern that Trump inherited the condition. It is important to note that this is a strong possibility and should be noted in the campaign literature.

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Hartmann...

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dent for American presidents ignoring due process and engaging in extrajudicial torture and murder. Between Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo (along with dozens of other dark sites), America tortured and murdered hundreds, perhaps thousands, of prisoners without any semblance of due process; neither Bush nor any member of his administration was ever held to account for it, which has to have given Trump encouragement in his plans for violence and revenge.

Trump brazenly invited an armed mob to attack the Capitol on January 6th, demanding that his security people not make them go through magnetometers because he knew the weapons they carried presented a threat to Pence, Pelosi, and members of Congress rather than him. Five people died and several police officers later passed away from injuries they sustained on that day: Trump reportedly watched the violence on TV in the White House with delight and fascination.

Now he brags that he’s going to bring violence to America if his will is thwarted in this fall’s election, and his former chief of

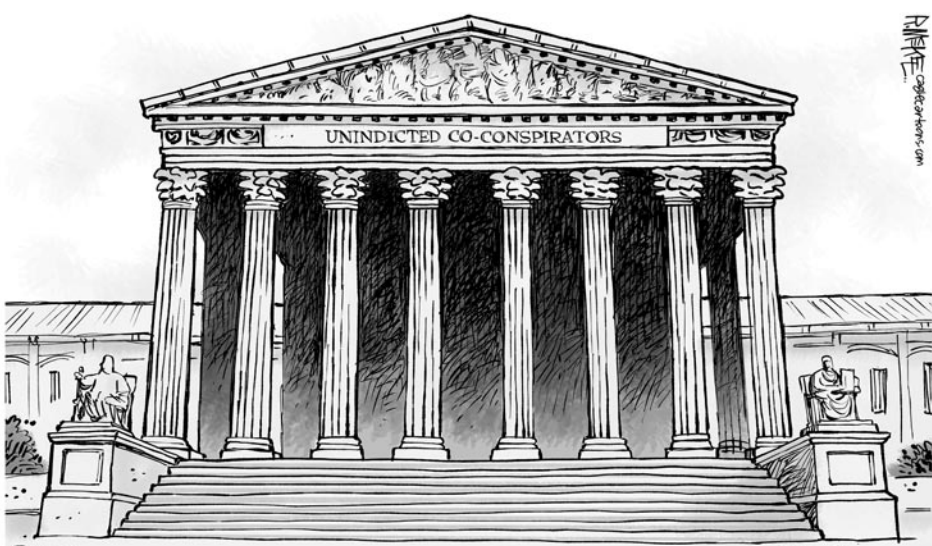
staff to the acting secretary of defense, Kash Patel, recently warned the American media that a second Trump administration would be coming for you and me.

“We will go out and find the conspirators, not just in government but in the media,” The *New York Times* quoted Patel as saying. “Yes, we’re going to come after the people in the media who lied about American citizens, who helped Joe Biden rig presidential elections — we’re going to come after you. Whether it’s criminally or civilly, we’ll figure that out.”

We — and the mainstream media — need to take Trump and his cruel facto-

tums seriously. Bill Barr’s bland assurances notwithstanding, the next time won’t be anything like the last time: Trump has unleashed his inner psychopath and if he wins this election it’s going to get uglier here in America than most people today can imagine.

Thom Hartmann is a progressive radio talk-show host and the author of “The Hidden History of American Oligarchy” and more than 30 other books in print. He is a writing fellow at the Independent Media Institute. This appeared at hartmannreport.com.



WAYNE O'LEARY

Is Democratic Capitalism the Answer?

It's not just the US; the entire Western world appears out of sorts. Throughout the European Union, as well as in North America and Australasia, the discontent is palpable. And as James Carville would say, "It's the economy, stupid."

Look at Australia, long a prosperous, stable democratic country that made it through the dot-com bubble and bust, and the world financial crisis that followed, without a recession or a downturn in the standard of living. That was then, but things have changed down under. A recent *New York Times* analysis (3/29/24) of the country's prevailing mindset reveals growing economic unhappiness that, according to an annual poll, has registered the lowest level of "life satisfaction" in almost a quarter-century.

Australians, it seems, are deeply troubled by the high cost of living, an uncertain labor market, and rising inequality. Food insecurity is up, compounded by difficulties paying for housing, healthcare and utilities. A startling indicator is the price of bread, 24% higher than in 2021, but rents have increased 50% in a year, and mortgage rates have lately tripled. Overall inflation, which soared during the pandemic, has moderated somewhat to 3.4%. Still, consumer optimism has not recovered from the 2020 downturn, and wealth inequality, never a major issue in egalitarian Australia, has emerged as a nagging problem there, along with other developed nations.

We're seeing something similar throughout the Western countries. Take lib-

eral New Zealand, Australia's Pacific neighbor; it recently elected its most conservative government in a generation amidst rising food, fuel and rent costs, an emerging child-poverty problem, and an inflationary housing market whose prices rose 58% between 2017 and 2021.

Or take our close neighbor, Canada. There, the Liberal government of Justin Trudeau has dropped to a low of 27% in popularity as it approaches national elections. Public concerns include the rising cost of living, lack of affordable housing, and an inflation rate that, after falling from a 2020 peak of 8%, recently shot back up to 4%, double what it was in 2015. Add a suddenly struggling healthcare system, whose level of patient satisfaction has dipped from 67% in 2021 to 48% in 2023, as well as worries over the impact of expanded immigration.

And in famously social-democratic Sweden, plagued by growing inequality brought about by economic globalization and years of gradual privatization (of schools, hospitals, nursing homes, etc.), the 2022 national elections gave a neofascist party, Sweden Democrats, 21% of the vote, making it the second-leading parliamentary party and a threat to eventually take over government. Immigration was the immediate catalyst for the far-right upsurge, but Swedes were more concerned about inflation, healthcare, energy, pension contributions, and welfare privatization.

Lest there be a suspicion that we are witnessing a fundamental negative reaction to predominantly left-of-center governments, the facts say otherwise. France, where the mainstream political left in the form of the Socialist Party collapsed in 2017, Emmanuel Macron's succeeding center-right party La Republique en Marche (Republic on the March) is experiencing similar disfavor. In the 2022 election, squeezed between what remains of the left and Marine Le Pen's far-right National Rally, Macron's centrist/conservative coalition retained a bare governing plurality. The issues agitating

the French electorate revolved around inflation (primarily increasing food prices), inequality, insufficient wages, rising rents, declining purchasing power, and, of course, immigration.

Although economic issues dominate politics all across the Western world, the often critical factor, which in a real sense is also economic, is mass migration; it's impacting France, Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands, in particular. Even in tiny Ireland (population 5.3 million), where a coalition government has brought in record numbers of migrants — 27,000 asylum seekers since 2020 and 100,000 refugees since 2022 — public outrage has nearly overshadowed a cost-of-living crisis contributing to economic deprivation, an existing housing shortage, and already-strained social-service programs.

In country after country, governments have ignored domestic opinion and opened their borders. North America and Western Europe now have total foreign-born populations amounting to 12% to 15% of individual nation-state populations, and the push-back is reaching critical mass. Recent polls show that 60% or more of the French support stricter immigration rules, 61% of Canadians oppose the Trudeau government's plans to increase immigration, and 71% of Americans regard unauthorized immigration as a serious national problem. Some of this anti-immigration feeling can be superficially chalked up to expressions of racism or nativism, but that obscures justifiable economic concerns and anxieties associated with the costs of integration — housing shortages, reduced wages, increased demand for necessities, higher public-welfare budgets, and the like.

What's really roiling international politics these days is a negative reaction to the essentially centrist politics being practiced by Western governments of both center-left and center-right in an attempt to conform to the role assigned them by global capitalism. Adhering to that role entails being in

the pocket of dominant corporate interests.

The present system, which conservative free-market theorists like to call "democratic capitalism," was examined in detail recently by Martin Wolf, chief economics commentator for the *Financial Times* of London, whose latest book "The Crisis of Democratic Capitalism" (2023) sees systemic warning lights flashing. Wolf defines the currently besieged arrangement as "the marriage of democracy with the market economy"; it's based on the idea that democracy and capitalism are inextricably linked and mutually reinforcing — are, in fact, dependent upon one another.

The weakness of the system is that capitalism invariably seems to be the more important partner. In practice, this means taking care of capitalists and assuming democracy will follow. The danger, which Wolf recognizes, is that because of monopoly and its spin-off, plutocracy, the system won't deliver for the majority, causing a loss of faith in democracy. Recent developments worldwide suggest exactly that is happening.

In the US, we've learned voters unhappy with the exploitive economy are tending toward autocratic (that is, MAGA) solutions. They're most concerned about inflation, the product of corporate pricing, which refuses to return to pre-pandemic levels; instead, it's rising, up from 3.1% year-on-year to now 3.5% (and 3.8% for "core" inflation). That's bad news for Joe Biden, but, more broadly, for the specious claims made on behalf of democratic capitalism.

There is an alternative to the current system; it's called economic democracy. However, it requires a commitment to strong government action to roll back market supremacy. Unfortunately, we're not there yet.

Wayne O'Leary is a writer in Orono, Maine, specializing in political economy. He holds a doctorate in American history and is the author of two prizewinning books.

Don't Let Congress Widen the Digital Divide

Unless lawmakers act, over 23 million households could soon lose access to free or low-cost internet. That would be a disaster for rural communities and communities of color.

By CLAUDE CUMMINGS JR.

Nearly a third of Americans who don't have broadband say the reason is because it costs too much — and unfortunately, Congress is prepared to let that figure rise dramatically.

Lawmakers have yet to renew funding for the federal government's Affordable Connectivity Program, or ACP, which is being rolled back as of today and will fully come to an end in coming weeks unless Congress takes action. Through the ACP, more than 23 million households have received either reduced bills or effectively free internet service.

The shutdown of the ACP will hurt communities of color the most, with over 30% of Black families lacking home internet, and rural communities as well.

Affordable internet access isn't just about surfing the web or scrolling social media. High-speed broadband is a gateway to education, job opportunities, health care, and so much more. By taking this important program away from

low-income families, Congress is not only driving up costs for an already vulnerable population, but potentially taking away their educational, employment, and economic opportunities as well.

If Congress is serious about both closing the digital divide and achieving racial equity, it will have to act now to keep the ACP up and running.

Launched in 2021 as part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the ACP has been a resounding success, not only for helping families across the country afford reliable connectivity, but in incentivizing internet service providers to build it.

Too often, low-income and rural communities are overlooked by providers when they determine where to upgrade and expand high-speed service because they are viewed as a customer base who cannot afford it. Thanks to the ACP, these communities have become empowered customers — and internet service providers are now building strong, long-lasting connections to previously unserved and underserved areas.

My union, the Communications Workers of America, represents tens of thousands of broadband workers who are building and maintaining this nationwide network. They're speaking with families and community members every day, hearing stories about unaffordable internet services and bad connectivity. And they've seen the direct benefits of the ACP in our cities, suburbs, and rural areas.

Like when the federal government built electricity to

everyone, ACP is an investment in critical services and jobs that's brought millions of Americans who were previously being left behind into the 21st Century. It's a critical part of supporting Black, Brown and rural families and addressing economic inequality.

Losing the ACP wouldn't only cut off these families — it would undercut the financial viability of networks being planned under the Infrastructure Act's broadband deployment funding, causing providers to build less and leave more people behind. Affordable connectivity is truly one of the most important and most overlooked racial and economic justice issues of our time.

Discontinuing the ACP is an attack on the ability of communities of color and rural communities to access health care, online education, and better job opportunities, and would be a huge step backwards for our country. Hundreds of thousands of Americans could lose access to the life-saving services they need, from telehealth to remote work and online education.

Despite the success of the ACP, its bipartisan appeal, and the widespread need for affordable connectivity, Congress has not been able to move forward on funding for the program. We need our lawmakers to treat the internet as the essential resource that it is, and use our public dollars to help bridge the racial and economic gaps that may keep people offline.

Claude Cummings Jr. is president of the Communications Workers of America (CWA) union. This op-ed was distributed by OtherWords.org.

Restaurant Workers Deserve a Livable Wage, Too

The federal minimum wage for tipped workers hasn't gone up in over 30 years. Workers in several states are taking on the industry to change that.

By HELEN H. ABRAHA

Growing up, I looked up to my father and aunt, who began restaurant industry careers after immigrating

from Eritrea in the 1970s. When I started working, a restaurant job was a natural choice.

While I took great pride in my work, I struggled with the conditions. I was often on my feet for 10-12 hour shifts six days a week, had no access to affordable health care, was wholly unaware of my worker rights, and constantly worried about money.

Through laws rooted in slavery, employers are allowed to pay restaurant servers a sub-minimum wage. At the federal level, this wage has been stuck at \$2.13 per hour since 1991. If tips don't raise your hourly pay to at least the regular minimum wage, your employer is supposed to make up the difference. But non-compliance is rampant.

When I started as a server in 2018, my hourly wage was \$3.89. During the five-

month off season, I struggled to make the regular minimum wage, especially if I had a section with empty tables. When I got injured on the job and asked about workers compensation, my manager fired me.

I later experienced what I believed to be wage theft and workplace discrimination. That's when I joined the movement to end restaurant worker exploitation.

This movement is growing rapidly as workers across the country demand livable wages. Organizers are working to put minimum wage hikes for tipped workers on November ballots in several states, including Ohio, Maine, Maryland and Massachusetts. A dozen states are considering legislation to do the same.

I can tell you the opposition to these efforts will be fierce.

I live in Washington, D.C. In 2018, I

cheered when D.C. voters passed a ballot initiative to phase out the local sub-minimum wage for tipped workers. But the city council blocked the wage hike, forcing organizers to mount another successful ballot initiative in 2022.

D.C. finally began phasing out the sub-minimum tipped wage in 2023. And yet many restaurant owners are still undercutting workers by charging 20% "service fees" that most customers mistakenly think go to their servers, so they're likely to tip less.

The National Restaurant Association, with affiliates in every state, is the leading driver of these anti-worker efforts. The lobby group's members include powerful corporations intent on shifting business risks and costs onto employees, customers, and

Continued on next page

'Intifada' in Arabic Just Means Uprising or Mass Protest; It Is Used for the Jewish Warsaw Uprising

By JUAN COLE

ANN ARBOR — A key feature of American bigotry toward people from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and toward Muslims more generally, has been the demonization by journalists, politicians and interest groups of ordinary, everyday Arabic words.

Arabic words have a proud and positive history in the English language. Consider a few:

Magazine is one of my favorites. It comes from the Arabic word for storehouse, makhzan. In French, it was borrowed as magasin, which just means "store." From the mid-1600s, books in English that listed things of interest to particular groups of people started using it in their titles, so it gradually took on the meaning of a special interest periodical.

Or how about sequin, a small disk used as an ornament on clothing. It came through the French and Italian from the Arabic sikkah, a die for coining.

Then there is mattress, from matrah a cushion or rug that you lie on. In modern Arabic taraha can mean to broach (a subject) or to posit, since the root has to do with laying things out.

Or what would a nice room be without an alcove, a recessed or arched section or opening? It is from the Arabic al-qubbah, meaning a dome or vault.

And of course we could go into chemistry, algebra, alcohol and a host of other scientific terms, since medieval Muslim science was way more advanced than the European and so was borrowed with alacrity.

But then there are the recent borrowings that have been endowed with negative connotations. Our English word "agony"

comes from the Greek for struggling or striving, agonizomai. The Olympic games in modern Greek are called Olympiakoi agones. So our idea of being in excruciating pain comes originally from the idea of striving hard in a contest. Striving hard in Arabic is jihad. It can be an internal struggle to do the right thing or discipline oneself, or a public struggle to give charity to the deserving. In some contexts it can mean to struggle violently, but that is only one of its meanings. A famous soccer club is called "Nadi al-Jihad," the "struggle club" or "competitive club." But in the US the FBI has begun putting the word jihad in indictments for terrorist activity, which is not the connotation of the original. In fact, people give their sons the name "Jihad," not because they are glorifying violence but because they are naming them for "virtuous struggle." It is similar to the German girl's name, Wylda, which means "strive."

The most recent Arabic word to be demonized is "intifada." The horrid Elise Stefanik (R-N.Y.) lambasted university administrations for allowing the word to be said on campuses. Since Congress is forbidden to police our language by the First Amendment, they put pressure on private universities and corporations to do it for them.

Congresswoman Lisa McCain in Michigan's 9th District knew she disliked the word, but didn't seem to actually know what it was, and kept demanding that Columbia University President Minouche Shafik "denounce the infantada."

Since it sounded like the Spanish food empanada, her malapropism provoked a good deal of mirth on the internet. I think it would be great if the infantada ended up on the menu in Michigan restaurants.

Since McCain lives in Michigan, which has one of the largest Arab and Muslim populations of any state in the country, I suggest she come to Dearborn for the truly magnificent Lebanese, Yemeni and other food, and talk to some locals about what intifada actually means to them. Alas, she won't find infantada on the menu, though.

Then on April 30 a spokesman for

President Biden's White House actually denounced the term "intifada" as "hate speech" and hinted that using it was a form of anti-semitism. But Arabic is a Semitic language, so how can a Semitic word be "antisemitic"? I'm confused.

Intifadah derives from the three-letter root n-f-D. The verb nafada means to remove or to clean. Thus you use it for getting dirt off clothing. "His two hands nafada from something" means he gave up on it.

Arabic verbs are based on three-letter roots, as in Hebrew, and are then put into "molds" to create further meanings and connotations. In Form 7 you slip the equivalent of an "i" before the root and insert a "t" after the first letter.

That gives you intafada, a verb which has many meanings but can denote to "rise," or "rise up," or "revolt."

Intafada al-shay' means "the thing moved or was disturbed."

Intafada al-karm means the vineyard became succulent.

Intafada al-sha'b means "the people rose up or revolted."

It is this last sense that seems to have infuriated the members of Congress. But uprisings aren't all bad.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has an Arabic website. On one of its pages it explains the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The word for "uprising" in the title of the article is — you guessed it — "intifada."

The Nazis forced Polish Jews into one section of Warsaw in 1940, isolating them from the outside world. Some 400,000 were crowded into small apartments in squalor. Then in September of 1942 the Nazis began deporting them to death camps like Treblinka. Some organized to make a stand and there was a skirmish in January of 1943. In April a full-scale rebellion of the remaining Jews broke out, the Jewish Ghetto Uprising. They engaged in an intifada against the Nazis. Doomed though the effort was, I think we'd all agree that it was a noble intifada.

Al-Itihad [Unity] newspaper in Arabic did a retrospective on the youth demonstrations in France and elsewhere in Europe in

May, 1968. You guessed it. They called it an intifada. So does the Arabic service of France 24.

The Arab Spring youth revolt against dictator Hosni Mubarak in Egypt? An intifada.

Jordan's al-Ra'i [Opinion] newspaper, ironically enough, refers to the US campus demonstrations against Israel's Gaza campaign as, yes, an intifada, as do many other periodicals.

Of course, the object of the ire of the US Establishment is two particular moments of popular push back against oppression, the first and second Palestinian intifadas in the Palestinian West Bank against Israeli colonization, in the late 1980s and again at the turn of the century.

A PBS site explains of the first that "The First Intifada was a largely spontaneous series of Palestinian demonstrations, nonviolent actions like mass boycotts, civil disobedience, Palestinians refusing to work jobs in Israel, and attacks (using rocks, Molotov cocktails, and occasionally firearms) on Israelis." It was largely nonviolent, though, so people denouncing it aren't denouncing violence but the failure of the Palestinians to acquiesce in their own oppression and slow-motion ethnic cleansing.

In short, the paroxysm of anti-Palestinian bigotry that has swept the United States, no doubt deriving in some large part from a bad conscience over our complicity in their genocide, has now advanced to the point where an attempt is being made to outlaw perfectly ordinary words such as "uprising."

I predict that it will fail, and that what the Arab world is applauding as the "intifada" of the American universities will only derive further energy from the attempt to suppress them.

Juan Cole is the founder and chief editor of Informed Comment. He is Richard P. Mitchell Professor of History at the University of Michigan. He is author of, among many other books, "Muhammad: Prophet of Peace amid the Clash of Empires" and "Engaging the Muslim World." He blogs at juancole.com, follow him @jricole or the Informed Comment Facebook Page

The Evil of Inequality and Wrong Prescriptions

By N. GUNASEKARAN

In its "World Economic Outlook, April 2024," the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has indicated the growing gulf between the economic North and South. The report said: "A troubling development is the widening divergence between many low-income developing countries and the rest of the world. For these economies, growth is revised downward, whereas inflation is revised up."

The COVID-19 pandemic had already affected these poorest countries, in Africa, Latin America, Pacific island and Asia. They suffered due to severe drop in output relative to pre-pandemic projections, and even now, they are struggling to recover. Added to their woes, the mounting debt service burden was severely obstructing their capacity to spend on vital needs of the people like better education, health care and improving food security.

The World Bank's report said that half of the world's 75 poorest countries were experiencing a widening income gap with the wealthiest economies. The World Bank Group's Chief Economist Indermit Gill explained it: "[the 75 poorest countries] are home to a quarter of humanity — 1.9 billion people ... and are home to 90% of people facing hunger or malnutrition." Half of these economies were also hit by debt distress. Indermit Gill also demanded the world's richer countries to support the poorest nations financially and warned that they could not afford to turn its back on a quarter of its people. He stressed that tapping every reserve of economic potential is required to achieve universal peace and prosperity.

As far as the prevailing situation in the South countries is concerned, nobody can disagree with the observations of the World Bank Group's Chief. The question, however, is this: Will the richer countries be generous enough to support the poor nations? The richer countries, including the United States, have all along been following policies of economic plunder and domination over the developing nations. These policies have resulted in accelerating the huge capital accumulation for big corporations and billionaires. It is estimated that the richest 1% will possess two-thirds of all global wealth by 2030. These richest 1% are mainly from advanced countries, although some billionaires are from Asia.

The very idea of the rich supporting the poor in a charitable manner is not feasible to solve the problem of in-

equality. Further, it recognizes the status quo of immoral and unethical inequality. It will not help the poor to come out of their precarious poverty-stricken living conditions. Depending upon the individual billionaire for his/her support for the poor will not lead to any marked progress in the lives of the poor.

For example, it may be recalled that, in 2022, the United Nations asked Elon Musk to utilize \$6 billion — 3% of his fortune — to overcome world hunger, since 11 people around the world were dying from starvation every minute. But Musk diverted the money to his own charity foundation. Moreover, in 2022, Musk's foundation for charity spent only 2% while it is mandatory for the charities to allocate at least 5% of their assets annually for philanthropic purposes.

The IMF was notorious for lending loans with strings attached. They have always forced vulnerable countries to open markets, liberalize exchange rates, privatize state companies, and reduce public spending. The IMF's own statements in the past confirmed that their prescriptions for the low-income countries including many Asian nations further worsened poverty and inequality in these nations.

Oxfam, a charity and advocacy group, noted that, during the pandemic period (from 2020 to 2022), 87% of lending from the IMF came with many strings, including severe austerity measures. Both the IMF and World Bank could not absolve their own responsibility for the creation of the current unequal, unjust world order.

An Oxfam study had noted that the 26 richest individuals combined have the same amount of money as the poorest half of the human race, i.e. 3.9 billion people, who are mostly living on less than \$5.50 per day. It is obvious that

the labor of these poor people contribute to the national wealth which is being swindled by big corporates with the patronage of the governments. The new liberal economic policies that include the tax cuts for the rich, the cuts in people welfare schemes in the name of austerity, privatization of government-run public sectors, etc., have created a conducive atmosphere for such looting of public wealth by the big corporates.

While the income gap between poor and wealthy countries is increasing globally, each nation in Asia is suffering from acute inequality. Across South and Southeast Asian countries, various levels of inequality and income gaps are developing. According to the World Inequality Database 2023, the richest 10% in the countries such as India, Maldives, and Thailand, are earning more than half of the national income. In Bangladesh, Nepal, Singapore, the richest 10% earn about 35% of the national income. In Indonesia, Pakistan, Vietnam, the richest 10% of the population are earning about 40 to 50 percent of the national income. The neoliberal regimes across the globe have been acting at the behest of the elites and it logically leads to intensification of the gap between rich and poor.

The basic shift in policies is required to eradicate the evil of growing inequality. Alternative policies oriented towards the well-being of the toiling poor and working people in each country are vital for the achievement of socio-economic justice and equality, and also for national development and progress.

N. Gunasekaran is a political activist and writer based in Chennai, India.

Abraha...

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taxpayers.

I used to work for one of them. In 2019, I had a job at Yard House, which is part of the Darden empire along with Olive Garden and seven other chains.

I faced a common challenge for sports bar servers: groups would come in to watch a game for several hours, only to leave a modest tip on a \$30 bill. Inexperienced managers would also often send me home as soon as I arrived because of overstaffing. On those nights, my pay would be less than my transportation cost.

A recent report by the Institute for Policy Studies and Americans for Tax Fairness shows that while Darden was fighting minimum wage increases for their servers, they

paid their top five executives a total of \$120 million between 2018 and 2022. That's four times as much as they paid in federal taxes, despite strong profits.

After college graduation, I decided to work full-time as a labor organizer. With so many immigrants relying on restaurants for jobs, this struggle feels personal. But we'd all be better off if corporations like Darden had to share their profits more equitably.

Workers could achieve a better life and restaurants would have less turnover. And for customers, the food will taste even better if they know the hard-working professionals who serve their meals are treated with respect.

Helen H. Abraha is an organizer with Restaurant Opportunities Center — DC. This op-ed was distributed by OtherWords.org.

A Light in the House: Farewell to a Senate Friend

By JAMIE STIEHM

“Every single member (will) vote their conscience.” Conscience, did you say? House Speaker Mike Johnson’s (R-La.) words cut cleanly through the House of Representatives noise. Seldom are they told to rise above the partisan rabble.

After months of darkness and delay, Johnson did the right thing for the nation and world. He opened the gate for Ukraine aid in its perilous war with Russia.

Johnson, 52, deserves credit for refusing to “play politics” as he allowed a grave vote to advance.

“History judges us,” he stated in an emotional voice. “I believe (Russian president) Putin would continue to march through Europe.”

The CIA chief’s urgent briefing convinced Johnson, but so did a personal matter: His son will be a first-year “plebe” at the Naval Academy.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) told Johnson he would al-

ways regret not answering Ukraine’s call for help.

Ousted former Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-Ca.) never appealed to the good heart and sense of lawmakers. Everything he did was to keep his job. Ironically, the slippery McCarthy lost his job in a far-right rebellion.

Johnson stood up to shrill pressure and threats from Chip Roy (R-Texas), Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-Ga.) and Matt Gaetz (R-Fla.). Stumbling blocks all, they are allied with former President Donald Trump’s isolationist view of a world without our leadership.

America’s \$60 billion could make all the difference, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said in grateful thanks. Still, it’s not coming a moment too soon after Ukraine lost ground this winter.

This foreign aid package finally passed 311-112 on the floor in a rare Saturday session, with strong approval from all Democrats and about half of Republicans.

The cheers that broke out were not only for Ukraine but for the House itself turning on a light of hope.

It’s quite a moment of sea change in the most miserable Congress anyone can remember: Lawmakers are leaving the House in droves.

This event might stop the exodus. When you’re a rookie reporter, you

never forget when a senator takes the time to really talk with you.

Democrat David Pryor recently died at 89 in Little Rock, Arkansas. He was one of the best in the Clinton era, when giants strode the Senate.

As governor, Pryor mentored the younger Bill Clinton. Arkansas punched above its weight in political talent then.

I clutched my heart’s memory as I found legal pad notes from interviewing the senator years ago. Pryor began his Capitol Hill life as a page and recalled domineering Sen. Joseph McCarthy snapping his fingers, saying, “You, get me my bedroom shoes.”

One day Pryor invited me to a reception in his Russell office for Arkansas artists and added, “the president” would come. Sure enough, President Clinton waded through a throng with a kind word for every man, woman and child. For the boy with a flag necktie: “That’s a good tie for a president.”

That was once Harry Truman’s office. “Old Harry Truman still kind of lives in this office,” Pryor mused. Indeed, he and Truman were cut from the same small-town cloth in seeking a fair shake.

Pryor related a country courtroom case where he represented the owner of a stolen coon dog. “The dog walked into the courtroom, stopped and sniffed, and put his paws on my client’s chest.

“You could hear a pin drop.”

Disarming and low-key, Pryor championed seniors, labor and the environment in 18 years of Senate work. He resented “hate groups trying to demonize” the federal government. How prescient.

Before his political career, Pryor published a “little paper,” the *Ouachita Citizen*. He opposed — and later defeated — the rigidly racist Gov. Orval Faubus.

Pryor served with loquacious Sen. Dale Bumpers from the same Southern state. He chuckled, “Three former governors of Arkansas (Bumpers and Clinton), all of us gainfully employed!”

He never lost his reverence for the dignified Senate’s traditions.

“I can remember my first day in the Senate, how much in awe I was. I chose the right clothes to make my first speech. ... I love the Capitol building itself. We tend to forget (it’s) an absolutely grand place to work.

“I hope (the Senate) does not succumb to become a House.”

Jamie Stiehm is a former assignment editor at CBS News in London, reporter at The Hill, metro reporter at the Baltimore Sun and public policy scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. She is author of a new play, “Across the River,” on Aaron Burr. See JamieStiehm.com.

The Receding View of Rudy Giuliani

By BARRY FRIEDMAN

Rudy Giuliani had won. In 2005, four years after the attacks on the World Trade Center — attacks on America, if you’re speechifying — he made more than \$10 million from delivering 108 speeches around the world to Wall Street banks; oil, gold mining, and pharmaceutical companies; and investor groups in Japan and Singapore.

They wanted to know how it felt. He was, to quote the then-host of *Meet the Press*, the late Tim Russert, “America’s Mayor” for his calm after the terrorist attacks. He was *Time’s* “Man of the Year.” There was talk of allowing him to run for another term, even though New York City law limits mayors to two consecutive four-year terms.

Even when then-Sen. Joe Biden described Giuliani this way: “Rudy Giuliani — There’s only three things he [needs] to make ... a sentence: a noun and a verb and 9/11,” nobody cared. In fact, they were paying huge honoraria to hear him say it over and over. A 2002 Marist College poll showed that Republicans liked him 85% to 7%, but independents weren’t far behind, at 77-11, and Democrats gave him sterling numbers as well, at 74-10.

There were always problems with that praise. He was a world-class putz. As mayor, he was sued 34 times by the New York Civil Liberties Union (26 successfully); he banned critics from protesting at City Hall; he supported stop-and-frisk policies aimed at Blacks and Hispanics. Even his crowning achievement, his stewardship of New York after the attack, was called into question. He had made a bonehead decision to place NYPD’s entire emergency command center at 7 World Trade Center, even though he was warned it would be vulnerable if a truck bomb hit it.

A Boeing 767 hit it. None of that matter to those who booked town halls across the nation.

In 2008, flush with money, he ran for president. He finished third in the Florida primary behind John McCain and Mitt Romney.

It stung. But first, more money.

He established a management consulting business; he was shilling for LifeLock™.

But he wasn’t a player, wasn’t a national presence.

John McCain was the maverick. Rudy Giuliani became a courtier.

He had known Trump, obviously, when he was mayor. Trump, too, was going through wives quicker than he was releas-

ing falsified business records. There’s an infamous picture of both of them in drag, hugging at something called a Mayor’s Inner City Press Roast in 2000. In the video — and the skit was done for charity — Trump nuzzled his face into Mr. Giuliani’s fake breasts.

“Oh, you dirty boy, you!” the mayor exclaimed and slapped Mr. Trump in the face. Giuliani got that part right.

He had found his way back in. He went to the 2016 Republican convention and, channeling his obsequiousness and self-aggrandizement, said Trump was a man “with a big heart” and that “What I did for New York City, Donald Trump will do for America.”

Rudy’s implosion was live and in color. There was the silly stuff: appearing on Russert’s old show, *Meet the Press*, and telling Chuck Todd, “Truth isn’t truth”; going on a Tel Aviv station and vouching for Trump’s fidelity. But his newfound embrace of buffoonery also included peddling Ukrainian and Russian propaganda.

After Trump lost in 2020, whatever integrity Giuliani had left — and there wasn’t much — was running down his face like bad hair dye under bright lights.

He had embarrassed himself outside a landscaping company in Pennsylvania, alleging the election had been stolen. He fondled himself in Sacha Baron Cohen’s “Borat: Subsequent Moviefilm” in front of a woman he was trying to seduce. Hunter Biden sued him for violating his privacy over data allegedly taken from his laptop. He had been found guilty of falsely claiming Ruby Freeman and Andrea “Shaye” Moss, two Georgia election workers, committed ballot fraud — he alleged they were passing around USB ports of voting information like they were vials of heroin or cocaine — and was ordered to pay them \$148 million. Noelle Dunphy, a former employee of his, accused Giuliani of sexual assault and wage theft, and called him “a hard-drinking, Viagra-popping womanizer who made satisfying his sexual demands an absolute requirement” of her employment. Former Trump aide Cassidy Hutchinson said he tried to finger her on Jan. 6, 2021, at the Trump rally on the Ellipse in Washington. He was indicted on 13 felony counts for violating the Georgia RICO act, which includes forgery, making false statement, and impersonating a public officer. He has been sued by voting-machine companies Dominion and Smartmatic for defamation. He has had his law licenses suspended in New York and Washington, D.C. He has declared bankruptcy.

He went to Donald Trump, the man for whom he did all the above, to get help with legal expenses.

Trump refused. Giuliani had made a deal with the devil and the devil wasn’t keeping up his end of

the deal.

In September 2023, Giuliani’s favorability rating was at 16%.

To paraphrase Ernest Hemingway in “The Sun Also Rises,” Giuliani’s fall happened “gradually, then suddenly.”

On the day Arizona indictments were handed down, April 24 — he and 10 other Trump allies were indicted in Phoenix for trying to overturn the 2020 election loss — I was thinking about whether Giuliani ever thinks instead of waking up that day broke, disbarred, and mocked, he’s waking up in a suite at the ADERO Scottsdale Resort, after collecting yet another fat check for another subject-verb-9/11 speech? Would he give up the past eight years with Trump to get it back, to still be America’s Mayor?

Short answer: no.

Here’s what he said about the Arizona indictment: “This is just straight-out communist corruption. These people are massive crooks — the people in Arizona. They’re despicable, anti-American traitors.”

Giuliani, the pragmatic NYC mayor, the RINO, the pro-abortion Republican, the one

who put aside politics in the immediate aftermath of Sept. 11, 2001, never existed.

We wanted him to. This is all the Rudy Giuliani there ever was.

In March, in an interview on WABC 77 radio in New York, Giuliani said he had stuck to his principles and that he thought his loyalty to Trump would “help me in Heaven.”

*Barry Friedman is an essayist, political columnist, petroleum geology reporter — quit laughing — and comedian living in Tulsa, Okla. His latest book, “Jack Sh*t: Volume One: Voluptuous Bagels and other Concerns of Jack Friedman” is out and the follow-up, “Jack Sh*t, Volume 2: Wait For The Movie. It’s In Color” is expected to be released ... soon. In addition, he is the author of “Road Comic,” “Funny You Should Mention It,” “Four Days and a Year Later,” “The Joke Was On Me,” and a novel, “Jacob Fishman’s Marriages.” See barysfriedman.com and friedmanoftheplains.com.*

Lethal Workplaces: Deaths on the Job Continue

By SETH SANDRONSKY

The National Council for Occupational Safety and Health (National COSH) announced “The Dirty Dozen” employers of 2024 recently. Who are the Dirty Dozen? They are members of an employer class, a tiny minority of the population, which put the vast majority of workers and communities at-risk due to unsafe practices, leading to preventable illnesses, injuries and fatalities.

That is not all. Several of the Dirty Dozen also harass and retaliate workers who demand in deeds and words more safety on the job.

Jessica E. Martinez, MPH, is co-executive director of National COSH. “This is an exciting and challenging time for US workers,” she said in a statement. “It’s exciting to see a renewed interest in joining labor unions, participating in workers’ centers and connecting with advocacy campaigns. The challenge facing workers who are fighting for something better is that conditions in US workplaces are getting worse.

“The latest data show an increase in workplace fatalities, injuries and illnesses,” according to her. “An increasing number of children are being assigned to dangerous jobs, and the reality of climate change is bringing the risk of extreme heat to both indoor and outdoor workplaces.”

Consider this. Regular shade and water

breaks for agricultural workers who harvest the food we eat is a labor standard that some employers neglect. The impacts of such maltreatment can and do result in death and illness among workers.

National COSH releases the “Dirty Dozen” each year to spotlight the real conditions in US workplaces. That is a direct way to back workers coming together to improve their lives and those of other working families.

The Dirty Dozen report comes out in observance of Workers’ Memorial Week, which took place this year from April 21 through April 28. This global event recalls workers who lost their lives on the job and their families and recognizes those suffering from occupational injuries and illnesses.

Worker victims of death on the job are born in and out of the US. For example, when a container ship, the Dali, hit Baltimore’s Francis Scott Key Bridge, the collision killed immigrant workers who were repairing the roads upon which businesses and households depend.

Local COSH groups, worker centers, unions, and worker leaders and advocates from across the country nominate employers for the Dirty Dozen list. Criteria range from the severity of safety risks to workers, to repeat and serious employer violations of safety standards and applicable laws.

The Dirty Dozen employers for 2024, are, listed alphabetically: Alabama Department of Corrections; Ascension; Black Iron/XL Concrete; Costa Farms; Florence Hardwoods, Mar-Jac Poultry and Onin Staffing; Space X and the Boring Company;

Continued on next page

Palestinians as 'The Others'

Throughout history, military empires have reduced their victims, their subjugated, and their abducted to a state of "The Others." The political and mass media institutions usually follow suit by supporting their empire's predatory policies with slanted coverage.

Such is the case with the US global and the Israeli regional empires. The US federal government and the mainstream media often move in lockstep.

For example, take the word "terrorism." The *New York Times* regularly refers to the Hamas regime as "terrorists," while describing the far more extensive Israeli acts of state terrorism as "military operations." Since Oct. 7th, the Israeli military superpower has killed over 500 times more children than Hamas killed in their raid through a still uninvestigated collapse of Israel's vaunted multi-tiered border security.

Apart from a massively greater overall civilian toll inflicted on Palestinians in Gaza – the vast undercount stands at 34,000 Palestinian deaths compared to the deaths of 1,139 Israeli civilians, soldiers, and foreign workers. This staggering ratio – over 14,000 Palestinian children (with many thousands under the rubble) compared to 30 Israeli children – escapes proper reporting. "The Others" don't get accurate coverage as was also the case with huge Iraqi losses during the Bush/Cheney criminal war. (See, the March 5, 2024, column: Stop the Worsening UNDERCOUNT of Palestinian Casualties in Gaza).

Take the use of the term "hostage." Hamas seized over 240 Israelis hostages on Oct. 7, 2023. Since then, the Israeli army has seized about 9,000 Palestinians, in-

cluding women and children, and taken them without charges, along with many more thousands languishing in these prison camps also without charges for years (it's called Israel's "administrative detention"). Many of the imprisoned Palestinians are being tortured. Who has gotten the far greater attention? Aren't these Palestinian hostages also? Again "The Others."

How about the application of the right to self-defense? Every state has the right to self-defense. Count the many times you have heard, "Israel has a right to defend itself" compared to "Palestine has a right to defend itself." Members of Congress who bellow the former declaration daily can not get themselves to say the latter. It is a forbidden phrase. Yet, who is the violently occupying, colonizing, land, and water-stealing party? Israel. For over 50 years, more than 400 times more innocent Palestinians have been killed and injured compared to innocent Israeli civilians. Where is the detailed coverage of the loss of life from enforced destitution and denial of life-saving medicines, equipment, and emergency transport to health facilities? Again, it is "The Others."

"The Others" are always described with less charitable words. In a meticulous content analysis by The Intercept of the *Los Angeles Times*, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* between Oct. 7 and Nov. 24, the use of the words "slaughtered," "horrific" and "massacre" in relation to Israeli and Palestinians killed was 218 to 9!

The Intercept said Israel's war on Gaza is "perhaps the deadliest war for children – almost entirely Palestinian – in modern history." There is scant mention of the word "children" and related terms in the headlines

ments in Israel-affiliated companies. Back in November, long before American college and university campuses saw the current spread of encampments and other protests, Columbia suspended two student groups, Students for Justice in Palestine and Jewish Voice for Peace.

Why? No reason was given. "The university did not elaborate on how exactly the groups did that except to say they had held 'unauthorized' events that included unspecified 'threatening rhetoric and intimidation,'" The *New York Times* reported. As an alumnus and veteran of protests there, I can attest that Columbia's rules do not require demonstrators to obtain authorization from campus authorities.

No pro-Palestinian protester at Columbia had carried out any actual violence or violent threats. They still haven't.

After wealthy pro-Israel alums withdrew their donations, cash-grubbing Columbia president Nemat "Minouche" Shafik went full-spectrum fascist in voluntary testimony on Capitol Hill. Calling the slogan "from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" anti-Semitic (it isn't), she cravenly groveled before a cabal of far-right Congressional goons, agreed that anti-Semitism is rampant on the Columbia campus (a lie), claimed that she had launched investigations of pro-Palestine instructors (if so, it was news to them) and when Republican lawmakers demanded that she fire a tenured professor of Middle Eastern, South Asian and African studies for allegedly saying the October 7th attack by Hamas was "awesome" (he didn't), she agreed to get rid of him and other educators (she can't).

To drive the point home, Shafik suspended pro-Palestinian student demonstrators (pro-Israel marchers get a free pass) and asked heavily-armed NYPD riot cops to violently arrest them and steal their personal possessions. Campus security guards shut down WKCR, the campus radio station, so student journalists could no longer report the news.

Fascist administrators ordered similar police crackdowns at protests at such institutions as Princeton, USC, UT Austin, Emerson, Cal State Poly Humboldt and Emory, where Atlanta cops tased and maced students as they held them down. Brutal tactics only serve to further inflame passions, a fact

of articles in that span of time.

(Note, reporters from these papers are like the rest of the mainstream Western media reports, including Israeli journalists, who have long been banned by the Israeli government from freely reporting from inside Gaza, but have managed to write some exceptionally graphic stories from a distance.)

Palestinian Arabs are denied the description of armed-force anti-semitism by the Israeli war machine. Arabs are Semites and have long been the victims of violent racist, hate-filled anti-semitism by brutal Israeli leaders. (See the "Anti-Semitism Against Arab and Jewish Americans" speech by Jim Zogby and DebatingTaboos.org).

The Intercept reported that the three newspapers mentioned anti-semitism against Jews in the US 549 times compared to 79 mentions of Islamophobia, notwithstanding, far more frequent, and violent assaults on Muslims and Arabs.

Western medical doctors spending a few weeks in bombed Gaza hospitals are personal witnesses of scenes beyond any level of deliberate slaughter they have ever experienced in their courageous service in troubled areas around the world. Ambulances, hospitals, and thousands of families – adults, children, women, and babies alike – huddling in areas outside these facilities are routinely bombed, and shelled by Israeli planes and tanks, and targeted by Israeli snipers. Courageous Israeli human rights groups and refuseniks will detail more of the mayhem over time.

Biden's chosen humanitarian aid emissary David Satterfield did not mince words in his remarks during a virtual event hosted by the American Jewish Committee, "there is an imminent risk of famine for the majority, if not all, the 2.2. million population of Gaza." According to Satterfield, "This is not a point in debate. It is an established fact, which the United States, its experts, the international community, its experts assess

reconfirmed when the encampment at Columbia was immediately reassembled the next day. USC valedictorian Asna Tabassum, denied her right to deliver her commencement address because she is Muslim and supports the people of Gaza, has received infinitely more attention to her message because she was censored.

Not wanting to miss out on this latest McCarthyite moment, however, employers who support Israel's slaughter of Gazans are firing journalists, teachers, athletes, editors and tech workers who disagree. Far-right Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson has demanded that federal workers who oppose the bloodshed be fired while a group of pro-genocide corporate CEOs is organizing a blacklist of pro-Palestine college students to distribute to major companies so these young people won't be able to find a job after graduation. (Student activists have taken to wearing masks and scarves to avoid being doxxed by reactionary supporters of Israel's war.)

Those who resort to censorship do so because they don't have a credible message of their own. When the overwhelming majority of the American public, Democrats and Republicans alike, disapproves of Israel—a longstanding ally of the US—it's clear that the usual lame "if you oppose Israel you're anti-Semitic" trope is no longer effective. We are no longer scared.

Like the political parties who work harder to suppress the vote for the other party than to motivate and excite their own supporters, those who have nothing affirma-

and believe is real...

Still, the duplicitous Netanyahu twirling the hapless Joe Biden around his bloody fingers continues to obstruct the entry of hundreds of trucks with critical food, water, and medicine, sometimes paid for by US taxpayers that are lined up daily at the borders of Gaza. Netanyahu continues to enforce, whenever he can, the genocidal orders by his barbaric ministers on Oct. 8 – "No electricity, no food, no fuel, no water... We are fighting animals and will act accordingly."

To the White House and the Netanyahu-dominated US Congress, violating numerous federal laws, (See the April 19, 2024, Letter to President Joe Biden), the response is to make the American taxpayers continue to pay billions of dollars to unconditionally weaponize further the Israeli death machine in Gaza, right down to 2000-pound bombs that destroy entire civilian neighborhoods. After all, Gazans are "The Others."

The streets of America have come alive with valiant Jewish, Muslim, and Christian protestors joining together and showing up wherever Biden and other callous politicians speak such as Senator Tom Cotton (R-Ark.) who said, "As far as I'm concerned, Israel can bounce the rubble in Gaza."

After 76 years of Congress blocking testimony by leading Israeli and Palestinian peace advocates, more lawmakers are starting to listen. But many more in Congress – are still mired in their clenched-jaw obedience to the AIPAC lobby. It is time to stop the rubble 'bouncing' over decomposing bodies in the besieged tiny Gaza Strip.

Ralph Nader is a consumer advocate, lawyer and author. His books include "How the Rats Re-formed the Congress" and, with Mark Green, "Fake President" and "Wrecking America: How Trump's Lawbreaking and Lies Betray All." Contact Nader c/o PO Box 19312, Washington, DC 20036. See www.nader.org, reportersalert.org or facebook.com/ralphnader.

TED RALL

This is a Golden Age of Censorship

It's too bad we can't monetize censorship, because we truly live in a golden age of speech suppression. In this deeply polarized society, the one thing we can all agree upon is that people we disagree with need to shut up.

Officially, freedom of speech is a key commandment in our national civic religion. We love free speech—in the abstract. Nine out of 10 Americans told a 2022 Knight Foundation/Ipsos study that "protecting free speech is an important part of American democracy" and that "people should be allowed to express unpopular opinions." Yay, America!

When people express specific unpopular opinions, not so yay. 70% of respondents to the same study said that, for example, COVID-19 misinformation ought to be banned. Some even called for those who spread it (even though some of it may turn out to be true) to be jailed.

Young people often call for those they disagree with to shut their yaps. A College Pulse/Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression poll found that 71% of today's college students would ban someone from speaking on campus if that person viewed transgender people as being mentally ill or they thought Black Lives Matter was a hate group. And 57% said anti-abortion activists should never be allowed to speak in public.

And if objectionable speech manages to slip through? Then 63% think it's OK to shout you down if you're saying something they don't like.

Nowadays, though, young people are big targets of censorship, too.

At my alma mater, Columbia, administrators have been coming down like a ton of bricks against peaceful student demonstrators calling for a ceasefire in Gaza and for the university to divest its financial invest-

Sandronsky...

Continued from previous page

Tyson Foods; Valor Security and Investigations; Uber and Lyft; Waffle House and Walmart, Inc.

For more information, please visit coshnetwork.org. Follow National Council for Occupational Safety and Health on Facebook, @NationalCOSH on Twitter and @NationalCOSH on Instagram.

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to say for their own position strive to make sure that those on the other side, who have a strong argument, cannot express themselves.

Censorship is a tool used by those who know they are wrong.

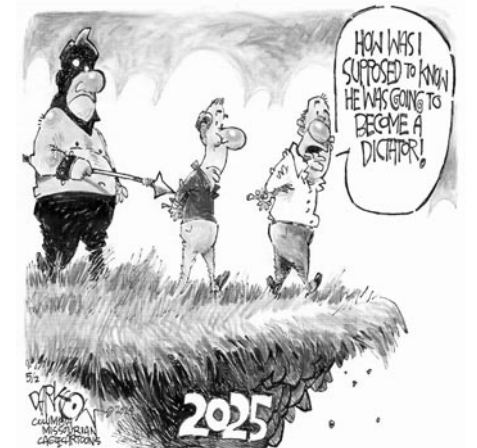
Censoring antiwar voices is nothing new. Columbia suspended and expelled opponents of the Vietnam War in 1968. And when the Russo-Ukrainian war broke out in 2022, the US government and its media mouthpieces censored Russian media outlets, boycotted Russian culture and even attacked Russian cats. But the truth about Ukraine—its corrupt president, its official romance with neo-Nazism, its anti-democratic regime and its low chance of success—is coming out.

Yet optimism is the wrong response to this attempt to crush voices of conscience. Every spasm of mass censorship leaves a trail of cynicism, stifled voices, stunted careers and an ever-shrinking spectrum of expression. Remember Al Jazeera America? Phil Donahue's show on MSNBC?

They were casualties of the War on Terror's Bush-era censors; we could use them now.

Again, we are losing good people with important voices.

Ted Rall, political cartoonist, columnist and graphic novelist, co-hosts the left-vs-right DMZ America podcast with fellow cartoonist Scott Stantis. Write him c/o his website (rall.com), Twitter @tedrall



How Did So Much Stuff Pile Up?

By RICH WANDSCHNEIDER

A few years ago, I turned a carport into a bedroom. But first I had to empty out the books, papers, furniture, rugs and tools that were in the carport. Then I took it all to a storage unit where rent was \$50 a month.

After three years of thinking about it, and only occasionally pawing through the storage unit for a lost item, I finally sorted out a handful of books and items that meant something—I could have fit them in a suitcase!—and held a yard sale for the rest.

I think about that when I see storage facilities spreading and expanding across the country. At least 500 units have been built here in eastern Oregon's Wallowa County, population 7,500, and storage businesses can be found in towns and suburbs across the West.

A local entrepreneur who owns about half the local units is now building in regional towns as well: Concrete slabs with

metal buildings on top, single light bulbs inside, no plumbing.

I'm past 80 now, and, although my house is small, I have held onto a lot of stuff. In the normal course of events, my children would inherit it.

But my two children and their families live in Arizona and Guam, busy building their own inventories of stuff. In a previous age, when there was a family house and three or more children to a house, the house and its basic furnishings would go to one child, and the remaining children would parcel out anything else.

In my nuclear family, it worked like this: Mom passed on, and no one wanted or needed the house, so Dad called a summit meeting as he prepared to go into assisted living.

We four siblings gathered for a week in the sunny Southern California backyard and emptied the house. Dad sat in his captain's chair and laid down the rules: if you brought it into the house — sculpture from Africa, old sports equipment — you took it away. Or traded with a sibling. One table was set up for stuff to go to Dad's best friend and another for a yard sale, and off we went to sort through the remaining items.

When it came to Dad's fine collection of old cameras, they went to brother Phil, in Dad's estimation the only one of us who knew how to take a decent photo. The tools were split between sister Mary and me: "You both at least know the difference between an end wrench and a crescent."

Dad said that he had seen families argue and split over parental leavings, and he wanted no part of that. So on we went, sorting through grandma's rag rugs, old diplomas, a collection of bell bottom pants and lots of keepsakes, all the while drinking beer and retelling old stories.

We cried some as we set Dad up with a few things for the assisted living place, then left for our own homes. I got Dad's last Ford—his cars were always Fords—as he figured my family needed a good second car more than did the others.

It was a wonderful week.

I don't have plans for a summit, but I am looking around the house and thinking about what child or grandchild might want the things I have held onto, such as carpets from Turkey, artwork by Northwest artist friends, cast iron cookware and so many books.

Books written and signed by Ivan Doig

and Ursula LeGuin—they can go to libraries now. And I smile thinking about taking my best Turkish carpet to a granddaughter's first house.

In April, Nez Perce artist Carla Timentwa brought a fine collection of beadwork, woven basket hats and shell dresses to the Joseph Center in the town of Joseph, where I work. She said she'd ignored her grandmother's teachings as a child, but on becoming a grandmother herself, took up the arts and began making things to give away: hats for granddaughters who serve food in the Longhouse, a fine beaded vest for her husband, dresses for young women to wear at naming and mourning ceremonies.

It's important, Carla said, to take care of others as they come into the world, as they grow and as they leave. It's a good lesson—giving is always more important than storing stuff away.

Rich Wandschneider is a contributor to Writers on the Range, writersontherange.org, an independent nonprofit dedicated to spurring lively conversation about the West. He feels lighter in Joseph, Oregon.

Dick Wolf Gets Back to the Basics with 'Homicide' Docs

By ROB PATTERSON

I have often joked that I am a Law & Order Leftist due to my affection for the mighty Dick Wolf-created television series franchise. Without even having to look it up, I am certain that it's the most successful TV franchise ever.

What that says to me is that I am hardly alone in a fascination with crime and justice. I take a simple leap from that and also say that it's one of those overarching societal issues where the rubber truly meets the road for many of my fellow citizens. And, in my own Leftist and progressive way, also to me.

This is hardly the most propitious time to say that policing and the justice system are prime needed building blocks of a fair and functioning society. As I write this, protesters on college campuses across the nation are being abused and unfairly arrested by law enforcement. The Supreme Court is debating the notion of presidential immunity. And it seems some of the constitutionally maladjusted occupiers of the SCOTUS bench are OK with a chief executive being

free to commit murder. Stories of police violence against African-Americans and other minorities seems like a daily news staple.

Rarely has policing and the prosecution and judgment of those who do genuinely bad acts and break the law been more in need of some "good press," so to speak. And just as he had with his moral storytelling in all the "Law & Order" shows, as well as his triptych Chicago and FBI TV series, Dick Wolf is on the case.

He's the executive producer of "Homicide: New York," a five-part documentary series screening on Netflix. Caught my attention as an ex-New Yorker (in a time when crime there was rampant, but it was still in ways I value the only place to be at that juncture). As a fan of fictional NYC cop shows as far back as "Naked City" at the juncture of the '50s and '60s, getting a look at the real thing was quite enjoyable for a number of reasons.

Each episode focuses on a high-profile Manhattan murder case, all with interesting twists. There's the shooting of a pot dealer/aspiring actress and singer who lived in an apartment above the legendary Carnegie Deli in Midtown. A man who was oddly hanging out with two young teenagers at night in Central Park — the obvious why question remained unanswered — whose dead body wound up in the lake. A nighttime office-

ting in the back row."

Trump cranes neck around, shakes his head, says, "Never met her."

Steinglass holds up a photo of Trump and Stormy. "Remember now?"

"Look, I'm famous! Women want their photo taken with me all the time. You can't expect me to remember everyone."

"You just heard her testimony, about how you met at a golf tournament, asked her to dinner in your room and then had sex with her."

Trump shrugs and bobs his head. "If she says so. I was napping when she was talking."

Steinglass continues, "She also said that when she asked about Melania, your wife, you brushed it aside, said, 'Oh yeah, yeah, you know, don't worry about that. We don't even—we have separate rooms and stuff.'"

"If you say so," says Trump, trying not to squirm.

"She says so, under oath."

"Look, we had sex, OK? And, it was fantastic."

"That was not what Stormy said. She told Jimmy Kimmel you had a tiny mushroom-topped penis and that you didn't wear a condom and that she prayed for death while you were on top of her."

"Biden paid her to say that. Look, having a baby messes with the lady parts, you know? After Barron was born, Melania moved into her own bedroom and got some new panties that said, you know—what she had printed on her green jacket the day we went to the border to visit illegal children in their cages—the panties said, 'I really don't

cleaning woman who seemed to mysteriously disappear from a financial district building. A seeming family murder and a serial rapist/killer.

The show gets down into the nuts and bolts of how police resources are marshaled when the 911 calls come in, and how investigations and interrogations happen in real life — somewhat different from those in TV dramas. Its richness here is in the personalities of those who worked on solving and prosecuting the cases.

It's reassuring that not all is toxic in copland to come across the homicide detectives in this series. One of them is a Deadhead (ie. a Grateful Dead fan, for any uninitiated) who refused to take off his band skull logo lapel pin when a prosecutor asked him to before testifying. Another who is an expert at going through hours of surveillance camera recordings does so while rocking out to hard rock and heavy metal music. I can relate to these guys.

Then there's the Latina detective who grew up in the housing projects who often manages to use her common background with the accused at critical points in interrogations to get them to confess. And the Black cop of similar background whose common ground with some offenders helps him in his duties.

"Homicide: New York" spotlights the

care, do you?" I didn't like it but you don't cross Melania or she'll cut you

"So you did have sex with her—Stormy Daniels?"

"That's what I just said, dumbass. Where did you get your law degree—in a Cracker Jack box?"

Steinglass glances at the clock and says, "I think that's all for today. We will take this up again tomorrow."

Trump rushes to the back of the room, assumes his favorite position in front of the cameras. He straightens his blue tie, smiles and says, "I want to begin by wishing my wife, Melania, a Happy Birthday, it's her birthday today, be nice to be with her but

human side of not just the police and district attorneys but also of victims and their family and friends. It's reassuring to know that not all cops are bad, and that the forces of law and order include good souls and likable humans just like us. I look forward to the "Homicide: Los Angeles," slated to follow.

Populist Picks

BOOK: "Blue Blood" by Edward Conlon — I may have touted this book about a young man's seven years as an NYC policeman years ago when I first read it, but its real-life resonance and blunt yet literate prose make it "The most stunning memoir ever written about the cop world," says ex-cop and master of both factual and fictional police procedurals Joseph Wambaugh.

TV SERIES: "Blue Bloods" — Another repeat plug. Yeah, it's not the real nitty-gritty of policing in the Big Apple. But its appeal as what I would call a nighttime soap opera melded with warm family drama have managed to keep it on my regular viewing list for 14 seasons.

Rob Patterson is a music and entertainment writer in Austin, Texas.

I'm in a courthouse for a rig trial a rig trial but we're doing very very well, everybody knows it, she's in Florida and I just want to say Melania, that none of this happened, you know, and even if it did, it wouldn't have meant anything you're my wife and I love you."

He starts to turn away, then swings back to scowl and point at the camera, "This is all Biden's fault, all of it."

"See you soon!"

Rosie Sorenson is a humor writer in the San Francisco Bay Area. Her column is satire and, like Fox "News," cannot be believed as fact. You can contact Rosie at: RosieSorenson29@yahoo.com. See RosieSorenson.com

SATIRE/Rosie Sorenson

Did He or Didn't He

There's no longer a question of "Will he or won't he?"

Trump's attorneys tried to talk him out of it, but Trump insisted upon testifying at his own criminal trial in New York City.

"My fans want to hear the truth from me!" he hollered. "I don't want them to think I'm a p***y!"

It's 9:00 a.m., Thursday. Trump is sitting upright in the witness box, having been admonished by Judge Merchan to "Tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God."

Trump squirms, waves his hand in the air and says "Yes, yes! Let's get on with it."

Prosecuting attorney Joshua Steinglass draws near, takes a beat, says, "You're not happy to be here, are you?"

"What, me? No. Hell, I've been breaking laws since you were in diapers, so fire away, my little legal beagle."

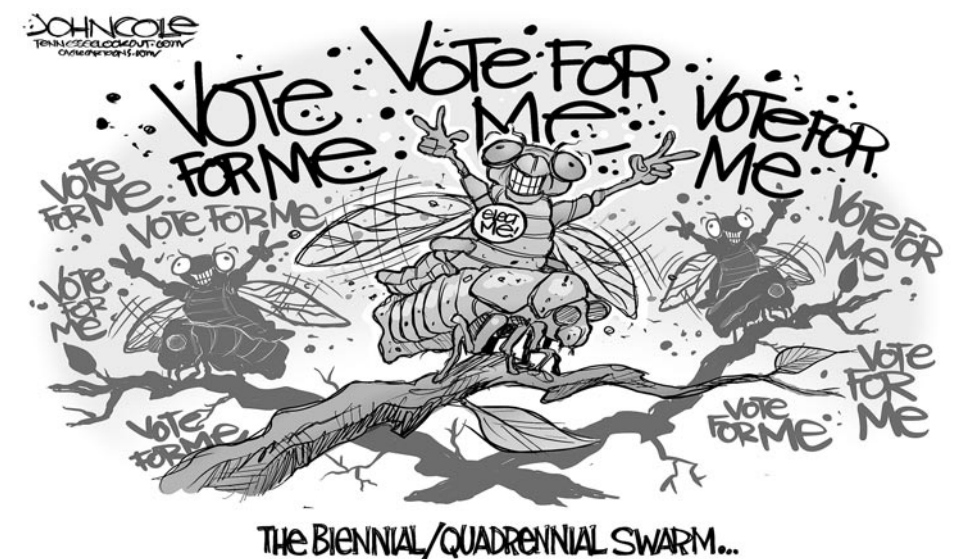
"You're admitting crimes?"

"Of course not. I just wanted to see if Trump's little joke might rattle you."

Steinglass takes a deep breath and begins. "Tell me about Stormy Daniels."

"Who?"

"Stormy Daniels. That blond woman sit-



The ‘Coachella of Classic Movies’ Rides Again at Hollywood

This year, the TCM Classic Film Festival turned 15 years old with the central theme: “Most Wanted: Crime and Justice in Film.”

As a film historian/critic, Turner Classic Movies is my favorite TV channel, and I eagerly look forward to its annual film festival featuring screenings, celebrities, panels and parties devoted to vintage films at — where else? — Hollywood. This year, the TCM Classic Film Festival turned 15 years old with the central theme: “Most Wanted: Crime and Justice in Film.” This is appropriate, because I have been the victim of a cultural crime perpetrated by my cable TV provider, Spectrum/Charter, which since last September has failed to adequately provide me with proper service and unobstructed viewing access to TCM. Although I subscribe to my favorite channel, for eight months whenever I attempt to watch TCM, every two minutes or so, the image on the screen freezes and there’s no sound, rendering it impossible to simply watch movies without constant disruption of the TCM channel. This, despite the fact, that I’ve made innumerable complaints to Spectrum/Charter, which has proven to be totally incompetent by repeatedly failing to resolve this technical issue, which company repairmen have told me afflicts others in my L.A.-area city. Of course, on the other hand, Spectrum/Charter’s extremely expensive bill never fails to arrive on time, and despite my requests, not only has Spectrum/Charter failed to fix this tech problem, but it has refused to compensate me (to date) for eight months of poor service, making it impossible to watch classic movies on my favorite channel.

So, this year I looked forward to the April 18-21 TCM Classic Film Festival more than ever — at least I’d be able to enjoy TCM for four days without interruption, and as usual, I wasn’t disappointed. After picking up my press pass, I squeezed into Club TCM, which converts the Blossom Room at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel — site of the very first Academy Awards ceremony in 1929 — where Festival panels and receptions take place for passholders. There, Bruce Goldstein, founder and co-president of Rialto Pictures and Founding Repertory Artistic Director of New York’s Film Forum, hosted “So You Think You Know Movies.” As part of this cinematic trivial pursuit game, clips featuring George Chakiris appearances as an uncredited extra in scenes from 1953’s “Gentlemen Prefer Blondes” with Marilyn Monroe, 1954’s “Brigadoon,” etc., were

screened. To the audience’s delight, Chakiris, who won the Best Supporting Actor Oscar for portraying Bernardo in 1961’s “West Side Story,” became the first of many screen notables to make a personal appearance at the star-studded event which celebrated the 30th anniversary of TCM’s going on the air in 1994.

The biggest conundrum facing movie lovers at the TCM Classic Film Festival is deciding which of up to six events being presented concurrently to attend. After the welcome reception also in Club TCM, I had to decide whether to see 1985’s “Clue” poolside under the stars at the Roosevelt (which is always good fun) or to cross Hollywood Blvd. to see the 2024 documentary “Made In England: The Films of Powell and Pressburger,” directed by David Hinton, at the Chinese Multiplex. Being a film historian/critic, I opted for the edifying over escapist entertainment, and I am glad I did. The doc’s British co-producers Nick Varley and Matthew Wells spoke before the curtain lifted for this 131-minute nonfiction look at the talents behind often idiosyncratic English pictures, such as “Black Narcissus” (1947) and “The Red Shoes” (1948).

Intriguingly, “Made In England” is as much about Martin Scorsese as it was about Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, who professionally and personally influenced the Italian-American auteur (particularly Powell). The extremely educational documentary unfolded details about the careers and private lives of the duo who gave the world The Archers film company, and it left me wanting to see more of their work, especially 1946’s “A Matter of Life and Death,” starring David Niven and Kim Hunter. Interestingly, in his commentary Scorsese seems to warn viewers from being obsessively fixated on reel life, as opposed to real life, to focus on one’s lived experience offscreen and on reality with flesh and blood people, not focusing on filmic phantoms and celluloid spirits. Scorsese sounds like he’s advising cinephiles that there’s more to life than going to and making movies. (An apropos message for TCM audiences, who applaud like crazy during credit sequences.)

One of the great things about the TCM Classic Film Festival is that it introduces pictures to rank and file film fans or even historians/critics like your humble scribe that we have never heard of before. A case in point is George Cukor’s 1954 “It Should Happen to You,” which was revived to celebrate Columbia’s 100th birthday and the movie’s 70th anniversary. TCM host Alicia Malone and SNL alum Julia Sweeney introduced this charming rom-com, the big screen debut of two-time Oscar winner Jack Lemmon. Interestingly, he portrays a documentaryarian opposite a beguiling, effervescent Judy Holliday.

Her Gladys Glover character is a sort of forerunner of Angelyne, Hollywood’s busty billboard queen. A girldle model from a smalltown in Upstate New York, Gladys is disappointed that she’s failed to attain fame in Manhattan, and is just another anonymous face lost in the crowd. This movie morality tale, which also co-stars Peter Lawford as a pre-Mad Men Madison Avenue advertising agency hot shot, poses a thought-provoking question, especially for today’s celebrity-obsessed culture. Written by Garson Kanin, this film fable asks what’s more important: Being famous or being in love? Hilarity ensues.

Speaking of Columbia Pictures, Matthew Wells’ 2023 documentary “Frank Capra: Mr. America,” about the man

who may be that studio’s most influential director, was also screened to commemorate Columbia’s centennial. Wells and academic/author/film historian Jeanine Basinger — who received this year’s Robert Osborne Award named after TCM’s late host — introduced the Capra biopic. The nonfiction film followed Capra’s life as a Sicilian immigrant who, Horatio Alger-like, rose from humble circumstances to achieve the American Dream. Capra became one of the Golden Age of Hollywood’s titans, directing a string of hits during the Depression and New Deal era, then a series of “Why We Fight” documentaries intended to persuade audiences to support the war effort during WWII. With movies like 1936’s “Mr. Deeds Goes to Town,” 1939’s “Mr. Smith Goes to Washington” and 1941’s “Meet John Doe,” Capra seemed to extoll the virtues of the little guy in populist pictures lauding democracy, while his Second World War docs embodied anti-fascism. Thanks to his optimistic, upbeat take on Americanism and life in general, he became one of the few directors to inspire an adjective: “Capraesque.” (In a similar vein, “Hitchcockian” refers to something suspenseful.)

Much of this is familiar territory, but I wasn’t prepared for the apparently scurrilous role Capra played during the Hollywood Blacklist. If I understood correctly, according to the documentary, when Capra was reproached for having creatively collaborated with leftwing screenwriters, decades later, as the Red Scare raged, Capra claimed that he did not know they were leftists. Although the doc doesn’t specifically mention him, these scribes include Sidney Buchman, who was a card carrying, dues paying member of the Communist Party USA, including, in all likelihood, when he co-wrote “Mr. Smith Goes to Washington.” (During the Blacklist, Congress finally had the chance to exact revenge upon Buchman for co-writing that paean to democracy.) Onscreen, the great film historian Joseph McBride alleges that Capra made “anti-Semitic” and “racist” comments. American Studies Professor Eric Smoodin goes on to compare Capra to director Elia Kazan, who, according to Victor Navasky’s seminal book on the Blacklist, “Naming Names,” was considered to be “the quintessential informer.”

Kazan and screenwriter Budd Schulberg both squealed to the House Un-American Activities Committee in the early 1950s, informing on Hollywood progressives to Congress, which enabled these “friendly witnesses” to continue working (while blacklisted “unfriendly” talents were banned from making movies). To justify their informing, Kazan and Schulberg made a movie that lauded betrayal and snitching. That picture, 1954’s multiple Oscar-winning “On the Waterfront” — starring Marlon Brando as a “heroic” stool pigeon — was screened April 20 at the TCL Chinese Theatre IMAX. Kazan and Schulberg weren’t “contenders” — they were just informers, “bums” who named names to HUAC.

In that great Tinseltown tradition, there will be a sequel to this article about the 2024 TCM Classic Film Festival. Stay tuned!

For more info: <https://filmfestival.tcm.com/>.

Ed Rampell is a film historian and critic based in Los Angeles. Rampell is the author of “Progressive Hollywood, A People’s Film History of the United States” and he co-authored “The Hawaii Movie and Television Book,” now in its third edition. This article first appeared at hollywoodprogressive.com.

EDGE OF SPORTS/*Dave Zirin*

Palestinians Stand Up to Israel Through Soccer

The American Friends Service Committee staged a youth soccer tournament in Rafah, showcasing the joy that the sport can offer.

Soccer is the world’s most popular sport, making it perhaps the closest thing we have to a cultural Esperanto—a common language that billions share. Amid the horrors of 2024, soccer has also become something else: a tool in the effort to stop Israel’s total war on the people of Gaza. If soccer is the great uniter, then countries that slaughter and starve civilians have no place on the pitch. This athletic activism is right now coming from two directions: There are nations trying to penalize Israel through the world governing soccer body, FIFA. Then there is the American Friends Service Committee, an organization that has been practicing mutual aid from inside Gaza since 1948. In April, the AFSC staged a youth and teen soccer tournament in Rafah—with

solidarity games in cities throughout the United States—to showcase the joy and humanity that the sport can offer. The organization’s tournament should remind the world that these young people deserve to live and play—and not become casualties of Israel’s war.

At its May 17 governing body meeting in Thailand, FIFA was to debate whether to punish Israel. The Palestinian Football Association has spearheaded this effort to confront the Israeli state at the FIFA congress. “All the football infrastructure in Gaza has been either destroyed, or seriously damaged, including the historic stadium of Al-Yarmuk,” the Palestine FA wrote in its proposal to debate sanctions.

While a smattering of countries have pledged to support this effort, any kind of a penalty has little chance of passing. This is because the 55-member United European Football Association will undoubtedly block such a measure. (Israel absurdly plays in the UEFA league for reasons that would require its own article.) It also won’t pass because craven FIFA President Gianni Infantino sees himself as representing many identities, but Palestinian is assuredly not one of them.

Yet FIFA’s even having the debate is a step toward accountability for Israel and a reminder to the world of FIFA’s hypocrisy. FIFA cannot claim that it is just about sports, since it has long established itself as a political player. After the invasion of Ukraine, Russia was sanctioned faster than

a Ronaldo penalty kick. This is the Palestinian Football Association asking “What about us?” not only to FIFA but to the world.

In addition to this push for accountability in the corrupt world of FIFA, the American Friends Service Committee on April 28 held a youth soccer tournament in Rafah. The AFSC is expanding the incredible work they do on the ground, having provided aid to more than 541,000 people in Gaza since October. A soccer tournament serves a similar purpose. It is an effort to bring normalcy and joy to lives that have been violently disrupted. “The young people of Gaza have experienced so much hardship and trauma over the last six months,” said Firas Ramlawi, manager for AFSC’s Gaza office and one of the tournament organizers. “They have lost parents, siblings, and loved ones. They have been displaced from their homes and their schools and community spaces have been bombed. It is so important that they experience moments of joy and resiliency in the midst of all this pain.”

The soccer world of Palestine has also seen the killing of prominent players and coaches beloved throughout the region. Imagine what it does to a child to see their heroes slaughtered. As these matches take place, the death toll continues to mount, the

hunger continues to rise, and the US-made weapons continue to be sent to Israel.

“In the US, teens might worry their soccer match will be called off because of rain. In Rafah, it is not weather but Israeli missiles that threaten the game, the players, and the 1.4 million Palestinians taking shelter there,” said Noor Nabulsi of AFSC. “We are calling on President Biden and every single member of Congress to support an immediate and permanent cease-fire, full humanitarian access, and an end of all military support for Israel. The young people of Palestine deserve a future where they can grow and play in peace.”

The playing of a soccer tournament in Rafah is an act of resistance—and even of survival. Israel’s destruction of sport is about killing the idea of play—of preventing people from having even the aspiration of feeling the wind against your face while chasing a ball. By playing soccer in the face of state violence, Palestinians are saying that they remain unshackled, that they still have dreams of being free.

Dave Zirin is the sports editor at The Nation. He is the author of 11 books on the politics of sports. He is also the coproducer and writer of the documentary “Behind the Shield: The Power and Politics of the NFL.” Email edgeofsports@gmail.com

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AMY GOODMAN



Protests and the press are intimately linked. As protesters are subject to arrests, we need the press to hold those in power accountable.

Campus Protest, Press Freedom and Palestine

World Press Freedom Day came May 3 amidst Gaza solidarity protests on campuses across the United States. In a democratic society, protests and the press are intimately linked. Desperate to clamp down on the growing movement, university administrations and police are increasingly restricting or outright banning the press from campus grounds. As protesters are subject to violent arrests, we need an independent press to hold those in power accountable, and to document this nationwide attempt to suppress free speech.

And it goes beyond free speech. We need to hear students' voices, why they are risking suspension and expulsion and in all-

too-many cases their personal safety, joining millions of people across the country who are deeply concerned about Israel's assault on Gaza, about the US providing the weapons for that attack, and about university investments in companies that profit from war. These student protests echo those against the Vietnam war in the '60s and '70s, and calls to divest from South African apartheid in the '70s and '80s.

Weeks ago at Columbia University, the epicenter of the current movement, President Minouche Shafik called in the New York Police Department (NYPD) which arrested over 100 students. She locked down the campus, preventing many journalists from covering the encampment. Soon after, the Columbia School of Journalism, or J-School, one of the most prominent in the world, stated on social media that they would facilitate access to journalists wanting to cover this important story, a clear challenge to university policy.

Despite Shafik's efforts to quash the protest, another encampment grew. When she issued yet another ultimatum, students occupied Hamilton Hall, renaming it Hind's Hall, after a six-year-old girl brutally killed by Israeli forces in Gaza. Shafik again called in the NYPD the next night. The police stormed the building and arrested another 100 students, inside and out.

Gillian Goodman, a Columbia J-School student, was on campus that night. "Myself and my colleagues at the Journalism School were pushed with police batons to our backs and corralled out of the space, so we were not able to witness the arrests head on," Gillian said on the *Democracy Now!*

news hour. "[The police] were extremely clear and efficient that they were not to have any eyewitnesses, including the majority of press, during the time that the arrests were made."

Police threatened students if they stepped outside the J-School, based in Pulitzer Hall, they would be arrested.

Across the country in Los Angeles, also on April 30, the UCLA Gaza solidarity encampment was physically attacked by a violent pro-Israel group. The *Los Angeles Times* reported that when the police finally arrived, they simply watched. The university's student paper, *The Daily Bruin*, wrote in an editorial published hours later,

"It began with ear-piercing screams of wailing babies loudly emitting from speakers. Counter-protesters tearing down the barricades. Laser pointers flashing into the encampment. People in masks waving strobe lights. Tear gas. Pepper spray. Violent beatings."

Shaanth Kodialam Nanguneri, *Bruin* senior staff writer, who was there with three other Bruin reporters, described the scene on *Democracy Now!*:

"It was about 2 or 3 a.m. ... We had all spent hours being out there on the field reporting, sending messages to our editors, really scared about the scenes that we were seeing on campus towards the protesters in the encampment, the level of violence and vitriol that was in the air. ... I personally witnessed a counter-protester slam a wooden slab onto an individual who had her hands on the barricade of the encampment and smashing her fingers, and listening to her scream."

The pro-Israel vigilantes then accosted

the four reporters:

"We were leaving and were vulnerable and were in a small group, we were encircled and attacked," Shaanth continued.

"They started shining lights in our face, spraying us with very strong irritants, circling in particular one of my colleagues and physically harassing and violently assaulting her."

The reporters managed to escape. One of them was briefly hospitalized.

The Bruin's editorial addressed the UCLA administration: "The world is watching. As helicopters fly over Royce Hall, we have a question. Will someone have to die on our campus tonight for you to intervene?"

On May 2, the Pulitzer Prize Board issued a statement, "to recognize the tireless efforts of student journalists across our nation's college campuses, who are covering protests and unrest in the face of great personal and academic risk ... In the spirit of press freedom, these students worked to document a major national news event under difficult and dangerous circumstances and at risk of arrest."

In this election year, with the likelihood of mass protests at the Democratic and Republican National Conventions, let us remember: a free press is essential to the functioning of a democratic society.

Denis Moynihan cowrote this column. Amy Goodman is the host of Democracy Now!, a daily international TV/radio news hour airing on more than 1,400 radio and TV stations. Her sixth book, co-authored with Moynihan and David Goodman, is "Democracy Now!: Twenty Years Covering the Movements Changing America."

Ultraprocessed Food Manufacturers Should Not Be Permitted To Market to Children

By BONNIE JEAN FELDKAMP

My son brought home a bookmark from school promoting the school's spring book fair — and it doubled as a coupon to a fast-food restaurant. This isn't the first "free kid's meal" coupon my son has gotten. It's a pretty common thing, and after the book I just read, it annoys me.

"Ultra-Processed People: The Science Behind Food That Isn't Food" by Chris van Tulleken dives into our food system in a way that exposes the real damage of the ultraprocessed food found at fast-food restaurants and on our grocery store shelves. Of course, children are most susceptible to the marketing that surrounds it, and they have the most to lose.

We all know that fast-food restaurants are not part of a healthy diet. Parents would not tolerate bookmarks coming home from school advertising tobacco products to children. So why do we tolerate bookmarks that advertise fast-food chains?

Thanks to chemical-laden manufactured food, according

to the science Tulleken presents, we've created a mismatch between taste and nutrition that confuses our bodies. When your mouth perceives a certain flavor, your body reacts by preparing to receive the nutrition that should accompany it. This is why artificial sweeteners can still cause a spike in insulin. When the nutrition doesn't arrive as expected, your body is still hungry which prompts you to eat more. This mismatch is one of the many things that contributes to obesity.

The fact is that food manufacturers are not in the business of providing nutritious food. They are in the business of creating a market to sell as much of a product as possible at the expense of public health. What's worse is that corporations know that if they can hook children on their brand, they'll likely have a customer for life.

Food manufacturers have even infiltrated the very entities charged with establishing nutrition guidelines for the public. Tulleken writes that the "Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics which trains dietitians and helps to shape national food policy has extensive relationships with the food industry." Not only have they accepted millions of dollars from companies such as Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, Nestle and Hershey, but they also have more than \$1 million of stocks in some of these same companies.

That's a huge conflict of interest. The organizations responsible for policy should not accept money from or invest in the food manufacturers they are tasked with scrutinizing.

Marketing ultraprocessed food to children reminds me of the Laysan albatross. These seabirds die because they mistake our ocean's plastic pollution for food. With their bellies full of plastic, they starve to death, malnourished. This is what I think of when I think of the ultraprocessed foods in school cafeterias across the country and fast-food marketing sent home as bookmarks and kids' meal rewards.

We are feeding ourselves hyperflavored empty calories that fill our bellies but do not nourish our bodies. If a company's purpose is to market a product in a way that only serves to make the corporation more money, then it's probably not in your best interest to eat it. It also should not be marketed to our children.

Bonnie Jean Feldkamp is a wife, mother and opinion editor at the Louisville Courier-Journal. She is the media director of the National Society of Newspaper Columnists. Find her on social media @WriterBonnie, or email her at Bonnie@WriterBonnie.com. Check out her weekly YouTube videos at <https://www.youtube.com/bonniejeanfeldkamp>.

Dispatches ...

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US Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-R.I.), chair of the Senate Budget Committee, called the figures assembled by Zucman "disgraceful" and said that "not only can we fix this, we can make Social Security and Medicare safe and sound as far as the eye can see."

ECONOMY MATCHES LATE 1960S LOW UNEMPLOYMENT STREAK.

The US economy had its 27th consecutive month below 4% unemployment in April, as the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported unemployment at 3.9%. This matches the streak from November 1967 to January 1970, often viewed as one of the most prosperous stretches in US history, Dean Baker of the Center for Economic Policy and Research noted (5/3). It was a period when jobs were plentiful, real wages were rising rapidly, and prosperity was broadly shared as wages rose at all points along the wage distribution.

"We are not currently seeing as robust real wage growth as in the late 1960s boom. Productivity has not been growing as rapidly, and we are still recovering from the disruptions created by the pandemic. But the benefits of growth have been broadly shared with workers with the bottom of the distribution seeing the largest wage gains," Baker noted.

Bureau of Labor Statistics survey showed a gain of 175,000 jobs. This is well below the average of 234,000 jobs over the last 12 months.

After three quarters of extraordinary productivity growth in 2023, growth in the first

quarter came in at just 0.3%. However, this still left year-over-year growth at 2.9%, far above the 1.6% average in the five years before the pandemic, and even further above the 1.2% rate if we go back a decade. For this reason, even though the first quarter productivity number weakens the case, there is still some cause to believe we are on a faster productivity growth path.

Baker said it was another very solid jobs report. "The Fed should be absolutely ecstatic over this jobs report. The slower job growth is at a pace that most economists would view as sustainable. The recent pace of wage growth is certainly not inflationary and the data in this report are consistent with a more rapid productivity growth story."

"In fact, if we extrapolate from the last three months, there is cause to be worried that wage growth is too slow. Also, the decline in the share of unemployment due to quits suggests a reduction in workers' confidence about their labor market prospects. At this point, there is more basis for concern on the weakness side than an excessive strength story."

POLL FINDS RISE OF FASCISM AND EXTREMISM IS VOTERS' TOP CONCERN.

A recent Marist poll for NPR and PBS *NewsHour* surveyed Americans' biggest concerns for the country's future, finding that "the rise of fascism and extremism" topped the list, at 31% of US adults, Kerry Eleveld noted at DailyKos (5/6).

The partisan breakdown, as usual, was illuminating, with a plurality of Democrats and independents choosing the rise of fascism and extremism, at 47% and 32% respectively, as their primary concern.

The issue dominated with Democrats—nothing else even broke 20%. But among independents, "a lack of values" came in second at 24% with "becoming weak as a nation" just behind at 23%.

Republicans' top two concerns were "a lack of values," at 36%, and "becoming weak as a nation," at 30%, while the rise of fascism was a distant third at 15%.

Notably, 35% of those who cited rising fascism and extremism as their top concern said they are "definitely voting in November's election." Meanwhile, a lack of values and the nation becoming weak stayed static among "definite" voters at 24% and 21%, respectively.

Simply put, the rise of fascism and extremism is the most concerning to Americans, particularly those who are "definite" voters, and the feeling is most pronounced among potential Democratic voters (i.e. Democrats and independents). On the other hand, it is not a primary motivation for Republican voters.

Additionally, the survey's findings suggest that abortion could be a more powerful issue than some analysts suggest because of GOP abortion bans sweeping the South. These bans serve as a real-life example of the loss of freedoms and autonomy associated with fascists and autocratic regimes.

While attendees of this year's Conservative Political Action Conference are outright welcoming "the end of democracy," the GOP's quashing of abortion care in an entire region of the country serves as a tangible reminder of what an end to democracy means.

Among analysts, the economy and immigration are often touted as the two main

policy issues driving the election, with abortion lagging, polled separately, or even excluded from the issue polling.

That was also the case in the 2022 midterms, when Democrats were supposed to be swept away by a red wave but instead wildly outperformed expectations.

In October 2022, a Civiqs poll showed exactly why analysts misread the issues that would dominate the election. While 58% of voters overall chose the "economy/jobs/inflation" as their top issue, the partisan breakdown of issues showed that 52% of Democrats chose abortion as their No. 1 issue while 43% said "fair elections/democracy" was their No. 2 issue.

These two issues proved to be decisive and incredibly motivating among Democratic voters' and some independents who turned out to beat back the red wave, Eleveld noted.

The latest Marist polling suggests that anyone who underestimates them in this election does so at their own peril, Eleveld noted.

BIDEN AND TRUMP SUPPORTERS ARE SHARPLY DIVIDED BY THE MEDIA THEY CONSUME.

Supporters of President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump are sharply divided across all sorts of lines, including the sources they rely on to get their news, data from an NBC News poll shows, Ben Kamisar reported at NBCNews.com (4/29).

Biden is the clear choice of voters who consume newspapers and national network news, while Trump does best among voters who don't follow political news at all.

Continued on next page

This Tiny Flower Teaches Us All We Need to Know About Growing Old

By DANA MILBANK

For most of my life, I marked the progress of spring by its blooms. First came the crocuses of February and the daffodils of March, followed, in quick succession, by the tulips and hyacinth, the lilac and flowering cherry and the saucer magnolias. Later, the azaleas would explode in a pink and red riot - and, before long, the peonies would unfurl to proclaim the approach of summer. Each arrival announced itself with a spectacular burst of color and, often, a sweet perfume that filled the yard.

But lately I've come to share the view of Wendy Cass, the head botanist at Shenandoah National Park, when she sees a waving clump of daffodils.

"Boring," she says.

What I had been watching all those years was spring as humans made it. This year, I'm experiencing spring as God made it.

Those tulips, lilacs and all the rest were imported from Europe and Asia, curated and genetically manipulated by humans so they would grow with no effort and display improbably sweet and showy blooms. They are beautiful, no question, and I will always smile when I see a host of golden daffodils as Wordsworth did, "Beside the lake, beneath the trees/ Fluttering and dancing in the breeze."

But this year, I've instead been walking in the still-bare forest and looking for Dutchman's breeches.

In case you are wondering why some

European left his pants in the woods, let me explain that the Dutchman's breeches is my new favorite flower. Its bloom, just a half-inch tall, looks like an upside-down pair of white pantaloons, belted at the waist with a yellow rope. Native to this part of the eastern United States, it's one of the first wildflowers of spring, popping up in late March or early April, flowering for a couple of weeks and disappearing as quickly as it came. Its entire growing season - from the time its first green shoot emerges from the earth to the moment its last bit of green foliage dies for the year - is just a couple of months.

Yet so much life comes from those delicate trousers. It's one of the first foods in the forest after a long winter, and a crucial bit of sustenance for the queen bumblebee. When she emerges from her overwintering nest in the ground (the other bees die during the winter), she stretches her long tongue into the Dutchman's breeches to reach its nectar, which nourishes her as she lays the eggs that will replenish the colony with the next generation of workers.

The Dutchman's breeches are part of a class of plants felicitously known as "spring ephemerals." They appear on the forest floor before the trees have leafed out, taking advantage of the sunlight. They flower, go to seed and die back within just six to 12 weeks. These are flowers you generally won't find at florists: They are bluebells and bloodroot, trout lilies and toothwort, spring beauties and rue anemone. They are joined by other flowers that, while not "true" ephemerals (their foliage lasts a bit longer), generally share the same category: the great white trillium, hepatica, star chickweed and mayapple.

They are notoriously difficult to cultivate, hard to transplant and even harder to grow from seeds. It can take seven years from the time a trillium seed is planted to the appearance of just one of its three-petal

flowers. Ephemerals are finicky and fussy plants, growing only in forests and typically near streams. They aren't as bold and colorful as garden-variety flowers, and most don't even have a scent. You won't spot spring ephemerals from your car window with an "ooh" and an "ah." To find them, you have to go on a treasure hunt in the forest. Their flowers can be tiny - sometimes just a millimeter or two - and you could easily miss them if you don't look carefully.

That is just the point.

"The more you stand and stare at the ground, the more you see," Cass said as we stood in the forest this week. She pointed out an early meadow rue that was just unfurling, then a sessile-leaf bellwort emerging, then a trillium in bloom. "Just stand still for a few minutes and you'll discover."

Her advice for spotting the spring ephemerals seemed as applicable to life as to botany. "Don't be so focused on your destination or you'll miss the good stuff," she recommended. "Look around. Slow down. Even when you think you've seen everything, you haven't."

Spring ephemerals have been one of my happy discoveries as I've begun rehabilitating the neglected farm my wife and I bought in the Virginia Piedmont in 2022. Mostly, I've been discovering that everything I thought I knew about nature and gardening was wrong. In the case of these spring wildflowers, I realize that the knock-out colors and fragrances I had associated with the natural world in my urban existence were, in fact, caricatures. In the wild, beauty is more subtle and more delicate - but it is also more satisfying.

As I grow older, I find that this is true of life generally. It becomes clearer to me with each birthday that we are all spring ephemerals. We are here for just a short time. We sprout, we flower, we go to seed, we disappear. But, as the years race by, I am also learning to find beauty not just in

bold colors but in subtle hues. The sublime is with us in every season, if we only pause long enough to take it in.

The metaphor continues, for the spring ephemeral is so much more than its fleeting life above ground would suggest. Their root systems, under the surface, work actively well after their foliage has disappeared; spreading and storing resources in rhizomes, or corms, so they can push out new growth at the first sign of spring. And the ephemerals are deeply interconnected. An individual plant can live for 20 or 30 years, but a colony of spring ephemerals can take a century to form. These colonies can expand for hundreds of yards along a stream. But while the wildflowers thrive in their community, if you dig up one and transplant it away from its colony, it is unlikely to survive.

The spring ephemerals are connected as well to the animals in the forest. The queen bee needs her Dutchman's breeches. The mayapple spreads through the poop of box turtles, who, within their digestive tracts, prepare the seeds to germinate. Bloodroot is spread by ants, who carry off a tasty part of the plant called the elaiosome and then discard the seeds. The trout lily and spring beauty rely on solitary bees for pollinating. The wild columbine depends on hummingbirds.

On our treasure hunt, Cass had by now shown me a large colony of mayapples, and several Solomon's seals just beginning to sprout.

I spied a white bud at my feet. "Ooh! Another trillium!" I called out to her, and she concurred.

It was worth a thousand daffodils.

Dana Milbank is a political columnist for the Washington Post, where this appeared. Follow him on Twitter @Milbank. Email dana.milbank@washpost.com

What Would the Founders Say to Trump's Immunity Claim?

By ALEXANDRA PETRI

PHILADELPHIA. CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION, 1787.

James Madison: Well done, gentlemen. I believe that here we have a Constitution! Let's sign this bad boy!

[A mysterious, disheveled New Founder materializes suddenly out of thin air, looking the worse for wear.]

Mysterious, disheveled New Founder: One more thing! Put in: "And just to be clear, the president can't do crimes. And if he does do crimes, he isn't absolutely immune from prosecution!" Just to be safe. Just ... for me. I have been here the whole time and am from this time period. I did not just time-travel from Supreme Court oral arguments about a former president's immunity from criminal prosecution. You can tell because I know who Gouverneur Morris is, which would not be something I would know if I were from any other time.

Gouverneur Morris: Hey!

Benjamin Franklin: That sounds right. But what did you want put in there? That the president can't do crimes? Surely that's covered. Why, you might as well add that when the president's term of office ends, he should leave!

[Muffled laughter.]

New Founder: No, put that! Put that in, too!

Franklin: Or that the president is also bound by the country's laws!

New Founder: Yes, good idea! And: "The president should not do a coup to become king. We don't want a coup."

Madison: I think it's hitting them over the head a little bit if we specify: "The president should not be a king. We don't want a king." Trust the reader. They know what we just went through not to have a king.

New Founder: You never know! I think this constitution could be pretty good! Could last a long time, maybe. And then you'd feel pretty foolish if, say, 235 years from now, because you forgot to put in one little line about the president not doing crimes with impunity, we stopped being a democracy.

George Mason: Democratic republic.

New Founder: Sure. Yes.

Morris: You seem stressed.

Madison: I don't think we need to say all those obviously redundant things. Our intent is very clear.

New Founder: (Twitching.) I love that optimism!

Madison: It's just, I worked really hard on this, and all of what you said feels like it's implied in there already. What moron, what utter nincompoop, would think, "No, the president should get to do a coup if he wants"?

New Founder: Let's say it! Just in case! I just think we should say everything. Don't add it later. Say it in the text.

Mason: This is what I am always saying! If you're really serious about a right, put it in the main text! Don't just tack it on like some afterthought. If you want people to be able to carry semiautomatic weapons into coffee shops for fun, put it in the big part!

New Founder: Wait, you envisioned that?

Mason: Envisioned what?

George Washington: What a low opinion of future citizens you seem to have. Who could possibly argue that the president would use his office to suborn the republic?

New Founder: Hypothetically, this might be a great document that works for 235 years, with steady improvements being made all the time. And then some utter

ghoul might go before the Supreme Court and - oh! Put in an ethics code for them! And term limits!

Madison: That seems unnecessary.

New Founder: And argue that because it had worked fine for 235 years, we should explicitly dismantle the guardrails that had been holding everything in place for so long!

Franklin: Why, that would be like tossing your umbrella aside because no rain was getting on your head so long as you stood under it!

Morris: Why, that would be like if someone devised a miraculous vaccine that could prevent measles, and everyone took it, and it prevented them from getting measles, and then they said: "No need for vaccines! Measles is gone!"

Mason: Why, that would be like getting rid of child labor laws because there were currently no children working!

[The Mysterious, Disheveled New Founder begins to sob.]

Alexandra Petri is a Washington Post columnist offering a lighter take on the news and opinions of the day. She is the author of "AP's US History: Important American Documents (I Made Up)."

Dispatches ...

Continued from previous page

The stark differences help highlight the strategies both candidates are using as they seek another term in the White House - and shed some light on why the presidential race appears relatively stable.

The poll looked at various forms of traditional media (newspapers, network news and cable news), as well as digital media (social media, digital websites and YouTube/Google). Among registered voters, 54% described themselves as primarily traditional news consumers, while 40% described themselves as primarily digital consumers.

Biden holds an 11-point lead among traditional news consumers in a head-to-head presidential ballot test, with 52% support among that group to Trump's 41%. But it's basically a jump ball among digital media consumers, with Trump at 47% and Biden at 44%.

And Trump has a major lead among those who don't follow political news - 53%

back him, and 27% back Biden.

"It's almost comic. If you're one of the remaining Americans who say you read a newspaper to get news, you are voting for Biden by 49 points," said Republican pollster Bill McInturff, who conducted the poll alongside Democratic pollster Jeff Horwitz.

The trends also extend to other questions in the poll. There's a significant difference in how traditional news consumers view Biden, while digital news consumers are far more in line with registered voters overall.

More primarily traditional news consumers have positive views of Biden (48%) than negative ones (44%). Among primarily digital news consumers, 35% view Biden positively, and 54% view him negatively. Vice President Kamala Harris' positive ratings show a similar divide, while Trump is viewed similarly by news consumers of both stripes.

And although the sample size is small, those who don't follow political news feel more positively about Trump and independent presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy

Jr. and more negatively about Biden.

Trump's lead among those not following political news caught Horwitz's eye amid Trump's trial on charges related to allegations he paid hush money to quash news of an alleged affair from coming out during the heat of his 2016 campaign and as he faces legal jeopardy in other cases that consistently make news.

"These are voters who have tuned out information, by and large, and they know who they are supporting, and they aren't moving," Horwitz said.

"That's why it's hard to move this race based on actual news. They aren't seeing it, and they don't care," he continued.

The NBC News poll of 1,000 registered voters nationwide - 891 contacted via cell phone - was conducted April 12-16, and it has a margin of error of +/-3.1 percentage points.

BIDEN CAMPAIGN SURPRISING TARGET FOR NEW ABORTION AD: LATINO MEN. The Biden campaign is leaning into abortion as an issue that can cut against Donald Trump with a critical constituency: Latino voters, Kerry Eleveld

noted at DailyKos (5/3).

On May 3, the campaign announced a new battleground state ad blitz targeting Latino men that will pour \$1 million into Latino media in May alone, according to Reuters. The 30-second spot, which will air in English and Spanish, features Marine Corps vet and Nevada carpenter Cesar Carreon, talking about abortion as an attack on freedom.

"I know what tough is," Carreon says. "And a guy like Donald Trump that attacks women, takes away their freedom, and brags about it? That's not tough."

"If he wants to take any more freedoms away from my three daughters, he'll have to come through me first," Carreon says.

Carreon closes by saying that he's with President Joe Biden, " 'cause he'll give my daughters their freedom back."

Polling released in April by Axios/Ipsos with Telemundo found Latinos preferred Biden over Trump on abortion, 30% to 21%.

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Progressive populists believe that people are more important than corporations, and that government should be of the people, by the people and for the people. Nowadays, we hear, that's a pretty radical notion.

The corporate media failed to report on the Republican attempts to sabotage the economic recovery after Barack Obama took office in 2009. When Donald Trump emerged to lead the teabaggers to the White House, the infotainment channels that replaced network news became even less reliable. An informed citizenry needs the independent and adversary media that was envisioned when the Founders framed the First Amendment in the Bill of Rights. *The Progressive Populist* aims to be a witness for folks on Main Street.

A handful of corporations are consolidating their grip on the nation's primary information sources. Megacorporations and hedge funds already own the major radio and TV networks, newspapers, magazines, book publishers and movie studios. Now they're moving to control the Internet. Is it any surprise that editors and news directors reflect the concerns of their corporate bosses?

Little wonder that populism — the theory that people are more important than corporations, and government needs to be strong enough to keep corporations in line — gets short shrift in public policy discussions, and politicians and journalists who question the power of corporate barons are dismissed as radicals. Well, there are a few of us in the Heartland of America armed with the First Amendment, access to a printing press and a newspaper with a mission: to tell the stories of working people and how we can regain control of the United States.

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