



Rural Democrats Urge Sense of Humor, Respect, and Showing Up

On a national call organized before Minnesota Governor Tim Walz was named to the ticket, speakers emphasized the importance of remaining neighborly during what promises to be a divisive national fight.

By TIM MARENA / The Daily Yonder

Rural Democrats were urged to speak up about the November election — but in a neighborly way — on a national call Tuesday night to build support for Vice President Kamala Harris and Minnesota Governor Tim Walz.

Walz, who was named as Harris' running mate Tuesday, Aug. 6, was listed as a presenter in initial announcements earlier this week. But while the call was occurring, Walz was making his first public appearance with Harris at a rally in Philadelphia.

Despite his absence, Walz and his background as a progressive politician with rural sensibilities were a focal point of the online rally. The gathering lasted nearly 2.5 hours, had about 10,000 viewers, and included more than 25 speakers — from a U.S. senator and representative to other Democratic figures such as state party chiefs, political action committee leaders, local elected officials, and several Democrats who, notably, had run unsuccessfully for state or federal office.

"Vice President Harris has laid down the marker out here in rural America" with the selection of Walz as her running mate, said Chris Gibbs, an Ohioan with Rural Voices USA. "[She] has given rural America a gift tonight, a gift that we can point to and use to raise up all those who have felt like their voices weren't being heard in rural America."

Gibbs said the tone of Harris' campaign is also a gift for rural Democrats. "As the vice president said earlier, we believe in lifting people up, not knocking them down," he said. "And the best part, she says it with a smile."

Missouri organizer Jess Piper was also wearing a grin.

"I haven't quit smiling all day since I heard the news about Tim Walz," said Piper, who ran unsuccessfully for a state House seat in 2022. "And I haven't quit smiling since I've been on this call."

Brandon Presley, who lost his Mississippi gubernatorial bid to Republican in-

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Illustration by DOLORES CULLEN

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TRUMP DECLINES**

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WALZ BRINGS RURAL CRED
The folksy Minnesota governor as running mate boosts Kamala Harris' appeal to rural states.

CLAIRE CARLSON, PAGE 8

TRUMP'S 'FAT ELVIS' PHASE
The old guy hasn't grown or developed new routines. He's reliving his old hits, playing to nostalgic audiences recalling the glory days.

THOM HARTMANN, PAGE 12

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AN EDITORIAL

Harris Rises, Trump Declines

Kamala Harris has produced a startling turnaround in the presidential race since President Joe Biden announced on Sunday afternoon, July 21, that he was ending his re-election bid and endorsed his vice president to succeed him.

Harris quickly gained support of Democratic Party leaders — including the leading potential challengers for the nomination — as well as congressional leaders, Democratic governors and labor leaders. The Harris' campaign received \$81 million in donations in the first 24 hours and 10 days later had raised \$310 million, with 66% coming from small donors.

Meanwhile, Biden's exit from the campaign has left Don Old Trump as the elderly candidate showing signs of mental decline.

Trump had finished the Republican National Convention July 18 thinking he had the election in the bag. After all, he survived an assassination attempt at an open-air rally near Butler, Pennsylvania, on July 13, when a 20-year-old Republican fired eight rounds from an assault rifle from the roof of a nearby building before a Secret Service sniper killed him. One of the assassin's bullets apparently grazed Trump's right ear, although the former president refused to release medical reports on his wound.

Trump wore an large bandage over his right ear throughout the convention, and many delegates wore similar bandages in solidarity with their Fearless Leader. After the convention, the bandage was gone as Trump's ear apparently was miraculously healed.

Sen. J.D. Vance (R-Ohio) may have sealed his bid to become Trump's running mate when he blamed Biden's rhetoric about Trump being an authoritarian fascist with inspiring the assassination attempt. "That rhetoric led directly to President Trump's attempted assassination," Vance said.

The Trump campaign may not have vetted Vance's background. He no longer considers Trump "America's Hitler" and "the Opioid of the Masses," but old videos surfaced with his thoughts on childless cat ladies who, he said on Fox News' *Tucker Carlson Tonight* in 2021, "are miserable in the choices that they've made, and so they wanna make the rest of the country miserable too." He also believes childless adults have no "direct stake" in the future of the country and parents should get extra votes for their children.

Harris did a much better job in picking Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz as her running mate Aug. 6. Walz leapt into public view as one of a half-dozen Dems who were being considered by Harris, and he became known for coming across as an engaging, folksy Midwestern governor and former congressman with a progressive record in Minnesota, who tagged Trump and Vance as "weird," which caught on.

Democrats remained in array in August, as Harris went on tour with Walz, filling auditoriums in swing states with newly energized supporters. It drove Trump crazy; he first complained that Harris conducted a coup in getting Biden to quit the campaign, then Trump accused Harris of using AI technology to distort the size of a crowd that greeted her at the Detroit airport Aug. 7. (In fact, a big crowd, estimated at 15,000 people, did greet Harris at an airport hangar.)

Trump called a press conference Aug. 8 at Mar-a-Lago in an attempt to draw attention from Harris and Walz, but it didn't go well. In his meandering rants, NPR reporters and editors found at least 162 misstatements, exaggerations and outright lies in 64 minutes.

Trump said the U.S. economy was in terrible shape, despite high employment and higher wages since Biden pulled the US out of the post-pandemic mess left over from Trump's administration. Trump

described the country as in mortal danger if he did not win the presidential election. He falsely described his departure from the White House — which followed his refusal to concede his election loss in November 2020 and the violent attack on the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, by a mob of his supporters — as a "peaceful" transfer of power.

Meanwhile, Trump has demonstrated that he has no clue or inclination to bring down inflated grocery and housing prices. He phoned in to *Fox & Friends* and took questions from the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally in South Dakota Aug. 8. One of the questioners, who had a "Trump 2024" patch on his vest, said five of his children were struggling. "How are you going to make the economy — not just the food and electricity — but bring down the rent prices, the housing prices, so that these kids can survive without their parents' help?"

Trump's response: "We're going to drill, baby, drill, we're gonna bring down the cost of energy," he said, repeating one of his campaign mantras. "Energy's what caused the worst inflation, I think, in the history of our country. Food prices are up 50%, sometimes more.

"You look at bacon. Bacon has quadrupled. You can't order bacon, you can't order anything. We're living horribly," he continued. "We have the worst inflation we've probably ever had in our country, and it started because of energy. We're gonna drill, baby, drill."

He also noted that four years ago the price of gas was \$1.87. Of course, during the pandemic, people were staying home and not driving, which kept gas prices down. And U.S. oil production already is at an all-time high under Biden, frustrating climate advocates.

We note that bacon and eggs are widely available, if more expensive than they were before the pandemic. The prices are based on market demand, and apparently peaked in 2022 but have dropped in the past two years.

The average price of bacon was \$6.64 a pound in 2021 and peaked at \$7.31 in 2022 before dropping to \$6.827 in June 2024, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The average price of a dozen eggs was \$1.47 in 2021 and peaked at \$2.86 in 2022 before dropping to \$2.715 in June 2024.

Post-pandemic inflation peaked at 8.989% in June 2022, according to the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. Inflation was down to 2.975% in June 2024. The highest inflation in the past 60 years was 14.592% in March 1980.

Democrats have proposed to increase taxes on corporations and wealthy individuals, and tax windfall profits to reduce the incentive to increase prices, but Republicans who narrowly control the House won't hear of it. President Biden called on Congress to pass legislation presenting corporate landlords with a choice: cap rent increases on existing units to no more than 5% or lose valuable federal tax breaks. Republicans don't like that kind of talk either.

Instead, Trump proposes to renew tax cuts for the rich, which Republicans passed in 2017 and expire next year. He also wants to put a 10% tariff on all imported goods, and a 60% tax on products from China, plus more tax cuts for the wealthy and a crackdown on immigration, all of which are more likely to increase costs for consumers. If Trump implements his economic agenda, the annual inflation rate would increase to 3.6% in 2025, Moody's forecast.

If Trump enacts his proposed tariffs, the typical middle-class household in the U.S. would face an estimated \$1,700 a year in additional costs, according to the non-partisan Peterson Institute for International Economics. And low- and middle-income households would feel the burden much more than high-income families.

Democrats are a better choice for working families struggling to make the rent and put food on the dinner table. — JMC

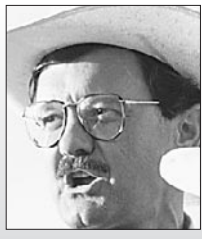
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JIM HIGHTOWER



Trump's humorless strategists decided their first point of attack on Kamala Harris would be her laugh. Seriously! 'I call her Laffin' Kamala, Trump snorted.

'Laffin' Kamala' vs. 'Grumpin' Trump'

You know that American politics is turning into a sad joke when a supposedly serious presidential campaign tries to demonize laughter.

Yet, bizarrely, Donald Trump's humorless gaggle of strategists decided that their first point of attack on Kamala Harris would be: her laugh. No, seriously! Donald himself launched the offensive — "I call her Laffin' Kamala," he snorted. "You ever watch her laugh?" he implored listeners, declaring, "She's crazy. She's nuts."

Uh ... no. Like normal people, she laughs — often, naturally and joyously. So do I. Maybe you do, too. But, one GOP outfit sniffed that this is "inappropriate" for a woman running for president. And a Republican senatorial doofus from Louisiana even barked that Harris should act more like Margaret Thatcher, Britain's former right-wing prime minister, pointing out that she "didn't giggle." The sour old senator then mansplained that Harris' laughter made people think she's "a ding-dong" — even though the dinging seems to be coming from his own head.

Interestingly, though, Trump's orchestrated snark attack on Harris' laughter is working. For Harris! By repeatedly pointing out that she has unscripted moments of laughter, Republicans actually make people feel positive toward her. I can attest from my own time politicking in a supposedly conservative state that laughter unites people — I quickly learned that humor is a key that can unlock the mind.

Moreover, the GOP's churlish demonization of laughter only highlights the fact that, in contrast to Kamala, Trump is a grump! Note that *we never see him laugh*. He smirks, gloats and often puts on a smarmy grin — but he never has a joyous belly laugh or shows any genuine sense of fun. Sad for him ... but sadder for us if we let his dour demeanor define our America.

J.D. Vance: Silicon Valley's Fake Hillbilly

Who is J.D. Vance, you might ask? Well, which J.D.? He keeps flipping his bio, politics and persona, trying to advance his fortunes. A decade ago, he was posing as a Kentucky hillbilly spokesman — only, he's not from Kentucky and he expresses disdain for actual hillbillies.

Still, he did go from a hardscrabble childhood to an Ivy League law school, later boasting that he's a self-made success, with no rich daddy pulling strings for him. Well, unless you count his sugar daddy. From those Ivy League days forward, "just plain J.D." has been a protege of a Silicon Valley multibillionaire right-winger, Peter Thiel, who put Vance in cushy, high-tech jobs, then arranged \$120 million in funding to make him a rich vulture capitalist.

Suddenly, the "hillbilly" was a "hill-william" — a full-fledged, rich man's Republican. But he was not yet a right-wing nut, even denouncing Donald Trump in 2016 as "America's Hitler." Then, J.D. decided he should be a U.S. senator, and Daddy Thiel promptly put up \$10 million to buy the seat. But, oops — Trump owned the Ohio GOP, so Vance grew a MAGA-macho beard and squirmed down to Mar-a-Lago to beg The Donald's forgiveness for

that Hitler faux pas, obsequiously pledging to be a Forever Trumper.

So now, Vance is Trump's VP nominee ... but with a wandering eye, looking to establish himself as the anti-democracy, Christian nationalist champion of the authoritarian Project 2025. Kookier yet, Vance embraces a new McCarthyism cult supporting a violent purge of progressives from our society, saying that such Americans are "unhumans" who must be treated as prey.

This is Jim Hightower saying ... Absurd? Yes! But there he stands, the new public face of extremist, right-wing nuttiness that surpasses even Trump's monarchial fantasies.

Trump and His GOP Sycophants Driven Crazy by Kamala

Suddenly, the presidential election has turned dynamic ... even fun!

The handoff from Joe Biden to Kamala Harris has not only energized Democrats, but it's also driving the Trump Party's top leaders absolutely crazy. Of course, that's a very short ride for most of them.

Take Andy Ogles, a far-right congressional goober from Tennessee who lunged for the media spotlight as soon as Biden endorsed Harris. He breathlessly called for the immediate *impeachment* of the vice president, squawking that (get this) she had covered up Biden's physical decline, thus making her guilty of misleading the people and the Congress about the well-being of the president. If ignorance is bliss, Ogles must be ecstatic. Hello — Biden's supposed decline has hardly been a secret, with Republicans and the media harping on it for months. But today's hyperpartisan MAGA-heads don't let reality block their stupidity.

Indeed, the entire Republican hierarchy has joined the Silly Parade, trying to slap down Harris' candidacy. GOP House Speaker Mike Johnson, for example, has shriveled himself and his office by pushing the absurd "Myth of the Stolen Nomination." Incredibly (literally), Johnson pretends to be the champion of the 14 million Democrats who voted for Biden in the party's primaries, asserting that elevating Harris "steals" the votes of Biden backers.

Gosh, Mikey, thanks for your deep concern for Democratic voters, but maybe you should ask them if they want you to be "their savior." Those 14 million Biden voters also chose Harris to be VP, and they are actually excited to have her now lead the ticket.

Besides, maybe you should mind your own party's business, including your Lord Trump's whiney attempts to steal the last election by trying to cancel the votes of millions of Americans.

Yes, Kamala Harris Stands for Diversity and Equality — So Does America

Ted Cruz actually spoke the truth once. In 2016, when running for president against Trump, he said: "Donald has a problem with strong women. This is not subtle; it's not complicated."

Right! This truth is resurfacing now that Trump finds himself unexpectedly matched against a very formidable woman: Kamala Harris. Resorting to his old slap-'em-down style, Trump immediately called Harris "dumb as a rock," even as he mispronounced her name. He then had his press secretary flail at Harris as "weak" — yet adding that's she "dangerously liberal." So, she's "weak" ... yet dangerously strong.

Pathetically, MAGA-world is resorting to overtly racist, anti-female tropes to attack Harris, proclaiming her to be a "DEI vice president" — i.e., chosen solely because she's a woman of color. "When you go down that road," bellowed Rep. Tim Burchett, "you take mediocrity." Tim, a mediocre, ethically corrupt Trump-acolyte from Tennessee, has only one claim to fame: He once sponsored a bill to legalize the eating of roadkill.

Meanwhile, Trump's own VP choice, J.D. Vance, piled on the Harris DEI attack.

That's awkward, since Vance, who falsely poses as a senatorial "hillbilly," is the ultimate DEI product. A Yale law school graduate, he was handpicked by Silicon Valley elites for plum jobs, then financed by right-wing billionaire Peter Thiel to run a hedge-fund hustle. Then Thiel gave \$10 million to put Vance in the U.S. Senate. The smug senator now trashes Harris and her women supporters as "a bunch of childless cat ladies."

This is Jim Hightower saying ... Trump

Good News For Earth

By FRANK LINGO

A website called Euronews knows there are many worries about climate and nature, but warns we must not lose hope because hopelessness breeds apathy. In a February Euronews article, Angela Symons said it's important for the media to not downplay or greenwash the situation, "but it is also our job to show that there is hope."

Following her lead, here are some points of progress on the planet.

- Wind and solar grew to an all-time high in the first half of 2024. In the European Union (EU), wind and solar generated more electricity than fossil fuels for the first time.

- In Colombia, deforestation fell by 36% last year. The Amazon, sometimes called "the lungs of the world," is the world's largest rainforest and one-third of it is in Colombia. Indigenous activists successfully campaigned to reduce the tree-cutting.

- Pope Francis wants the Vatican to run on solar power. Solar panels to be installed on Catholic Church-owned property could power all of Vatican City's energy needs.

- A California utility is backing the largest new geothermal development in the U.S. — 400 megawatts of clean electricity from the Earth's underground heat, enough to power 400,000 homes.

- The EU's Nature Restoration Law has been approved. Its goal is to restore at least 20% of EU's land and sea areas by 2030 to boost biodiversity.

- Bacteria batteries could soon provide nearly free sustainable energy. Huh??!! Yeah, really. A UK startup called Bactery uses electrons produced by bacteria in soil for rechargeable power on farms and could be used worldwide. Should be dirt cheap.

- On April 9, the European Court of Human Rights recognized the climate crisis as an existential threat to us all and said our leaders must protect people from harm

& his rich bros think trashing a strong woman is a "winner" — but they're about to learn that this is an inclusive America ... and Harris' diversity is a strength.

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caused by the crisis. The ruling could help compel governments to reduce emissions.

- President Joe Biden announced \$7 billion in grants for residential solar projects, serving nearly one million low-income and middle-income areas.

- The U.S. has placed the first-ever federal limits on "forever chemicals" in drinking water. The toxins will be reduced for 100 million people, assuming the Supreme Court doesn't strip away its enforcement.

- Bans of plastic bags in five U.S. states and cities totaling 12 million people have cut single-use plastic bags by 6 billion per year. It could be trillions of bags not added to the garbage stream if the bans went worldwide.

- Global electric vehicle sales reached almost 14 million in 2023 and they will continue to spike. Battery tech is rapidly improving. The charge range will soon improve by hundreds of miles using common components, instead of rare-Earth minerals, and will no longer be a deterrent to buying an EV.

- Climate and other environmental issues have steadily risen in importance to people all over the world. A 2024 survey of almost 60,000 people in 63 countries, reported by Science Advances, found that at least 73% of participants in every country think climate change is a serious threat and humans have caused it.

Oddly, many people around the globe think that many others don't care about the climate issue. But the survey shows the concern is widespread. With that kind of support, coalitions can be forged to get things done.

Wishful thinking is no use. But there is real hope to reverse the terracide because we know billions of people want it to happen. Let's elect leaders who will work for world solutions. Now is the time to turn hope into action.

Frank Lingo, based in Lawrence, Kansas, is a former columnist for the *Kansas City Star* and author of the novel "Earth Vote."

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Help Wanted— Apply Within

According to Pew Research, there are 11 million illegal/undocumented (ill/undocs) immigrants in the US, with 7.8 million in the workforce, roughly 5% of all US workers. The US Labor Department reports that 40% of farm workers are ill/undocs. In construction, the figure is 20%. Without them, crops don't get planted or picked, and homes don't get built or repaired. If you don't like inflation at the supermarket, imagine how lower supplies would cause prices to skyrocket.

Would requiring E-verify eliminate this discrepancy? Only if all parties fully complied. Many ill/undocs use false documents or are paid off the books. In spite of employer assurances that they are in full compliance with the law, they realize hiring ill/undocs means they keep operating expenses low, thus increasing their profits. Ill/undocs won't be forming any unions to demand better wages, hours, and working conditions since they have to remain in the shadows of the law.

Those seeking asylum for political or religious reasons can get work permits, but only after 180 days of entering the US (with exceptions). Violations result in deportation.

The current bipartisan Dignity Bill on immigration reform languishes in Congress because convicted felon Donald Trump ordered his MAGA acolytes to keep the crisis active to help him win the election. Don't believe MAGA propaganda that executive orders would solve the problem. Immigration requires Congressional action through legislation.

According to Homeland Security, 80% of all ill/undocs have lived here since before 2010. Thus many have worked the same jobs for years. Furthermore, providing a new guest worker status would mean ill/undocs would pay into FICA and help extend Social Security.

Our very low unemployment rate is actually an unemployed rate for those who can't pass a drug test, do not have a high school diploma or GED, or have a criminal record. Ill/undocs "stealing" jobs? Rubbish.

Trump pledges that, if elected, he will deport all ill/undocs. More rubbish. Remember his previous blather about "a beautiful wall" paid for by Mexico. Businesses employing ill/undocs would be down his throat for reducing their labor supply and subsequent profits.

Trump himself has employed ill/undocs in his businesses, most notably the 1980 building of Trump Tower Manhattan. Such chicanery has allowed him to reside in an opulent ocean mansion at Mar-A-Lago protected by, of course, "a beautiful wall." Deplorable.

ED ENGLER, *Sebring, Fla.*

Cynical Mendacity

During the National Association of Black Journalists' interview of The Former Guy, the criminal candidate's complaining accusations against immigrants became wilder, weirder and more exaggerated. We could see him making up more and more ominous lies as his hands played an invisible accordion. The fact that crime statistics for immigrants are far lower than for the general population didn't retard his fire-hose of lies.

But one fact should be repeated, over and over, until the public fully realizes how cynical and destructive the whining Grump's mendacity is. A bipartisan bill to allocate more resources to our borders — for both enforcement and for more

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Watching Hockey with the Next Vice President

By DON ROLLINS

It was winter 2006 when a mutual friend introduced me to Tim Walz, then the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party (DFL) candidate for Minnesota's 1st Congressional District. The scene was a Mankato State (now Minnesota State) men's hockey game, where the friend had cajoled a Walz staffer into seating me next to her boss.

The guy was unpretentious, present and more interested in my story than his. No backdoor campaigning to help separate my church parishioners from their dollars, no canned elevator-speech warnings about the utter evil of his opponent. Mostly just a

snowy night conversation that could have taken place in a neighborhood bar.

As the first period wound down, Walz shook my hand and finally took notice of the staffer who'd been nodding her head toward the exit for a good 10 minutes. As he left he shook every hand extended his way.

To be honest, my personal story isn't really all that interesting. And I have no doubt Walz has been just as present for many other constituents over his now 18-year political career. The point is, with the quest for high office in America comes a fair amount of soul-selling. Having followed Walz's political career from near and afar, he seems to know who he is, even when his political opponents give into their lesser nature.

But Walz's new status as Kamala Harris' wingman will sorely test his capacity for campaigning with relative restraint. The longstanding Republican strategy to distract the opposition with relentless misinforma-

tion requires discipline, and picking the right battles. Walz will no doubt be scripted at points, but the deluge of lies and distortions will only increase now that GOP character assassins have an actual target. Walz will at times be on his own, and he'll need to get and stay focused under withering assault.

BRUCE JOFFE, *Piedmont, Calif.*

Gathering Loose Facts

Another fine issue on 8/15 — I really liked the Ed Rappell piece ("Still Advertising for Himself: The Norman and the Dead").

But Thom Hartmann's column ("The GOP's Secret Agenda for America's Future") had some real loose end assertions, specifically:

1. 10 million immigrants will be going into concentration camps.

That would take the entire U.S. Army to set up and police the areas. Plus the ICE family facilities are not death camps.

2. The working poor are over half the Americans.

All census data places the working poor at about 4% of the labor force. This comes to about 6 million workers, not pretty but not half the workforce.

3. 500,000 medical bankruptcies.

I hate medical debt as much as anyone, but facts are facts. The total number of bankruptcies from all sources in the USA is about 500,000 in 2022. Could all of them be caused by medical care?

There is no easy way to know the answer. Elizabeth Warren and David Himmelstein have tried, but conclusions are elusive. Most bankrupt people do have medical debt, but they have all kinds of other debts and the cause of bankruptcy is not crystal clear.

I declared bankruptcy years ago. I had \$3,000 of medical debts but that is not what tipped me over.

For what it's worth, bankruptcy does not necessarily destroy people as Hartmann asserts. It makes their lives better in a lot of cases, including mine.

BOB HERTZ, *St. Paul, Minn.*

Leadership Blunders

But for serial blunders by Democratic Party leadership Trump would have never have come within 200 miles of the White House.

1992: Unfortunately, Bill Clinton's NAFTA treaty decimated communities and left millions unable to earn a decent living. Failing to provide aid to soften their hardship was a terrible mistake, which soured millions on government and powered a GOP upsurge.

2008: "Be the Change," Obama was elected president, and Democrats controlled both House and Senate for two years. However, the only people-friendly legislation enacted was the anemic Affordable Care Act. By failing to champion real change, the party leadership squandered its opportunity to prove it cared about average Jills and Joes.

2016 (and 2020): Democratic Party leaders did everything they could to keep Bernie Sanders from becoming the party's presidential candidate. They were epic failures in "reading the room." Imagine the stupidity of twice rejecting Sanders, who was the most popular politician in America, and who would have easily beaten Trump.

2016: It should have been an easy win for Clinton, but, ever the elite, she defeated herself. Instead of getting out and meeting common folks, she gave Wall Streeters \$200K speeches, and branded downtrodden-millions as deplorables. So we got four years of inept Trump governance, tax cuts for billionaires and a rogue Supreme Court.

2024: For the good of party and country Biden should have stepped aside early to allow selection of a younger candidate. It would have invigorated the Democratic base and made Trump the man too old to serve.

So, blunder by blunder, Democratic leaders have repeatedly and devastatingly ceded power to the GOP. It's a sorry history of leadership failures that could result in four more years of Trump, and the loss of our Democracy.

THOMAS MCKEE, *Cary N.C.*

Why Does God Save Narcissists and Madmen?

After the assassination attempt, Trump said: "God alone prevented the unthinkable from happening." But why then did God allow the unthinkable to happen to the retired firefighter who was killed at the rally?

Does God have favorites, and does God use the same approach as the U.S. and Israeli governments, that certain people are expendable as "collateral damage"? Is God saying, "Got to save Trump, but the retired firefighter can die, he's expendable." Could God work this way?

Why would God protect Trump but not children in Gaza? Why would God protect an old man who was caught on tape saying he would grab and grope women between the legs, sexually assault them, and had every right to do it because he was famous? Why would God protect a sicko like this and then not protect innocents in Gaza?

This is about narcissism and mental illness, not just for Trump, but for all those who believe God did save him.

FRANK ERICKSON, *Minneapolis, Minn.*

Trump's Presidency Was a Disaster

Donald Trump's first term demonstrated his incompetence. His careless managing of COVID-19 was blamed for 180,000 of the 450,000 coronavirus deaths that occurred while he was in office, a study by *Lancet* found in 2021.

Obviously, he is not fit to be a president. His disgusting life is riddled with inappropriate behavior. He has had two divorces, his businesses have had six bankruptcies. He has cheated contractors and disparaged our military after dodging the draft.

He has exaggerated his income tax. He was found liable for the sexual assault of a woman. He has been found guilty of 34 felonies. While president he was noted for telling more than 30,000 lies.

He was impeached twice and now faces trial for stealing mountains of US government top secret files that belong in government archives, not in his closet. He is also facing trial for encouraging the mob he assembled to revolt against our government on Jan. 6, 2021.

He also attempted to steal his victory from a Democratic win in Georgia in 2020. He also faces trial for trying to upset the Democratic victory.

His clueless followers are attempting to vote for him with the purpose of destroying our democracy, a path Trump has freely admitted.

RICHARD B. HYMAN, *Stillwater, N.J.*

Don't Risk Dictatorship

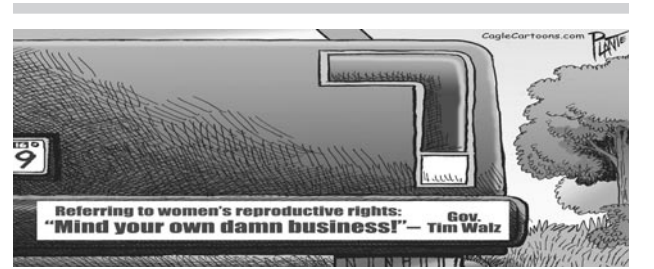
When a contender for the presidency tells us he'll be a dictator for no more than one day, what in the name of all that is sane are we to think?

Do remember, dear reader, that much grief for millions of fellow citizens can be wrought in a single day. Declaration of martial law, for example, and suspension of the Constitution.

In the unlikely happenstance that the far-fetched promise is kept, majoritarian governance would be forfeited here and throughout what remains of the free world.

History demonstrates that supreme rulers don't surrender their power voluntarily and wholly of their own accord.

WILLIAM DAUENHAUER, *Willowick, Ohio*



deed he can assume the presidency if called upon — not by order of the 25th Amendment alone, but by his readiness in the face of unexpected tragedy. Every vice president since the amendment's passing in 1967 has been the proverbial "one heartbeat away" from the presidency; and Republicans are predictably forecasting the end of democracy if Walz were to become chief executive by order of succession.

The case could be made Pennsylvania governor Josh Shapiro would've brought more to the ticket than Walz. Shapiro's centrist credentials and influence in a swing state could prove to be more important than Harris and associates estimated. Yet Walz's presence and life experiences will prove invaluable coming down the stretch. Like Harris, his moment has come.

Don Rollins is a retired Unitarian Universalist minister in Jackson, Ohio.
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Work for Kamala But Prepare for the Worst



Even though our energy is off the charts, we live in the same neighborhoods as before Joe Biden handed the race to Kamala Harris.

July 21 was a beautiful day at my place and I spent it with a crowd of mushroom hunters, gathering chanterelles. Floating into the house on my private cloud of endorphins, I found my husband sitting in front of the TV with a huge grin on his face. "You haven't been around the media today, right?" he said.

"Nope. I've been in the woods," I said and began to launch into a dissertation on all the fun I'd had.

But his grin told me that he'd had even more fun, so he took off with the moment ... "It happened," he said, grinning even bigger ... "You know ... IT ..." and after a few guesses I figured it out.

"IT" meant Joe Biden had dropped out of the presidential race. His beautiful VEEP Kamala Harris is taking his place.

OMG. This is huge. This is history. And maybe your household was thrown into the same joyous tizzy as mine. Some 888,000 folks, in fact, donated in the first 24 hours after the announcement, smashing records for previous donations. And the love has continued, with many of the donors being

first-timers for ActBlue, the Democratic fundraisers. We hope that candidates for down-ballot races are getting a similar bump.

Now it's time for a reality check. Even though our energy and commitment are off the charts, we live in the same neighborhoods as before the announcement. Despite our excitement, Republicans haven't thrown in the towel. The TV ads confirm that some candidates are proudly "endorsed by Donald Trump," while others "stand with Trump" and the neighbors are vocal. In the Missouri governor primary "endorsed by Trump" faces off with "stands with Trump" and we'll see who comes out best. The poor mailman is weighed down with glossy flyers.

If Trump wins, who loses? Check out Project 2025, the 2025 Presidential Transition Project. Yes, the document's 900 pages long but you don't have to read it all. Google it and read the parts that interest you—education, for example, or agriculture.

I worry about the independent media. According to Project 2025, the Corpora-

tion for Public Broadcasting will be on the chopping block, beheaded in the name of fighting the deficit. Funds for NPR, PBS and community broadcasters will be cut.

A section called "Corporation for Public Broadcasting" reveals that "all Republican Presidents have recognized that public funding of domestic broadcasts is a mistake," then explains the steps needed to cripple the organization.

Same goes for funds for education, the arts, humanities. Here is the statement on education: "every parent should have the option to direct his or her child's share of education funding through an education savings account (ESA), funded overwhelmingly by state and local taxpayers, which would empower parents to choose a set of education options ..." (p. 319). In other words, taxes will be diverted to Christian schools or other private educational groups. Bye-bye, neighborhood schools.

Likewise, the nation's environmental, minority and women's organizations will be in trouble if they depend in any way on government money. And, let's face it, they do. Talk to the board members of your favorite group to find out if they're concerned.

The website is pretty easy to get around, and you can concentrate on the areas of your greatest interest. Their four main "pillars" for success "pave the way for an effective conservative Administration" and they're open about their plans: "Our goal is to assemble an army of aligned, vetted, trained, and prepared conservatives to go to work on Day One to deconstruct the Administrative State."

There's plenty of food for thought in

the section on agriculture, which proclaims that USDA will change its mission and remove trade barriers "based on the importance of sound science, personal freedom, private property, the rule of law, and service to all Americans." Many of the ideas in this section are good, IMHO. First to go will be the federal sugar program which Project 2025 sees as keeping the cost of sugar high. My view is that sugar is too darn cheap. It's in everything and it's highly addictive and mostly unnecessary. Because of the cheap and ubiquitous use of sugar, America has become a nation of diabetics with 11.6% of us carrying the disease, according to the National Diabetes Association.

Many of the other recommendations in Project 2025 would slash subsidies for farmers, which makes it hilarious that so many of my neighbors think Trump economics will be good for them. Personally, I'm OK with those cuts but you may disagree. The last farm bills have been big handouts for the biggest industrial farms that produce soybeans for hog confinements and corn for ethanol plants. I'd like to see more food for my neighbors.

Whatever you think, dear reader, wise folks like us need to do our research and be vigilant. Work for Kamala but prepare for Trump.

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DISPATCHES

TRUMP BOILS AS KAMALA HARRIS GETS BIG CROWDS. As Kamala Harris went on tour with her new running mate, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, filling auditoriums in swing states with newly energized supporters, it drove Donald Trump crazy, as he first accused Harris of conducting a coup in getting Biden to quit the campaign, then using AI to make it look like big crowds greeted her at the Detroit airport Aug. 7.

Trump posted on his social media: "Has anyone noticed that Kamala CHEATED at the airport? There was nobody at the plane, and she 'AI.'d it, and showed a massive 'crowd' of so-called followers, BUT THEY DIDN'T EXIST! She was turned in by a maintenance worker at the airport when he noticed the fake crowd picture, but there was nobody there, later confirmed by the reflection of the mirror like finish on the Vice Presidential Plane. She's a CHEATER. She had NOBODY waiting, and the 'crowd' looked like 10,000 people! Same thing is happening with her fake 'crowds' at her speeches. This is the way the Democrats win Elections, by CHEATING — And they're even worse at the Ballot Box. She should be disqualified because the creation of a fake image is ELECTION INTERFERENCE. Anyone who does that will cheat at ANYTHING!"

The *Washington Post* noted (8/11) that there were, in fact, thousands of people at the airport when Harris' plane arrived, and there is no evidence that news organizations altered photos using artificial intelligence, just as there is no evidence that Harris, or other Democrats, have cheated to win elections, despite Trump's repeated lies that the 2020 presidential election was "rigged." Trump has been indicted on Georgia state charges that he engaged in a conspiracy to overturn Georgia election results and federal charges relating to the attempted insurrection on Jan. 6, 2021.

Harris' event at an airport hanger in Detroit was live-streamed, attended by media and local news outlet MLive estimated that 15,000 people filled the hangar and spilled out onto the tarmac.

Some photos appearing on X (formerly Twitter) appear to show AI manipulation, but they may have been produced by MAGA partisans in an attempt to discredit the Harris-Walz campaign.

TRUMP CONFUSES BROWNS, HELICOPTER RIDES AND TRASH TALKING KAMALA. A reporter asked Trump at his press conference at Mar-a-Lago (8/8) if he thought Vice President Kamala Harris's career had been helped by her relationship in the 1990s with powerful California politician Willie Brown. Trump said he knew Willie Brown very well, and "He told me terrible things about" Harris, when Brown and Trump were on a rough helicopter ride, which didn't happen. Trump was on in a helicopter with former Gov. Jerry Brown surveying wildfire damage in 2018, but they didn't talk about Harris and there was no near-crash. However, Trump was on a rough helicopter ride with Nate Holder, former Los Angeles City Councilman and state senator, who is now 95 and remembered the near-death experience on a flight from Trump Tower to Trump's Taj Mahal Casino in Atlantic City in 1990.

Holden recalled being a bit worried about the helicopter

ride because it came not long after five people, including three high-level executives of Trump's casinos, were killed when their chopper crashed in 1989 over Forked River, N.J., *Politico* reported (8/9). Holden said the helicopter made an emergency landing at an airport in New Jersey.

"Willie is the short Black guy living in San Francisco," Holden said. "I'm a tall Black guy living in Los Angeles. I guess we all look alike," Holden told *Politico*, letting out a loud laugh." But neither of them trash-talked Kamala Harris.

When asked about the vice president, Brown told KRON4 in San Francisco he "could not envision thinking of Kamala Harris in any negative way" and that she was a good friend.

Trump insisted that he had once been in a dangerous helicopter landing with Willie Brown, despite Brown's denial.

In an angry phone call to a *New York Times* reporter as Trump landed several hours away from his planned rally in Bozeman, MT, because of a mechanical issue on his plane, Trump excoriated *The Times* for its coverage of his meandering news conference at Mar-a-Lago, his private club and home, during which he told of an emergency landing during a helicopter trip that he said both he and Brown had made together, *The Times* reported (8/9).

"We have the flight records of the helicopter," Trump insisted, saying the helicopter had landed "in a field," and indicating that he intended to release the flight records, before shouting that he was "probably going to sue" over the *Times* article.

HARRIS PULLS AHEAD OF TRUMP IN SWING STATES. Donald Trump still insists he's "leading by a lot" in the new race with Kamala Harris, but in reality, Joan McCarter noted at DailyKos (8/8) no, he is not, as the *Cook Political Report* shifted its ratings for three swing states, Arizona, Nevada and Georgia,

changing them from "Lean Republican" to "Toss Up".

According to 538's poll aggregates, Harris has an edge over Trump in the battleground states of Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Wisconsin, and she's running neck and neck with Trump in North Carolina.

At the end of July, Harris had the lead in a dozen separate national polls, as Simon Rosenberg tweeted July 31:

- Harris leads in 7 new national polls:
- 49%-45% (+4) Civiqs
- 49%-46% (+3) Leger (was +7 Trump)
- 48%-46% (+2) FAU (was +5 Trump)
- 46%-44% (+2) Econ/YouGov (was +3 Trump)
- 45%-43% (+2) Redfield/Wilton
- 44%-42% (+2) Angus Reid
- 47%-46% (+1) Morning Consult

Battlegrounds are better too, as Josh Wingrove tweeted July 30:

"Harris has wiped out Trump's lead across seven swing states in the latest round of the Bloomberg News/Morning Consult poll. The poll found a big Dem lead in Michigan, a more modest Trump lead in Pennsylvania and close contests everywhere else. Dead heat."

- Arizona +2 Harris
- Georgia +0
- Michigan +11 Harris
- Nevada +2 Harris
- North Carolina +2 Trump
- Pennsylvania +4 Trump
- Wisconsin +2 Harris

A *New York Times*/Siena poll released Aug. 10 showed Harris leading in three key states:

Continued on page 22



FROM HARROP



Had Republicans managed to keep IRS enforcement at starvation levels, the deficit would have grown nearly \$1.15 billion over 10 years, CBO reported.

When Others Cheat on Their Taxes, Who Pays Them? You Do

When Republicans took control of the House in January 2023, their first order of business was a bill was to cut additional IRS funding from the Inflation Reduction Act. President Joe Biden fought them off and managed to retain \$60 billion of that needed money.

Had Republicans succeeded in keeping the IRS enforcement budget at starvation levels, the deficit would have grown nearly \$1.15 billion over 10 years, according to Congressional Budget Office estimates.

Thank you, alleged party of "fiscal responsibility."

As it happened, the beefed-up enforcement has yielded an extraordinary \$1 billion in revenues. This wasn't from any tax increase; it was from collecting \$1 billion in back taxes and penalties that wealthy households owed.

The rich can hire lawyers and skilled accountants to hide income, find deductions and invent them. The taxes owed by working people, on the other hand, get taken right out of their paychecks. Folks on a payroll have few places to hide income.

This notion that skimping on the IRS' ability to enforce the tax laws is a way to control government spending is – how do we put this? – insane. That's like saying landlords could save a lot of money if they stopped paying collection agencies to retrieve rents from deadbeat tenants.

It takes overheated language and half-truths to con ordinary wage earners into believing that beefed up enforcement of the tax laws was going to hurt *them*. Tom Cole, Re-

publican of Oklahoma, gave it a try.

"We don't agree with this heavy-handed enforcement rule that's designed to extract tens of billions from the American people," Cole, a member of the House Appropriations Committee, said about efforts to increase IRS funding.

A means to extract billions from tax cheats? Where do we sign?

When he was accused in 2016 of grossly evading taxes, Donald Trump responded that not paying taxes "makes me smart." When investigators got their hands on some of Trump's tax returns, it was revealed that he had 26 businesses with zero revenue for which he claimed hundreds of thousands in tax deductions for expenses.

Halfway through Trump's administration, the poorly funded IRS "spent far more money auditing the working poor than the 24,457 households with incomes of \$10 million and up in 2019," tax expert David Cay Johnston wrote.

Meanwhile, "not even 500 of the nearly 25,000 households reporting incomes of \$10 million or more in 2019 were audited. That's 2% – just 1 in 50. Only 66 audits were completed."

As an aside, Americans can pretty much drop the notion that entrepreneurs need lax

tax laws to get rich. Sweden has high taxes to fund social spending and a well-oiled infrastructure that strong economies need. But that hasn't stopped Swedes from innovating and getting fabulously rich.

Sweden has twice as many billionaires per capita as the United States does. Skype, Spotify and other household tech names were started there.

Nothing wrong with making a fortune. All we ask is that the wealthy pay their taxes as everyone else does. We often hear that the top 1% of taxpayers account for the vast majority of income taxes paid. Nothing wrong with that. The rich who pay their taxes are still rich, and America's wealth gap continues to widen.

Look, I don't like paying taxes, and I don't pay any more than I have to. But yes, I pay what I owe. The middle class shouldn't have to pay more than its share to make up for cheating by the rich.

When the rich don't pay their taxes, who pays? Most of us other taxpayers can find the answer by looking in the mirror.

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

Black Jobs, Hmong Jobs and Snow Jobs

By ART CULLEN

Donald Trump July 31 declared that millions and millions of immigrants "happen to be taking Black jobs." He said this on stage at the convention of the National Association of Black Journalists in Chicago, to three Black women whose job it was to question the Republican presidential candidate. He said the questions were rude.

Tote that barge, lift that bale. That's what Black folk must do.

"I love my Black job," said Simone Biles after winning her umpteenth gold medal at the Olympics.

Suni Lee loves her Hmong job, too, a daughter of refugees who landed in Minnesota. She stood next to Biles on the Paris podium with the bronze medal in gymnastics. Biles does not begrudge Lee one moment for competing for a Black job.

Around here, immigrants primarily work in meatpacking, of course mainly Latino but some Hmong as well. If they are taking Black jobs, we are not aware. We have not heard of a Black woman being

aced out of a position on the kill floor by Karin women, but it could have happened. Sudanese people work at Tyson alongside Salvadorans.

Immigrants take the lowest rung on the economic ladder, which is supposed to be where the White Boss Man puts the Blacks. Roofing. Laying sod. Scooping manure. Not winning gold. Certainly not running for president!

Trump said in St. Cloud: "No person who deliberately releases these kinds of savage criminals to prey on our youth and our people ... not just youth, elderly people too ... should ever be trusted with power. Again, she has no clue, she has no clue, she's evil." Immigration. Evil.

That dog won't hunt this time. Just who is the criminal?

Kamala Harris raised \$300 million in only two weeks while Trump was insulting Blacks, Asians and Latinos. His lead in key swing state polls evaporated.

Border crossings now are lower than when Trump was in office. Harris helped convince Mexican and other Latin American officials to stem the tide. Mexico's new president, Claudia Sheinbaum, studied at Berkley and promises to be a partner in managing refugee flows. Actually, it is working.

Pitting Blacks against immigrants and working-class Whites has always been

Trump's game. "I didn't know she was Black until a number of years ago when she happened to turn Black and now she wants to be known as Black." Trump said at the NABJ convention. "So I don't know. Is she Indian? Or is she Black?"

Harris is the daughter of immigrants, like Suni Lee. She worked her way up from Oakland to attorney general in Sacramento to the US Senate. Along the way, she attended Howard University and hooked up with the Black sorority system whose sisters will make sure she wins Georgia fair and square.

Immigrants should hope so. Trump will deport more than 10 million undocumented immigrants, his maestro Stephen Miller insists. That is impossible even in a dictatorship but they intend to give it a solid try. Biden deported more immigrants than Trump did, and helped President Obama deport more immigrants than the Clinton and Bush Administrations combined.

Harris claims she will get passed a bipartisan border security bill negotiated by the Biden Administration but squelched by Trump's order in the House. Harris is closing off Trump's principal argument – that she is soft on the border – and she will have plenty of money to drive the point home.

Biden and Harris campaigned for the Democratic nomination in Iowa with sympathy for immigrants, but they governed by

cutting off refugees from asylum. Dreamers remain in legal limbo. Immigrants remain afraid.

At least Harris has an immigration story to tell. She is not a blatantly ignorant racist like Trump, who thinks that Blacks are destined to shingle roofs or throw turkeys or pick cotton. The Biden/Harris administration has been a disappointment on human rights, but as an heir to immigrants Harris might finally be able to rationalize our awful system.

We need immigrants.

There are jobs in Storm Lake for Blacks, Whites, Asians and Latinos. Denison, Marshalltown and Worthington, too. Doubtful that the Tyson employment office in Waterloo will be overrun by laid-off John Deere union members, Black or White, whose jobs were shipped to Mexico. Trump would like you to think that a Mexican did that, when the call was made by a White guy at corporate in the Quad Cities. It's one of those White jobs, you know.

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.

You're Fired! Trump's Deportation Plan Would Gut Half Ag Labor Force

By ALAN GUEBERT

Nearly 45% of all agricultural workers in the U.S. today—950,000 of an estimated 2.2 million farmworkers—are "unauthorized" migrants working illegally on American farms and ranches.

All would be deported under the plan former President Donald Trump has been trumpeting since before securing the Republican nomination for president in July.

One state hit devastatingly hard by what candidate Trump calls the "largest deportation effort in history" would be America's Dairyland, Wisconsin, a "purple state" both he and Democratic candidate Vice President Kamala Harris hope to win in November.

Trump's deportation plan, however, could push Wisconsin toward Harris because a 2023 University of Wisconsin survey found that "an estimated 70% of the labor on [the state's] dairy farms" is performed by "more than 10,000 undocumented migrant workers."

As such, "Wisconsin farmers are heavily dependent on this unauthorized workforce. Without them, the whole dairy

industry would collapse overnight."

Not might, not could, and not may but would—as in "It would collapse."

Wisconsin isn't alone. According to the National Milk Producers Federation, "Immigrant labor accounts for 51% of all dairy labor, and dairies that employ immigrant labor produce 79% of the U.S. milk supply."

That means the Trump deportation plan would have immediate, catastrophic effects on U.S. fluid milk and dairy products markets and imperil dairy farmers that deliver four out of every five gallons of milk 24/7/365.

California agriculture—with an ever-unmet labor need for its massive vegetable, nut, and fruit-growing sectors—is home to roughly one-third to one-half of all U.S. farmworkers. Equally important, "Approximately 75% of (them) are undocumented," according to the Center for Farmworker Families.

Deporting hundreds of thousands of seasonal farmworkers would quickly shut down the giant fresh garden and orchard that California, the largest food producing state in the U.S., is to the nation and the world.

A similar number of undocumented workers in California—again, like almost every other state – "work in construction, hospitality, and retail," reports the *Los Angeles Times*, "industries that already suffer from severe labor shortages."

That's a hard truth Trump and his political allies never talk about: Deporting all,

most, or even a small number of these laborers doesn't mean those now-open jobs will be filled by unemployed Americans as implied by the former president.

"The vast economic research on this question," Natasha Sarin, a Yale University professor recently told *U.S. News*, "suggests just the opposite ... GDP would actually fall and inflation would rise under Trump's plan."

Unlike the deportation plan, there's ample research to support Sarin's claim. Just last year a University of Colorado professor, Chloe East, published a "comprehensive study on the impact of deportations. She concluded that deporting 1 million immigrants would result in 88,000 lost jobs."

The key reason for the job loss is the American labor force isn't static, it's dynamic; jobs are deeply interconnected across industries. For example, hiring undocumented workers to do basic construction tasks—like setting concrete forms—often frees a more skilled craftsman or machine operator to move into higher-paying jobs.

That also means losing the unskilled, lower-paid worker to, say, federally forced deportation, leads to delays, increased costs, and skilled labor having to slide down into the lower-paying, less skilled jobs. In short, it's a bad bet for everyone—including the overall U.S. economy.

The Congressional Budget Office, reported the *Washington Post*, calculated the U.S. labor force will likely grow by 5.2 million people and \$7 trillion by 2033 "thanks

especially to net immigration ..."

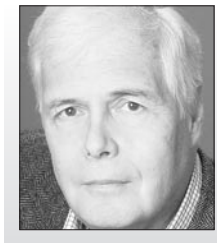
That's trillions, with a T, if we spend our time and money figuring out how to keep today's already here, already trained, already working migrant laborers in the U.S., not billions to send them elsewhere.

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

THE COWARDLY LYIN' CANDIDATE...



GENE LYONS



J.D. Vance and Donald Trump are definitely soul brothers. Try to imagine why a politician would be fool enough to call Jennifer Aniston 'disgusting.'

J.D. Vance vs. the Cat People

Some of my best friends are cat people. I'm particularly indebted to our neighbor Laura, a self-described "crazy cat lady," who took in Albert, the most unusual feline I've known.

One time, when we lived in the country, we walked through the fields to check on Albert, where he'd set up temporary headquarters hunting mice in the neighbor's hay barn. He came sauntering out to greet us, walking straight through a flock of turkey vultures cleaning up carrion on the ground. The buzzards paid him no mind. My wife was flabbergasted.

Albert always had his own plan — except for one time after I'd broken three ribs in a fall from a horse. He converted himself from a barn cat to a house pet, sitting on

the arm of my chair, purring and helping me watch the Red Sox on TV until I healed up.

I was absurdly fond of that cat.

Altogether, Albert lived with us for 10 years before relocating to Laura's front porch. After moving back to town, we'd adopted an energetic young dog — a Great Pyrenees-husky mix who thinks cat-pestering is great fun. I don't believe he means to hurt them — Aspen is a friendly, gentle animal in other respects — but Albert wasn't sticking around to find out. I figured he'd adapt, but he chose Laura's front porch instead.

He's always been a shrewd judge of character. Laura feeds him, pets him and takes him to the vet. We pay the vet bills and make occasional visits, where he's somewhat aloof but friendly. So, it's all worked out for the best.

Indeed, Laura has recently managed something I'd have thought impossible: She's converted the now 15-year-old orange tabby to an indoor cat. He no longer prowls the neighborhood killing rats and getting into fights. He's living as an older gentleman among Laura's several cats.

In short, she's a feline philanthropist and a wonderful neighbor. I know she has elderly parents nearby whom she cares for, but Laura's intimate life isn't something we talk about. Her immediate family consists of her and the cats.

In other words, J.D. Vance can kiss my grits, as we say in Arkansas when we're being nice.

I don't know if "weird" is the right word, but he and Donald Trump are definitely soul brothers. Try to imagine why a politician would be fool enough to call Jennifer Aniston, the widely beloved actress — she has a reported 45 million Instagram followers — "disgusting."

Aniston's sin was objecting to the "childless" part of "childless cat ladies who are miserable in their own lives" and therefore "have no direct stake in America."

On her Instagram account, the actress, who has made no secret of her struggles to become a mother, commented, "Mr. Vance, I pray that your daughter is fortunate enough to bear children of her own one day. I hope she will not have to turn to IVF as a second option. Because you are trying to take that away from her too."

It's true. A fierce anti-abortion activist, Vance voted against a Democratic bill to protect IVF rights. What he found "disgusting" was the actress's mention of his 2-year-old daughter. Evidently, only he gets to use his children as political pawns.

Has any national politician ever had a more unfortunate coming-out? This guy makes Alaska "hockey mom" Sarah Palin look like Abraham Lincoln. As blogger Charles Pierce puts it, "Vance may be the worst public politician I have ever seen. No kidding. This guy could screw up a two-car funeral if you spotted him the hearse."

Vance's liege and sovereign lord, meanwhile, has been going around the country promising his followers that if he's elected in 2024, there won't be any need for future

elections. Or something.

"Christians, get out and vote! Just this time," Donald Trump told an audience of evangelicals July 26. "You won't have to do it anymore. Four more years. You know what? It'll be fixed! It'll be fine! You won't have to vote anymore, my beautiful Christians. I love you, Christians! I'm a Christian."

Yeah, well, if he's a Christian, I'm the pope.

On her Fox News program, Laura Ingraham all but begged Trump to clear up his ambiguous remarks. Surely, he didn't mean to say he'd rule as a dictator?

Trump only repeated himself in one of his classic baffle-gab statements: "Don't worry about the future," he said. "You have to vote on Nov. 5. After that, you don't have to worry about voting anymore. I don't care, because we're going to fix it. The country will be fixed, and we won't even need your vote anymore because frankly, we will have such love if you don't want to vote anymore, that's OK."

We're all supposed to pretend that Trump's engaging in strategic ambiguity, and not simply a cunning but confused old man slipping into senility.

Truth is, he's halfway gone.

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

Mass Deportations Would Be a Nightmare

The popular GOP slogan would tear millions of families apart, including mine. It would also be a moral, logistical, and economic disaster.

By ALLIYAH LUSUEGRO

There's an image that's stayed with me for weeks: A sea of people holding up "Mass Deportation Now" signs at the Republican National Convention.

Since then, I've been plagued with nightmares of mass raids by the military and police across the country. I see millions of families being torn apart, including families with citizen children. And I see DACA recipients — like me — carried away from the only life we've ever known.

Mass deportation wasn't just a rallying cry at the GOP convention. It's a key plank of Project 2025, a radical document written by White nationalists listing conservative policy priorities for the next administration.

And it would be a disaster — not just for immigrants, but for our whole country.

I moved to the United States when I was six. Until my teenage years, I didn't know I was undocumented — I only knew I was from the Philippines. I grew up in Chicago with

my twin brother. Our parents worked hard, volunteered at my elementary school, and ensured we always had food on the table. They raised us to do well and be good people.

But when my twin and I learned that we were undocumented, we realized that living our dreams was going to be complicated — on top of the lasting fear of being deported.

Everything changed right before I entered high school in 2012: The Obama administration announced the Deferred Actions for Childhood Arrivals policy, or DACA. The program was designed to protect young people like my twin and me who arrived in the U.S. at a young age with limited or no knowledge of our life before. We're two of the 600,000 DACA recipients today.

DACA opened many doors for us. It's allowed to drive, attend college, and have jobs. And we're temporarily exempt from deportation, a status we have to renew every two years.

DACA helped me set my sights high on my studies and career. Although I couldn't apply for federal aid, with DACA I became eligible for a program called QuestBridge that granted me a full-ride scholarship to college. Today I work in public policy in the nation's capital, with dreams of furthering my career through graduate school.

But if hardliners eliminate DACA and carry out their mass deportations, those dreams could be swept away. And it would be ugly — mass deportation would be a logistical disaster, taking decades and costing billions.

Imagine your friends, neighbors, colleagues, peers, and caretakers being dragged away from their homes. For me,

it would mean being forced back to the Philippines, a place I haven't seen in two decades. My partner, my friends, my work — all I've ever known is here, in the country I call home.

This country would suffer, too.

An estimated 11 million undocumented people live here. We're doctors, chefs, librarians, construction workers, lawyers, drivers, scientists, and business owners. We fill labor shortages and help keep inflation down. We contribute nearly \$100 billion each year to federal, state, and local taxes.

Fear-mongering politicians want you to believe we're criminals, or that we're voting illegally. But again and again, studies find that immigrants commit many fewer crimes than U.S.-born Americans. And though some of us have been long-time residents of this country, we cannot vote in state or federal elections.

Despite all the divisive rhetoric, the American people agree with immigration advocates: Our country needs to offer immigrants a path to legalization and citizenship. According to a Gallup poll last year, 68% of Americans support this.

My dark dreams of mass deportations are, thankfully, just nightmares for now. And my dreams of a secure future for my family and all people in this country outweigh my fears. We must do everything possible to keep all families together.

Alliyah Lusuegro is the Outreach Coordinator for the National Priorities Project at the Institute for Policy Studies. This op-ed was distributed by OtherWords.org.

Trump, Healer of 'Discord and Division'? Har Har

By JOHN YOUNG

If Donald Trump said road apples tasted better than sweet red ones, Republican leaders would hustle out and sink their teeth into the nearest dairy dropping.

Ted Cruz would roast his at the end of an AK.

Being one who wants Trump, Cruz and party to lose and lose big, when I heard the stupid things Trump told an audience of Black journalists — most offensively that Kamala Harris "turned Black" for political purposes — I punched the air in pleasure.

I knew that Republicans would trundle out en masse to dine on a meadow muffin and exclaim, "You know," munch, munch, "Trump's right," regardless of the political damage.

It took J.D. Vance no time at all. He reached into his bag of witty metaphors to call Harris a color-changing "chameleon" — quite a claim from a guy who changed his name multiple times and who kisses the

loafers of a man he not long ago called an "idiot" and compared to Adolf Hitler.

Well, an idiot is as an idiot does.

Something so ignorant-sounding, so unconscionable, so crass. What Trump said about Harris, and what Republicans continue to parrot, is pure political foolery for a party that knows it needs to broaden its appeal.

"The discord and division in our society must be healed," Trump pontificated at the Republican National Convention.

"I am running to be president for all of America, not half of America."

That's what you call bovine effluvium.

Trump's whole political being is devoted to two acts: inflaming and dividing. Prove me wrong.

The title of Peter Baker and Susan Glasser's 2022 book on Trump says it all: "The Divider."

Baker is chief *New York Times* White House correspondent. Glasser, his spouse, is a staffer for *The New Yorker*.

Trump, they write, made divisiveness "the calling card of his presidency."

As president: "Trump pitted Americans against Americans, the United States against its allies. He threw matches on the dry kindling of race relations and escalated a culture war over competing visions of national identity."

Yes, a war between us: American vs. American. By design. For political gain. That's leadership.

The thing about this divisiveness: It's not just words.

In another revealing book, "This Will Not Pass: Trump, Biden and the Battle for America's Future," authors Jonathan Martin and Alexander Burns describe "protection-racket antics" by which President Trump carried out vendettas against whole states and constituencies.

Former Maryland governor Larry Hogan, a Republican who nonetheless was highly critical of Trump, said Trump was blithely open about his reasoning when states with Trump-friendly governors like Texas and Florida got disproportionate shares of COVID response funds. It was about partisan favors, not serving states equitably.

During the pandemic, Democratic Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont contacted the White House for help in his state's competing with Canada for a vaccine plant.

To that, Trump trade adviser Peter Navarro uttered a pitch-perfect Trumpian reply:

"I don't want to get involved with blue-state politics," he said.

And then there were so many — so

many! — examples of Team Trump's raw animus, or at last lack of sensitivity, toward people of color and diverse urban locales.

Don't kid yourself. Race was the subtext to Trump's statement that Milwaukee is a "horrible" city, that urban centers like Philadelphia or Atlanta can't administer elections fairly, or that certain nations are "sh*thole countries."

And this:

When advisers suggested that Juneteenth, celebrated nationally to recognize the end of slavery in the United States, wouldn't be a good day for a Trump rally in Tulsa, Okla., the site of America's worst race riot, Trump not only appeared to know nothing about the date's significance but showed he couldn't care less.

Change the day "to accommodate these people?" Trump retorted. "Have you ever heard of such a ridiculous thing?"

Martin and Burns called it "another sign that Donald Trump did not see himself as president for everyone."

Incorrigible, unrepentant, racist to the core: the Great Divider.

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Cover Story...

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cumbent Tate Reeves last year, said Walz was a great choice for reaching rural voters. “I am over the moon about Tim Walz being selected as vice president [Democratic nominee] today,” he said.

Presley made rural outreach a big part of his campaign. He said other Democrats need to do the same if they want to cut Republican advantages with rural voters and improve Democrats’ chances of victory.

“You can’t ignore people into voting for you,” Presley said. “We have a right, a duty, as Democrats to go out and talk to voters where they are and to make a difference in our communities.”

Several speakers said that the harsh politics of recent years have taken a toll in rural areas and that communities need to encourage respect and civility during what will likely be a contentious political debate.

Bobby Berk, a star of the reality television series “Queer Eye” who grew up in Missouri, said he recalls his “very Republican” parents speaking civilly with rural neighbors who were going to vote for then

candidate Bill Clinton. Berk said politics weren’t an issue when it was time to help bale hay.

“It didn’t matter who you voted for, it only mattered that you were there to help your community,” Berk said. “And I really want us to be able to get back to the way it was where neighbors could have different political views, but still every summer go out there and help each other.”

Comedian Trae Crowder, who bills himself as the Liberal Redneck and comes from Celina, Tennessee (“a town with more liquor stores than traffic lights, at a ratio of 2 to 0”) said his neighbors turned up for him when his father died.

“I was living paycheck to paycheck, student loan debt, all this stuff. But I had to pay for my dad’s funeral,” he said.

After the service, the funeral director told him that his bill had already been settled. “And I said, ‘what do you mean?’ He said, ‘well, everybody in town chipped in and paid for it, so it’s covered. You guys don’t have to worry about it.’ And so I know the heart of rural America.”

Despite extolling the virtues of neighborliness and cooperation, several speakers

acknowledged that Democrats in “deep red” counties may feel isolated and intimidated about speaking up.

Jane Kleeb, chairperson of the Nebraska Democratic Party, said fellow Democrats sometimes identify themselves in whispers if they see her wearing a Democratic sweatshirt at the grocery store.

“I know as a small-town and rural organizer, it gets lonely,” she said. One thing that helps is a sense of humor.

She was introduced at a county commissioners meeting in Nebraska as the driver of a vehicle with a Democratic bumper sticker. “She’s probably the only minivan in this entire county that has a Biden sticker,” a commissioner said.

“We have to meet that with laughter,” Kleeb said. “I could have gotten angry and said, ‘I’m not the only one,’ and given him facts about that. But you have to laugh and say, ‘yeah, I’m a proud Democrat. And there’s a lot more of us.’”

Anderson Clayton, North Carolina’s Democratic Party chairperson, said rural Democrats can point to the accomplishments of the Biden and Harris administration in delivering broadband, infrastructure,

and other programs that benefit rural communities.

“Right now [there are some who] may be feeling scared to say and to stand up in their rural town or in their small town and say that they’re a Democrat,” Clayton said. “You don’t need to be afraid. ... Look fear in the face. Look Republicans in the face. And say, ‘we’re not backing down. No way, no how.’”

Several speakers emphasized the importance of contesting down-ballot races because small changes in turnout can add up to success further up the ballot.

“Every person who comes to vote in these down ballot races helps the top of the ticket,” said Piper of Blue Missouri. “We [need to] make sure that there is a Democratic candidate in every state, on every ballot, in every race across the country. And that absolutely will help the top of the ticket.”

Tim Marena is editor of The Daily Yonder (DailyYonder.com), where this appeared.

Minnesota Governor Tim Walz Gives Harris Campaign Rural Cred

Kamala Harris’s new running mate boosts her campaign’s appeal to rural voters.

By CLAIRE CARLSON

Kamala Harris announced Tuesday, Aug. 6, that Minnesota Governor Tim Walz is her vice presidential running mate, bringing her campaign up many notches in rural credibility.

Walz grew up in Valentine, Nebraska (population 2,700), on his family’s farm before moving to the even smaller town of Butte, Nebraska (population 300), his sophomore year of high school, graduating in a class of 25 students.

After high school, he joined the National Guard and worked in manufacturing before attending Nebraska’s Chadron State College for a degree in social science education. He taught and coached high school football in Alliance, Nebraska (population 8,000), where he met his future wife, Minnesota-born Gwen Whipple. They married in 1994 and moved to Mankato, Minnesota (population 45,000), in 1996. Walz taught geography and coached football at Mankato West High School, where he also headed the school’s first gay-straight alliance.

In 2006, he ran for Congress as the

Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party nominee (a third party unique to Minnesota whose platform centers “progressive agrarian reform” and advocates for farmers, union workers, and the public ownership of utilities, railroads, and natural resources, as well as social security legislation, according to their website.) He won the disproportionately rural first congressional district of southern Minnesota, beating the district’s six-term Republican incumbent. He represented the district from 2007-2019 before becoming governor of Minnesota.

All this to say: Walz knows rural America.

Unlike many other Democrats, Walz understands what it’s like to be from a small town where no matter your political ideology, neighbors still look out for one another. He’s privy to political nuance in rural communities, like in the congressional district that voted for him and also voted for Donald Trump in 2016. Walz doesn’t hold the same disdain for or condescension of rural folks or Trump supporters that some Democrats are guilty of (Hillary Clinton’s 2016 “basket of deplorables” comment about Trump supporters is the most famous example of this).

This last point is what I find most compelling about him. Walz doesn’t think Trump supporters are dumb or are voting against their own interests; he thinks that Democrats have a messaging problem. In an interview with Ezra Klein, he harkened back to his teaching days to describe this issue.

“The schoolteacher in me keeps thinking, if I give a test, and 90% of the students fail, I can guarantee you it’s not because the kids aren’t smart, there’s something wrong with the test or the way I’m teaching it,” Walz told Klein. “I keep coming back to this:

if they’re not voting for us, there’s not something wrong with them, there’s something [about Democrats’ messaging] that’s not quite clicking.”

Since it was first announced Walz was being considered for the V.P. pick, he’s developed his own way of talking about the threat of another Trump presidency by keeping it simple: Republicans are just plain-ole “weird.”

Before Walz hit mainstream media, Democrats were warning of the “existential threat to democracy” that Trump poses, but now they’ve united around Walz’s phrasing. Republicans who want to take books away, to be in your medical exam room – they’re weird for that.

This messaging is refreshing in its simplicity. The way Walz uses “weird” isn’t to shame Trump supporters; it’s to point out how odd Republican policies like book bans or abortion bans really are. Isn’t it counter to personal freedom – one of the fundamental values in the United States – to dictate what a person can and cannot read? Isn’t it a terrible privacy infraction to want a say in the healthcare people receive? Can’t we all just respect each other’s personal freedoms and mind our own business, Walz asks?

As Minnesota governor, Walz has passed an impressive number of progressive policies. Some of his signature accomplishments include investments in public education like free breakfast and lunch for all students, expansion of the state’s child tax credit, protections for reproductive and gender-affirming healthcare, a \$1 billion investment in affordable housing and expanded voting rights access, to name just a few.

But he’s got critics, too. His governor’s campaign ran on a “One Minnesota” mes-

sage meant to bridge the state’s rural-urban divide, but some Minnesota pundits say once he was armed with a Democratic trifecta in the governor’s office and in both chambers of the state legislature, his “One Minnesota” message changed.

“But once he got that trifecta, his message shifted to: ‘This is what we can do with single party control, the era of gridlock is over,’” said Hamline University professor David Schultz in a CNN interview. Other pundits have wondered whether he’ll be able to rekindle the unity that message spurred if the Harris-Walz ticket loses in November.

Even with these critiques, Walz seems to be a strong choice for the Harris campaign.

He hits many of the demographic factors Harris’ advisers were looking for, whether officially or not: He’s a White, rural, middle-age veteran who has won over the internet through a single word. And the power of the internet is nothing to scoff at – one of this summer’s it-girls, musician Charli XCX, declared Kamala Harris a “brat” (a counter-intuitive compliment that references Charli XCX’s hit album), and enthusiasm for Harris soared among young millennials and Gen Z. Capitalizing on Walz’s internet virality is a good strategy for getting young voters.

Pair that with Walz’s rural credibility (he recently said he could out-shoot Republican vice presidential candidate J.D. Vance in a pheasant hunt), and the Harris-Walz ticket could be a force to be reckoned with.

Claire Carlson is staff correspondent of The Daily Yonder, where this article was originally published in its email newsletter, Keep It Rural. See DailyYonder.com.

‘Donald Being Donald’

By SUSAN ESTRICH

In her 2019 memoir, Kamala Harris wrote, “My mother understood very well that she was raising two Black daughters. She knew her adopted homeland would see Maya and me as black girls, and she was determined to make sure we would grow into confident, proud Black women.”

As she did, when she dismissed Donald Trump’s unbelievable attack on her Blackness as the “same old show,” of “divisiveness and disrespect.” Or to quote Ronald Reagan’s ultimate dismissal of Jimmy Carter’s attacks, “There you go again.”

It was Trump, being “weird” again. There was no need for Harris to say any more. Every news story underscored the fact that the Howard educated former President of the Black Law Students Association at Hastings Law has nothing to prove about her Blackness.

So why did Trump say it? And why choose an audience of Black journalists as your audience? What was he doing there in the first instance?

To the extent that there is a racist vote in this country, Trump already has it. He doesn’t need to say a word. Leaders of his own party – including the current and former

speaker of the House, as well as top strategists who he is clearly (by their own leaks) ignoring – have warned him and other Republicans away from frontal racial assaults. They alienate more swing voters than they attract. The message we were supposed to be hearing this week was all about her record as a supposedly liberal district attorney with a bad record on the border.

Instead, in a feat of derring-do, Donald Trump stole back the headlines from Harris’ stunning debut – and J.D. Vance’s Dan Quayle-like nightmare – to become the star of the week, the focus of attention – for, of all things, his decision to play the race card against Harris in an assault with no upside except for her.

Maybe the point was just that. Trump clearly hates not being the center of the limelight. He came out of his convention flying high, having ignored those who must have warned him that Vance posed real risks, believing he could choose who he, and Tucker (Carlson), and Junior, liked best, and Biden and Harris stole his thunder away before the weekend was out. Now everyone was playing the guessing game about Harris’ VP choice and the enthusiasm and size of her crowds, and he simply couldn’t bear being ignored.

And he did it before a hostile Black audience so he could go after them as well.

He wanted to have a fight. He wanted to get back in the limelight.

So he did.

And that’s what scares me. He is totally undisciplined. He is spinning like he is out of control. He is not sticking to message. He is not saying what he is supposed to say. He is doing everything we teach toddlers not to do.

The week began when he insisted that he meant what he said about Christians not needing to vote in subsequent elections, if they voted for him in this one, rather than walking away from what was at best a careless anti-democratic slur. No, he doubled down and confirmed it to Laura Ingraham, which gave him an extra two or three days of negative coverage. And then he went, of all places, to the National Association of Black Journalists, which he had to know was a hostile venue, and jumped into the attack on Harris’ identity and integrity that should have been beneath even him.

It’s Donald being Donald, which is not even good politics for him, which raises the question again of what it says about Donald the would-be next president.

A president who is not disciplined about what they say and do is not someone who is up to the job. Donald being Donald, I submit, is a very dangerous thing.

Susan Estrich is a lawyer, professor, author, political operative, and political commentator. She served as campaign manager for Michael Dukakis in 1988 and in 2016 as legal counsel to the former Fox News chairman Roger Ailes. She writes a column distributed through Creators Syndicate.

Does the Cornered Old Criminal Have a Plan B?

By DICK POLMAN

His poll lead has evaporated, his foe Joe has abdicated, his veep choice is a national joke, the ascendent opposition ticket is kicking his capacious ass, and with each passing day it seems more likely that the cornered old criminal will spend his remaining golden years fighting to stay out of jail.

How's he holding up these days? Not too well, it would appear. Confronted with the reality of Kamala Harris and her America's Dad wingman, Donald Trump hasn't the faintest clue what to do. The entire week after Harris unveiled Tim Walz as her running mate, Trump's sole rally was in reliably red Montana. His basic recourse is to melt down on social media and flee to the safe space of *Fox & Friends*. Someone in his inner circle really needs to step up and get him the mental health care he badly needs.

For starters, he just can't quit Joe. He's so nostalgic for the bygone days of a Biden matchup that he's typing his demented fan-

tasies for all the world to see. Here he was earlier this week on "Truth" Social:

"I HEAR THERE IS A BIG MOVEMENT TO BRING BACK CROOKED JOE ... What are the chances that Crooked Joe Biden, the WORST President in the history of the U.S., whose Presidency was Unconstitutionally STOLEN from him by Kamabla, Barrack HUSSEIN Obama, Crazy Nancy Pelosi, Shifty Adam Schiff, Cryin' Chuck Schumer, and others on the Lunatic Left, CRASHES the Democrat National Convention and tries to take back the Nomination, beginning with challenging me to another DEBATE. He feels that he made a historically tragic mistake by handing over the U.S. Presidency, a COUP, to the people in the World he most hates, and he wants it back, NOW!!!"

It's not worth our time to parse all that imbecility, except perhaps to point out that not even the stupidest graduate of Trump University would have argued that Biden's '24 candidacy was "Unconstitutionally STOLEN." Even his MAGA courtiers on the U.S. Supreme Court wouldn't buy that one.

But in his saner moments (grading on a curve), he's trying to move on from Joe. He had lots of "thoughts" (grading on a curve) about the "Kamabla"-Walz ticket Aug. 7 when he phoned in to the *Fox & Friends* couch mates, knowing full well that those lickspittles would let him rant and ramble with nary a challenging query. And that's how it went.

For instance: "This is a ticket that would want this country to go communist

immediately, if not sooner." (Um. What is "sooner" than "immediately"?) According to the voices in his tooth fillings, it is apparently "communist" to feed hungry school kids, offer people health care, offer paid family leave, offer child tax credits, expand background checks for gun buys, promote renewable energy, and allow women to make decisions for their own bodies.

For instance, referring to Tim Walz: "He is not where the country is, on anything." The Fox hosts sat there, mute and enraptured. But it just so happens that the aforementioned "communist" policies — staples of the Harris-Walz agenda — have landslide majority support in the polls. This is the center of gravity in America now.

He also said that Walz is terrible on "security." Which is a fascinating observation, given the fact that in 2019, when then-President Trump named some new appointees to the Council of Governors, a panel that advises the feds on security issues, one of the governors he chose was ... Tim Walz. (I'm sharing that fun factoid with you because, naturally, the Fox hosts either didn't know it or didn't want to know it.)

He also said "the stock market will collapse like in 1929 if they're elected," which is the same thing he said about Biden, baselessly, on Oct. 22, 2020 ("If he's elected, the stock market will crash"), and the only reason he's recycling his old doomsday mantra is because he has nothing new to say.

He also said he does want to debate Harris, although he's still wobbly about when and where. In a social media post in

late July he said he'd do it on Fox News on Sept. 4 (a date and setting he dreamed up on his own), "or I won't see her at all." But he apparently has come to realize that ducking the long-scheduled Sept. 10 debate on ABC News leaves the impression that he's scared sh*tless — split screen: babbling old man and feisty Black woman — so here's where he is right now: "I don't know how she debates, I hear she's sort of a nasty person but not a good debater but we'll see because we'll be debating her I guess in the pretty near future, it's gonna be announced fairly soon."

Meanwhile, Aug. 7, Harris and Walz have filled a Wisconsin arena to the brim. But Trump is on the case. He thinks he has found something to turn the tide. He has dispatched J.D. Vance to attack Walz's 24-year service in the National Guard (accusing Walz, without evidence, of ducking service in Iraq), which is a tad odd as tactics go, given the fact that Trump faked a medical condition to avoid military service and said that STDs were his "personal Vietnam."

The convicted criminal, who faces sentencing in New York on Sept. 18, has no idea what to do, and it's joyous. There may be anxious times in the next 90 days, but for now, it feels so good to feel good again.

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GRASSROOTS/Hank Kalet A Defining Moment

The 2024 election is about control of one's body and one's identity, and it is clear that the Republican ticket poses a danger to both.

The attack includes the 2022 *Dobbs* ruling on abortion and the repeated rhetorical assaults on the trans community, but is much deeper and darker, part of an effort to erase much of the progress we have made as a culture since the end of World War II.

This may seem like hyperbole. It may sound extreme. But my language is a direct response to the actions, plans, and rhetoric being used by former President (and current nominee) Donald Trump, his running mate J.D. Vance, and elected members of the party, which attempts to frame their bigotry as protection, and masks the very real assault on freedom of identity and bodily autonomy.

These attacks go back to the late 1950s, but have accelerated since the elections first of Bill Clinton and later Barack Obama, before really taking off during the COVID and post-COVID era. Trump is a central figure in this, his "Make America Great Again" slogan, with its emphasis on "again," is designed to play on the fear and grievance of those who see their majority or power status waning. Trump has encouraged a sense of resentment, mostly among White voters, by narrowly defining who he sees as "American" and making direct attacks on immigrants, Muslims and other groups as threats.

Bigotry is as much about power as it is about hate and resentment. The bigot — whether racist, sexist, or anti-LGBTQ+ — demands control of the terms of debate and the bodies being discriminated against. They want to define what those bodies mean and place them within a hierarchy of power that always places the bigot at the top.

This is the lens through which we need to understand his recent comments about Vice President Kamala Harris' race.

"I didn't know she was Black until a number of years ago when she happened to turn Black and now she wants to be known as Black. So I don't know, is she Indian or is she Black?"

His questioning of Harris' "blackness" is most overtly a way of undermining her within the black community, but also of stripping her of autonomy over her own identity. Trump is saying that she does not get to define herself, that he — a rich White man — gets to do that and, by extension, gets to hold power.

Vance's comments on "childless cat ladies" reflect his participation in a movement that wants to grant extra voting rights to families (parents would get proxy votes for each child) as a way of offsetting the votes of single individuals and childless couples because, as this movement argues, only those with families have a stake in the nation. Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, the Democratic vice-presidential nominee, has called this weird, but I think that underplays the danger here and ignores how it ties to a larger effort to define Americanness as tied to what the right has always called "traditional families," i.e., two heterosexual parents with biological children.

This voting theory echoes earlier efforts at disenfranchisement — denying women the vote because their hus-

bands should be making those decisions, or poll taxes that denied the property-less or poor from voting. The difference here is that this effort has been defended as "empowering children," though children would not be making any decisions for themselves.

Empowering children and protecting women were also at the center of the attacks on Algerian boxer Imane Khelif and Taiwanese boxer Lin Yu-ting of Taiwan, both of whom are being defined as trans by the right because both were banned from an international competition based on questionable testing by a body that itself was banned from the Olympics for a variety of infractions.

Both boxers are women, as Thomas Bach, president of the International Olympic Committee, made clear after one of Khelif's opponents abandoned a fight. They were born and raised as women, but also apparently had higher levels of testosterone than "normal." The fighters, who both medaled at the Paris Olympics, became political pawns in the attack on a trans community the right refuses to recognize.

Each of these cases implicates personal definition and power, with a conservative movement arrogating to itself the power over individuals' identity and bodily autonomy. A second Trump presidency — especially if it comes with Republican control over both houses of Congress (it already has the Supreme Court) — will only take us back to a far less equal past.

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Why Kamala Harris Laughs at J.D. Vance

By JOE CONASON

With his former vice president sidelined by that near-death experience on Jan. 6, former President Donald Trump had to name a new running mate at the recent Republican National Convention. But his campaign had scarcely announced the selection of J.D. Vance, the very junior senator from Ohio, before they began to feel pangs of regret.

Not only did Vance embody certain of the most unattractive aspects of MAGA — the Trump pseudo-ideology that highlights the bigotry and misogyny of its standard-bearer — but he instantly found ways to display his ugliest impulses.

For instance, despite whispered entreaties from campaign advisers, Vance simply couldn't resist the urge to personally disparage Vice President Kamala Harris, soon to become the Democratic presidential nominee. Having previously mocked her as a "childless cat lady" with no personal stake

in America's future, he now says she doesn't love our country — much as the right used to insult former first lady Michelle Obama, who resembles Harris in a couple of obvious ways. (Someone might remind Vance that like Harris, George Washington had no natural offspring but was instead the stepfather of his wife Martha's children.)

The sinister muttering doesn't stop there. Like many other Republicans, Vance has hinted that the vice president is unqualified to serve in the nation's highest office because she is merely a "diversity, equity and inclusion hire," meaning she was chosen for her race and gender rather than her ability and achievements.

Coming from a fledgling politician who has barely served a year in the Senate — and accomplished nothing in public service — Vance's criticism reeks of unearned arrogance. Leaving aside her role in the Biden-Harris administration, with its long list of legislative and diplomatic accomplishments, the vice president has served as a big-city district attorney, attorney general of the most populous state in the union, and U.S. senator. She has compiled a real record of action at every level. Were she a White male, there would be no question about her

qualifications for the presidency.

But Vance isn't the only Republican who should think twice before raising the "DEI" canard against Harris. For anyone with a functioning memory, their hypocrisy is ludicrous.

As noted in my new book "The Longest Con: How Grifters, Swindlers, and Frauds Hijacked American Conservatism," the most obviously unqualified nominee put forward by a major party, before Trump's rise, was that Republican phenomenon and MAGA favorite, former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin. It was the feckless nomination of Palin that drove the Republican right toward the vacuous populism and conspiratorial paranoia that became Trump's far-right cult.

Nobody doubted in 2008 that Republican nominee John McCain's campaign team picked Palin because she was a right-wing woman. She lacked the minimum knowledge to perform her job as governor, let alone vice president or, heaven forbid, commander-in-chief. What McCain's campaign team learned during their backward selection process — naming her first and vetting her later — blew their minds. Her mental cupboard didn't just have a few empty shelves. Her brain was a dark and terrifying

vacuum, almost wholly devoid of useful content for a major party candidate. She had vaulted from small-town mayor to governor without acquiring a basic grasp of history and government. She required emergency tutoring on the two world wars, the two Koreas and the Federal Reserve System.

Yet she scorned knowledge and expertise, placing far higher value on her own overrated "common sense," the same bluster that Trump would echo a decade later.

As the first woman chosen for a national ticket by the Republican Party, Palin's novelty obscured the glaring fact that she was not their first deeply underqualified nominee. A dismal precedent dating back two decades existed in the person of Dan Quayle, the young Indiana senator whose surprise elevation onto the 1988 GOP ticket with George H. W. Bush discarded any consideration of competence for the youthful appeal of a blond frat boy.

Quayle was also a version of a "DEI" candidate, intended to attract women voters. But while Quayle seemed to deserve pity more than mockery, Palin projected a bullying assurance that only "elitists" would

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Holding Workers in Contempt

By DAVID McCALL

David Harvey credits the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) with helping him make it to a healthy retirement.

OSHA implemented a standard in 2016 dramatically reducing workers' exposure to silica in many workplaces, including the Du-Co Ceramics Co. plant in Western Pennsylvania where Harvey spent decades making ceramic electrical components.

Harvey's union, the United Steelworkers (USW), long pushed OSHA to enact the rule and protect workers across the country from airborne silica dust, generated during manufacturing processes and other kinds of work involving rock, sand, gravel and clay. The substance lodges deep in the lungs, contributing to cancer, silicosis and other life-threatening ailments.

It would be foolhardy now to return to dustier workplaces that put workers' lives at risk. But Harvey knows this nightmare scenario is a real threat with a right-wing Supreme Court that's already gutting labor rights and will almost certainly attempt to institutionalize the subjugation of workers if a Republican wins the White House in November.

"Just look at what's happening," warned Harvey, Pennsylvania coordinator for the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees

(SOAR), referring to the court's growing and alarming string of anti-worker decisions. "We're going back in time, back to the way it was when unions were just getting started."

In one particularly alarming case, *Loper Bright Enterprises v. Raimondo*, the court's six pro-corporate justices overturned long-time precedent and slashed the authority of federal agencies to interpret laws and make regulations.

This ruling sets the stage for a potential rollback of hard-won regulations safeguarding working people, such as a new Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services rule mandating safer staffing levels at nursing homes, the OSHA silica standard that continues to protect Harvey's former co-workers, and the similar silica standard for miners that the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) enacted earlier this year at the urging of the USW and other unions.

Also at risk because of the decision are Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rules and recently expanded Department of Labor (DOL) standards extending overtime to millions more workers when they work extra hours.

The greedy corporations that opposed these kinds of common-sense measures in the first place now circle like vultures, hoping to have them rescinded. In the four weeks since the *Loper Bright* ruling, for example, companies already filed at least five lawsuits challenging DOL regulations on minimum wages and other critical issues.

"They're not exposed to it," said Harvey, explaining why the justices would issue a ruling potentially increasing workers to silica or other hazards. "They don't care."

The Undemocratic Reality of Capitalism

In capitalism, democracy is unacceptable because it threatens the unequally distributed wealth of the minority

By RICHARD D. WOLFF

Fans of capitalism like to say it is democratic or that it supports democracy. Some have stretched language so far as to literally equate capitalism with democracy, using the terms interchangeably. No matter how many times that is repeated, it is simply not true and never was. Indeed, it is much more accurate to say that capitalism and democracy are opposites. To see why, you have only to look at capitalism as a production system where employees enter into a relationship with employers, where a few people are the boss, and most people simply work doing what they are told to do. That relationship is not democratic; it is autocratic.

When you cross the threshold into a workplace (e.g., a factory, an office, or a store), you leave whatever democracy might exist outside. You enter a workplace from which democracy is excluded. Are the majority—the employees—making the decisions that affect their lives? The answer is an unambiguous no. Whoever runs the enterprise in a capitalist system (owner[s] or a board of directors) makes all the key decisions: what the enterprise produces, what technology it uses, where production takes place, and what to do with enterprise profits. The employees are excluded from making those decisions but must live with the consequences, which affect them deeply. The employees must either accept the effects of their employers' decisions or quit their jobs to work somewhere else (most likely organized in the same undemocratic way).

The employer is an autocrat within a capitalist enterprise, like a king in a monarchy. Over the past few centuries, monarchies were largely "overthrown" and replaced by representative, electoral "democracies." But kings remained. They merely changed their location and their titles. They moved from political positions in government to economic positions inside capitalist enterprises. Instead of kings, they are called bosses or owners or CEOs. There they sit, atop the capitalist en-

terprise, exercising many king-like powers, unaccountable to those over whom they reign.

Democracy has been kept out of capitalist enterprise for centuries. Many other institutions in societies where capitalist enterprises prevail—government agencies, universities and colleges, religions, and charities—are equally autocratic. Their internal relationships often copy or mirror the employer/employee relationship inside capitalist enterprises. Those institutions try thereby to "function in a businesslike manner."

The anti-democratic organization of capitalist firms also conveys to employees that their input is not genuinely welcomed or sought by their bosses. Employees thus mostly resign themselves to their powerless position relative to the CEO at their workplace. They also expect the same in their relationships with political leaders, the CEOs' counterparts in government. Their inability to participate in running their workplaces trains citizens to presume and accept the same in relation to running their residential communities. Employers become top political officials (and vice versa) in part because they are used to being "in charge." Political parties and government bureaucracies mirror capitalist enterprises by being run autocratically while constantly describing themselves as democratic.

Most adults experience working at least eight hours for five or more days per week in capitalist workplaces, under the power and authority of their employer. The undemocratic reality of the capitalist workplace leaves its complex, multilayered impacts on all who collaborate there, part time and full time. Capitalism's problem with democracy—that the two basically contradict one another—shapes many people's lives. Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos, and the Walton family (descendants of Walmart's founder), along with a handful of other major shareholders, decide how to spend hundreds of billions. The decisions of a few hundred billionaires bring economic development, industries, and enterprises to some regions and lead to the economic decline of other regions. The many billions of people affected by those spending decisions are excluded from participating in making them. Those countless people lack the economic and social power wielded by a tiny, unelected, obscenely wealthy minority of people. That is the opposite of democracy.

Employers as a class, often led by major shareholders and the CEOs they enrich, also use their wealth to buy (they would prefer to say "donate" to) political parties, candidates, and campaigns. The rich have always understood that universal or even widespread

"They're not in touch with the working people. There's no doubt about that," Harvey said of the justices, one of whom, Neil Gorsuch, once sided with a trucking company that fired a driver for leaving his disabled rig on the side of the interstate so he could seek warmth from freezing temperatures.

As much danger as the *Loper Bright* decision portends for working people, it's only one reason why this court earned a reputation for corporate bootlicking.

In the past year alone, MAGA justices also wrote rulings attempting to limit workers' right to strike and making it more difficult for the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to reinstate workers illegally fired for asserting their labor rights.

"They don't want us to strike," observed Harvey, who once joined co-workers on a walkout to get a fair contract at Du-Co Ceramics. "They're making it harder and harder to do that."

Rulings like these fly in the face of Americans' growing support for unions and helped to drive the court's approval rating to a record low. What's particularly galling is the justices' cozy ties to the very CEOs and corporations potentially benefiting from their rulings.

Gorsuch and two associates sold a Colorado property for nearly \$2 million to the head of a law firm with cases before the court. The trio had the property on the market for about two years and sold it shortly after Gorsuch took his seat on the court.

Right-wing Justice Samuel Alito accepted private jet transportation from a hedge fund billionaire who later had cases

before the court. Alito neither reported the gift on ethics forms nor recused himself from the cases involving his benefactor.

And Alito's fellow extremist, Justice Clarence Thomas, accepted numerous vacations and other gifts from a conservative megadonor and billionaire with ties to right-wing organizations.

"They need ethics," Harvey said, noting that the justices right now "don't answer to anybody."

The Biden-Harris administration in coming months plans to pursue Supreme Court reforms aimed at holding the justices accountable and ensuring the court serves all Americans instead of just a wealthy few.

Right now, justices enjoy lifetime appointments, ostensibly to keep them out of politics. But it sure hasn't worked out that way, observed Priscilla Marco, SOAR coordinator for Puerto Rico, New York and several other states, noting the spate of rulings stacking the deck in favor of corporations.

"They were appointed by Trump to do certain things, and they're apparently doing them. They're not being independent," she said, welcoming the idea of term limits and an enforceable ethics code for justices.

"The only way to change this is at the ballot box in November," she said, noting that electing a Democratic president and Congress will provide the impetus necessary to enact the reforms and ensure the appointment of fair-minded justices in the future. "Everything comes down to November."

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

suffrage risks a nonwealthy majority voting to undo society's wealth inequality. So, the rich seek control of existing forms of democracy to make sure they do not become a real democracy in the sense of enabling the employee majority to outvote the employer minority.

The enormous surpluses appropriated by "big business" employers—usually corporations—allow them to reward their upper-level executives lavishly. These executives, technically also "employees," use corporate wealth and power to influence politics. Their goals are to reproduce the capitalist system and thus the favors and rewards it gives them. Capitalists and their top employees make the political system depend on their money more than it depends on the people's votes.

How does capitalism make the major political parties and candidates dependent on donations from employers and the rich? Politicians need vast sums of money to win by dominating the media as part of costly campaigns. They find willing donors by supporting policies that benefit capitalism as a whole, or else particular industries, regions, and enterprises. Sometimes, the donors find the politicians. Employers hire lobbyists—people who work full time, all year round, to influence the candidates that get elected. Employers fund "think tanks" to produce and spread reports on every current social issue. The purpose of those reports is to build general support for what the funders want. In these and other ways, employers and those they enrich shape the political system to work for them.

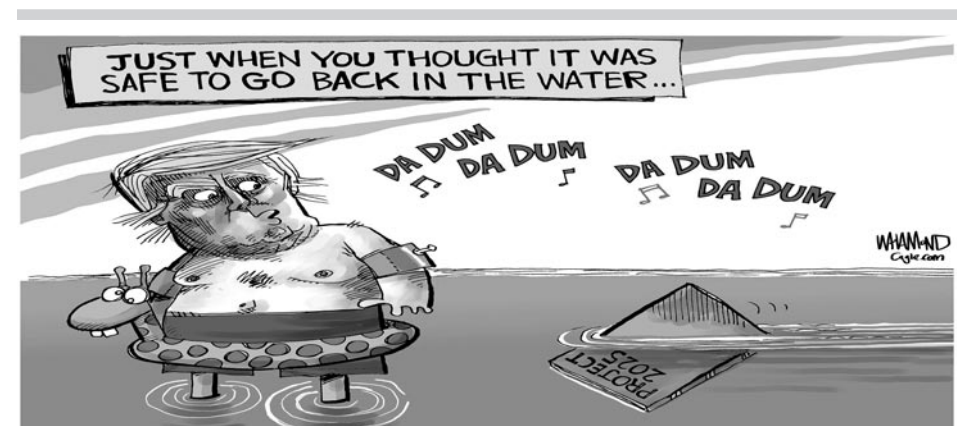
Most employees have no comparable wealth or power. To exert real political power requires massive organization to activate, combine, and mobilize employees so their numbers can add up to real strength. That happens rarely and with great difficulty. Moreover, in the U.S., the political system has been shaped over the decades to leave only

two major parties. Both of them loudly and proudly endorse and support capitalism. They collaborate to make it very difficult for any third party to gain a foothold, and for any anti-capitalist political party to emerge. The U.S. endlessly repeats its commitment to maximum freedom of choice for its citizens, but it excludes political parties from that commitment.

Democracy is about "one person, one vote"—the notion that we all have an equal say in the decisions that affect us. That is not what we have now. Going into a voting booth once or twice a year and picking a candidate is a very different level of influence than that of the Rockefeller family or George Soros. When they want to influence people, they use their money. That's not democracy.

In capitalism, democracy is unacceptable because it threatens the unequally distributed wealth of the minority with a majority vote. With or without formal institutions of democracy (such as elections with universal suffrage), capitalism undermines genuine democracy because employers control production, surplus value, and that surplus value's distributions. For capitalism's leaders, democracy is what they say, not what they do.

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MARY SANCHEZ



No matter how the election plays out, a woman of Indian-American descent will be moving her influence into the White House.

If Kamala Harris Is a DEI Vice President, is Usha Vance a DEI Bride?

Indian-American duo of Usha Vance/Kamala Harris will challenge stereotypes. Welcome to the new, improved 2024 presidential campaign.

No matter how this plays out, a woman of Indian-American descent will be moving her influence into the White House.

She'll either be the President of the United States Kamala Harris, or the wife of the next Vice President, Usha Chilukuri Vance.

Who prevails depends on how things go in November for Democrats or Republicans.

But this inevitable outcome developed while some of the most conservative politicians in the GOP were grouching about "diversity," "identity politics" and "DEI hires."

It's what happened as their political opposites, self-defined lifelong liberals, continued to see the nation's racial dynamics primarily in terms of Black people and White people, with others who didn't neatly fit into those categories as an afterthought, if they were one at all.

Meanwhile, the nation's storied history as a "land of immigrants" continued to evolve.

It's shifted, deepening with rich and complex tones, with immigrants from around the globe – Latinos from a wide range of South American countries, as well as Black people from Nigeria, Liberia and Tanzania.

And South Asians like the immigrant parents from India who gave birth to Vice President Kamala Harris and Usha Chilukuri Vance, the wife of former President Donald Trump's vice presidential running mate, Ohio Sen. JD Vance.

We rarely acknowledge that the U.S. Asian-American population is the fastest-growing among all racial and ethnic groups, rising by 81% between 2000 and 2019.

Usha Vance's parents are part of that diaspora. They, like her, are Hindu.

Vice President Harris's late mother, Shyamala Gopalan Harris, was from India. Her father, Donald Harris, was born in Jamaica. The couple met as graduate students in the United States.

The nation will be better off with some forced introspection due to the presence of these second-generation daughters in the national spotlight.

The reactions that each draw – positive and negative – will challenge and hopefully do away with some of the most backward-facing views currently undermining the nation's future.

The myth of the model minority is one. It's the belief that some immigrants are

more worthy than others, that some are hard-wired, from some warped mindsets even genetically superior, and therefore, more valuable as workers and producers for the economy.

The contention is as absurd as it is widespread.

But it's often applied to Asian Americans, along with the assertion that they are smarter from birth, harder working, driven by a fierce "tiger mom" and above all, adept at math and science.

Such views infect public policy – like Congressional decisions that slash the numbers of refugees allowed per country annually, or other limits that are placed on green cards, an attempt by policy and law to keep some people out, while allowing others in.

Trump's vow for mass deportations if he's elected president spins from this nonsense.

His comments generally conjure images of the unwanted immigrants as Latino – Mexicans, Hondurans, El Salvadorians.

Trump would be shocked to learn that some of the people he wants to cast out, look a lot like, indeed are as educated as, the wife of his vice presidential choice.

Just because someone arrived legally in the nation, say as a college student, doesn't mean they always retain that status.

Legality is a document, a rubber stamp so to speak. And it can lapse, especially under the massive backlogs of our immigration courts.

Indian Americans do have some of the highest income levels of Asian Americans. It's a direct correlation with the fact that many arrive for schooling, to attend some of our finest universities. That's a leg up to success that doesn't play out for all Asian groups.

Others – Hmong, Vietnamese, Kore-

ans – had different starts in life, with the first generation migrating often without English language skills and literally the clothes on their backs. It doesn't mean one group is inherently more intelligent or entrepreneurial.

Online haters attacked Usha Vance before she could step off the stage at the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee. They criticized her faith and her suitability as a wife to a White senator.

Meanwhile, elected members of the GOP immediately began deriding the intelligence and career accomplishments of Harris, labeling her a "DEI hire."

As their arguments go, the line of thought is particularly weak.

President Joe Biden announced his intention to appoint a woman and a woman of color for his vice president running mate. Critics pounced, equating his biracial choice of Harris with the idea that she must be unqualified.

As if Black-Indian-woman can never align with "qualified."

"So does that make Usha Vance a DEI bride?" quipped an Indian-American friend, an outstanding attorney herself.

The question gathered the slurs toward one Indian American woman and funneled them toward another, understanding that the contention would never be appropriate for either woman.

Usha Vance and Kamala Harris have each achieved, personally and professionally.

They also just happen to have a shared heritage.

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Powell's Perverse Policies Persist

A flawed understanding of today's mild inflation leads the Federal Reserve to keep interest rates punishingly high.

By ROBERT KUTTNER

The Fed had every good reason to begin the process of reducing interest rates at the July 31 meeting of the Federal Open Market Committee. Yet once again, Fed Chair Jay Powell and his colleagues refused to cut rates, keeping the target range for short-term rates at 5.25 to 5.5 percent, a 23-year high. Given the state of the economy, the Fed's stubborn stance makes no sense.

Recent government reports on growth, jobs, and inflation showed an economy that was defying predictions of both renewed overheating or a drift into recession. Sec-

ond-quarter growth was a sustainable 2.8%, while inflation as measured by the Fed's preferred indicator, the Personal Consumption Index, continued to decline to an annual rate of just 2.5%.

The reports also showed that investment in equipment increased by an impressive 1.6%, suggesting a solid basis for future growth. And they showed that personal savings rates were down, meaning that people are having to borrow to sustain consumption. That in turn suggests that wages are far from adequate, and are not a source of inflation.

Yet the Fed refused to cut rates. As the Fed's official statement put it, "The Committee does not expect it will be appropriate to reduce the target range until it has gained greater confidence that inflation is moving sustainably toward 2%." Compared to June's policy statement, this one was slightly more mindful of the risks of rising unemployment, signaling a possible rate cut when the committee meets again on Sept. 18.

The report of the 13-member Open Market Committee was unanimous, showing once again that the Fed governors and regional Fed bank presidents suffer from groupthink. Many outside economists consider the 2% inflation goal arbitrary and un-

realistic. If inflation continues to hover at just above that level, will the Fed keep money tight indefinitely?

In his own statement at a press conference following the release of the report, Fed Chair Powell hinted that the central bank may finally relent and cut rates in September. If inflation continues to improve and labor markets remain stable, he said, "a rate cut could be on the table at the September meeting." But he wants to wait two more months to be on the lookout for any possible increase in inflation or changes in the job market.

YOU MIGHT ARGUE THAT IF THE ECONOMY is doing so well, the Fed's current monetary policy is about right. So why mess with success?

The problem with this stance is threefold. First, the Fed itself has become a prime source of inflation. High interest rates increase costs for homebuyers and builders. As people rely on credit card borrowing to sustain living standards in the face of inadequate wages, those costs increase as well. And higher small-business borrowing costs are passed along to consumers in the form of higher prices.

Second, most price increases in the current economy are not macroeconomic, but

the result of market power by monopolistic industries, as the Prospect keeps reporting. Consumers are also paying more for homeowner's insurance, because insurers are paying out increased claims from catastrophes related to global climate change.

Third, some price hikes are due to factors that are even more extraneous to U.S. supply and demand, such as the sudden spike in global shipping costs. Shippers are charging more because they are avoiding the risk of damage from Houthi bombardment in the Red Sea and are taking more circuitous routes around Africa rather than via the Suez Canal.

The Fed's tight money policy has no impact on any of those drivers of price hikes. The Fed doesn't understand the basic economics of price pressures unrelated to excessive demand. And any of these factors could spike between now and the Fed's September meeting, giving Powell an excuse to hold off cutting rates yet again.

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Conason...

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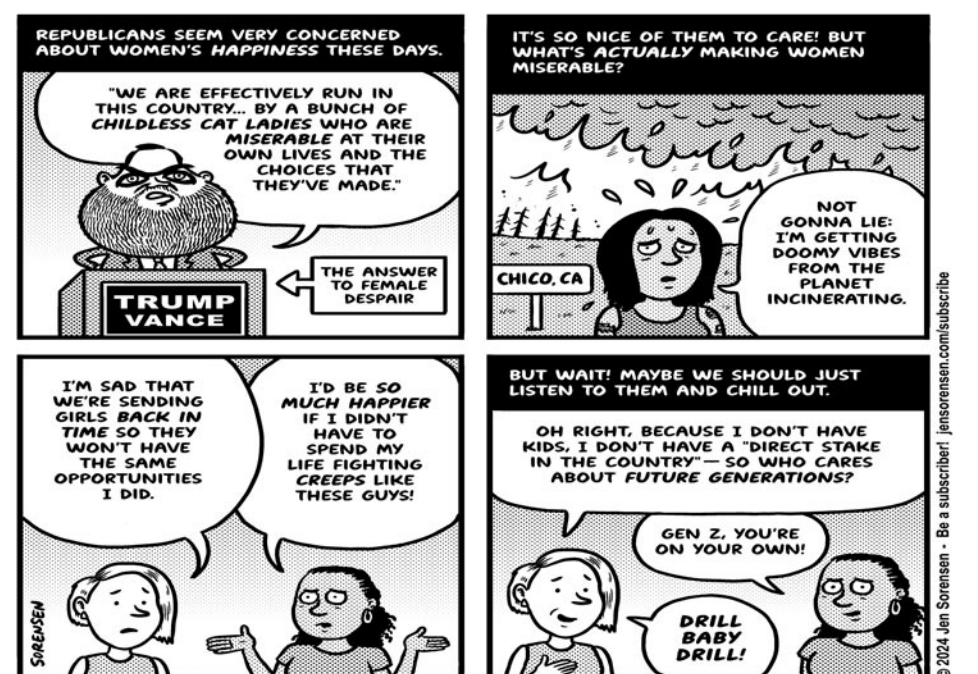
ever insist on actual command of facts and policy.

The same conservatives who had depicted themselves for decades as the last line of resistance to the "dumbing down" of American culture, standing up heroically against affirmative action for women and minorities to preserve standards, rushed to Palin's defense. They brushed aside her lack of experience and intellect, confident that qualifications and merit no longer mattered to the "real Americans" whom Palin claimed to represent. Nor did they worry that she was the ultimate token, representing exactly what Republicans had always claimed to scorn as quota politics and political correctness.

If anything, Vance has even less useful experience in government than Palin did. Whatever motivated the Trump team to

choose him, it surely was not that he is prepared or qualified to sit a heartbeat from the world's ultimate responsibility. That was their decision, which they may already regard as a mistake. But when the Ohio senator and his gang of far-right Republicans spew their snotty insults at Harris, the only proper answer is laughter.

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. His new book is *The Longest Con: How Grifters, Swindlers, and Frauds Hijacked American Conservatism*, with a foreword by George T. Conway III.



Trump's Political Downfall: The 'Fat Elvis' Phase Begins?

He hasn't grown or developed new routines; he's just daily reliving his old hits, playing to a nostalgic and mostly elderly audience who fondly remember his glory days...

By THOM HARTMANN

I hear it frequently on my radio/TV program: Americans are baffled about what's happened to Donald Trump.

He used to seem so formidable, a very real threat to American democracy, the pal of dictators around the world. Now even Vladimir Putin is dissing him, cutting the very prisoner deal with President Biden that Trump said a few weeks ago the Russian dictator would only do with him.

He's gone, in the minds of many Americans, from being a danger to being merely weird. What happened?

The simple reality is that Trump has entered the Fat Elvis phase of his career.

He hasn't grown or developed new routines; he's just reliving his old hits every day, playing to a nostalgic and mostly elderly audience who fondly remember his glory days.

His pathetic attempt to question the racial identity of Vice President Kamala Harris was just a warmed-over version of his Barack Obama Birther slanders; they played well back in the first decade of this century, but now they're just old and flat.

His claim that Hispanic immigrants and asylum seekers are "taking Black jobs" is just a makeover of his 2015 coming-down-the-escalator pitch. It was new and novel then and caught the love and attention of racists all across America; now it's just a tired retreat.

His forcing Republicans in the House to vote down the border bill that Oklahoma Republican Senator James Lankford principally wrote just adds to the perception that he's

a rank hypocrite with little interest in actually solving America's problems.

His newest fundraising grifts — "gold" tennis shoes, bloody-ear bobble head dolls, raising the Mar-a-Lago entrance fee for spies and hangers-on to \$1,000,000 — are every bit as pathetic and sloppy as his old pitches for Trump steaks, Trump water, and his failed Trump "First Class" Airline.

His entire career in the media has been characterized by rich-frat-boy flamboyance and testosterone-driven excess, from publicly cheating on each of his three wives to bragging about leering in the dressing rooms of teen beauty pageants to his faux "successful businessman" routine on NBC. Today, though, nobody is shocked, amazed, or impressed; more Americans pity him than are in awe of his proclaimed masculinity.

The one aspect of his public persona that hasn't much changed is his naked racism, although even that has become boring. He's now desperately trying to slice-and-dice the American electorate so he can pit separate groups of people against each other or suck up to whatever faction he thinks might save his doomed candidacy.

He's trying to appeal to boomers by saying he'll repeal the income tax Ronald Reagan put on Social Security; it's not working because boomers remember that every one of the four budgets his administration produced when he was president called for radical cuts in Social Security.

He thinks he can ingratiate himself with Jews by saying that Kamala Harris "hates Jews" when most Americans know she's married to one. When that didn't work, he tried sucking up to Benjamin Netanyahu and inviting him to Mar-a-Lago; most Americans realize that both men are spinning political plates in the air as fast as they can to avoid going to prison for corruption. Now he just sounds like an aging antisemite afraid of jail.

He believes young people will swoon when he says he wants to eliminate income taxes on tips, but most young workers are still old enough to remember that in 2020, as the Economic Policy Institute noted in their headline, "Trump administration finalizes regulation that will cost tipped workers more than \$700 million annually."

He thinks trash-talking women, calling them "nasty" and other epithets, will bond men to him; instead, they imagine him bursting in on their mothers, sisters, wives, or daughters in a Bergdorf-Goodman dressing room.

In each one of these efforts to either turn Americans against each other or slice off and nail down a segment of

the electorate, Trump is ignoring what most citizens are fundamentally concerned about: the physical, emotional, and fiscal health of our entire country.

Nobody — outside of his Greene/Gaetz/Boebert fan club in the House — believes his promise to pardon the people who tried to beat over 140 police officers to death is righteous; it just makes him look and sound like a sleazy, washed-up, wannabee mob boss who hates cops.

The only "new" policies Fat Elvis Trump has come up with are those brought to him by billionaires dangling campaign contributions:

— He wanted TikTok banned until billionaire Jeff Yass — the largest American investor in the platform — visited him at his shabby golf motel.

— He correctly pointed out that Bitcoin is a risky commodity rather than a currency until Bitcoin aficionados and billionaires Elon Musk, Joe Lonsdale, Doug Leone, Shaun Maguire, Antonio Gracias, and Cameron and Tyler Winklevoss came to his defense.

He doesn't have any new vision for America: he just wants to be the star of his own version of The Apprentice, reliving the highlights from his glory days and, of course, keeping himself out of prison by taking control of the Department of Justice.

He oversaw the unnecessary deaths of a half-million Americans, giving America the second-worst COVID death rate in the world because of his incompetence.

He gave us the worst economy since the Republican Great Depression of the 1920s.

He nearly destroyed an international alliance of democracies that it took good men and women across dozens of nations — and two bloody world wars — a century to put together.

Fat Elvis Trump thinks he can keep spinning the old hits, but polls now show that — outside of his elderly White rally audiences — Americans have figured him out, are tired of his cons, and have moved on.

And it couldn't happen at a better time: A new day is at hand if enough of us will simply show up and vote this November.

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.

Our Falling IQ Shows in the Polls

Excessive sensory stimulation is making us less intelligent

By SABRINA HAAKE

Polls suggest half the country may vote against their own self-interests in November. The self sabotage is head-turning: Christians who defend Donald Trump's debauchery; poor people who donate to a billionaire's Ponzi schemes; pensioners who don't grasp that tax cuts for the 1% threaten their own entitlements.

As the April 30 *Time Magazine* interview made clear, Trump has done nothing for the common man and everything for his wealthy donors, yet somehow, that fact doesn't seem to compute.

To misquote Jesus, the stupid will always be among us. But stupid seems to be spreading in the U.S., and data suggest that excessive sensory stimulation may be the reason.

Do our politics reflect a cognitive decline?

When Trump celebrated his 2016 win, his declaration, "I love the poorly educated" made headlines. Eight years on, it's not that half the country supports violent coup attempts, it's that they sincerely believe the 2020 election was stolen, despite all evidence to the contrary.

The U.S. seems to be slumbering toward "Idiocracy," a funny-not-funny satire about Americans in the year 2500 who have lost the ability to think. In the movie, Americans elect as President a dimwitted pro-wrestler — President Camacho — because he is loud and manipulative and they don't know any better. The Trump sequel writes itself.

Funny as that movie was, America's declining cognition is serious. Americans' logic, language, and reading comprehension levels have fallen measurably. Last year, researchers from Northwestern University and the University of Oregon reported that, while American IQs increased dramatically over the past century, cognitive abilities showed measurable decline between 2006 and 2018. Scores in three of four broad domains of intelligence fell during that period: logic, vocabulary, and visual/mathematical problem-solving.

Excessive use of personal electronics, social media may be to blame

In 1850, unwashed kids aged 6 to 18 were crammed into a smelly one-room school house with no AC and no technology — and often no books — yet still emerged well-versed in Latin, French, humanities and trigonometry.

Today, with whiteboards, laptops, separate rooms for each grade, and teacher/student ratios historically unheard of, student comprehension levels are falling instead of rising. Last year, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, math and reading scores for 13 year-olds hit their lowest scores in decades, which isn't explained by the COVID-19 gap of recent years.

The explanation may be found in a growing reliance on smart phones, social media and electronic devices that offer addictive and excessive visual and audio stimulation, dulling the brain's ability to think critically and organically.

Observational studies in human learning have shown a direct link between a child's exposure to fast-paced television in the first three years of life and his subsequent attentional deficits as he gets older. Excessive sensory stimulation (ESS) during childhood has been shown to increase cognitive and behavioral deficits overall. Even rising levels of ADHD among older children and college students are correlated with subjects' early exposure to excessive electronic media.

Educators are taking cell-phones out of the classroom

Educators are paying attention. This year, dozens of schools across the country have taken steps to remove cellphones from the classroom.

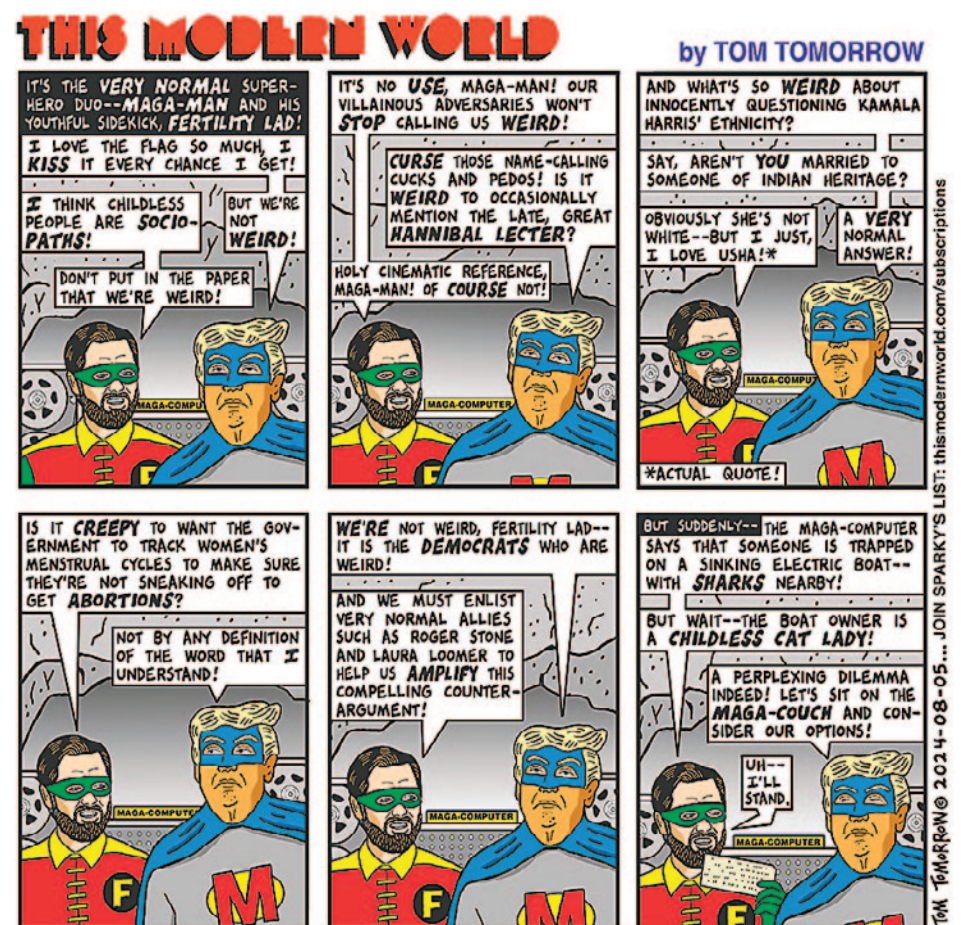
Although three-quarters of U.S. schools already disallow cellphone use in the classroom, it's up to individual teachers to enforce, which results in high variability among schools and classrooms. Unruly and disruptive students who need instruction the most may be getting it the least as exhausted teachers pacify them with their cellphones to keep them quiet and in their seats.

Congress is catching on too. Bipartisan concern is growing over how cellphones

and social media may be harming children. With about a third of U.S. teens reporting they are on social media "almost constantly," the U.S. surgeon general recently issued a warning about social media and mental health.

More studies are needed on how excessive online stimulation affects cognition and mental health, regardless of age, and Congress may (shockingly) do something about it. In November, legislators introduced a bipartisan bill to study how cell phones affect mental health and cognitive development. The Focus on Learning Act, presently in committee, would require the U.S. Department of Education to complete a study on the effects of cellphone use in K-12 classrooms, both on students' mental health and their academic performance.

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Who's a Bigger Threat to Democracy—Immigrants, or Billionaires?

Don't be distracted by the anti-immigrant rhetoric this election. The real impact on democracy comes from moneyed elites.

By SONALI KOLHATKAR

When President Joe Biden said in a phone call to MSNBC's Morning Joe recently, "I'm getting so frustrated with the elites ... the elites of the party. I don't care what the millionaires think," former Labor Secretary Robert Reich wrote that, "It was the first time any modern president has admitted that the elites of the party are the millionaires (and billionaires) who fund it."

While Biden's comments were in reference to the movement to oust him from the 2024 Democratic presidential nomination, it was an important admission about who really wields power in our democracy.

We may think of elections in terms of one person, one vote. But, not only do undemocratic structures such as the electoral college dilute our votes, the money that elites flaunt places a hefty thumb on the scales of who represents us. Yet, we hear more about the threat of, say, immigrants than the threat of billionaires, to our democracy.

Billionaires have tried very hard to buy influence and political power. For example, former New York City Mayor Mike Bloomberg donated \$20 million toward efforts to reelect Biden this year alone. Four years ago, Bloomberg spent a whopping \$1

billion in just four months in an attempt to be the 2020 Democratic presidential nominee. In a testament to the fact that we have a modicum of democratic accountability left within the system as it stands, he failed spectacularly, as others have often done. Voters seem to have a distaste for electing the ultrarich but have yet to disavow the de facto proxies that their money helps elect.

While billionaires remain influential within the Democratic Party, the last election for which spending records exist shows that moneyed elites overwhelmingly prefer the Republican Party. The nation's 465 wealthiest people collectively donated \$881 million to influence the 2022 midterm elections, most of it to the GOP.

Now, the richest person in the world—not just in the United States—Elon Musk, has jumped into the 2024 race. His proxy, Donald Trump, in surviving an assassination attempt, earned Musk's endorsement, as if that was somehow a qualification to run the nation. Musk vowed to pour \$45 million a month into a new Super PAC that's working to elect Trump. [He later backed off from that commitment.] The amount is pocket change for someone currently worth nearly \$250 billion. Musk could spend \$45 million a day every day this year and it would barely make a dent in his bottom line.

According to a *New York Times* analysis, Musk went from supporting Democrats to Republicans because he was "[a]ngry at liberals over immigration, transgender rights, and the Biden administration's perceived treatment of Tesla." At a meeting earlier this year that embodied the specter of a secret cabal of billionaires seeking to buy an election, Musk reportedly conversed with his fellow wealthy elites about Republican control of the U.S. Senate. At that meeting, he reportedly worried that "if President Biden won, millions of undocumented immigrants would be legalized and democracy would be finished," as per the *Times*.

He's not the only one. The Republican Party as a whole has decided that undocu-

mented people voting in U.S. elections is the single biggest threat facing the country—not billionaires like Musk raining down dollars to drown our democracy.

Undocumented immigrants are human beings, not dollar bills. And yet they hold far less sway over elections than Musk's money. There is no mass amnesty for undocumented people in the U.S. currently—this isn't Ronald Reagan's America after all. And even if there was, there is a long, complicated path from legal status to the voting status that citizenship allows.

I should know, I've been there personally, having entered the U.S. as an immigrant on a student visa before obtaining legal residency and then citizenship. My journey was far more straightforward than that of Melania Trump and still, it was 18 years before I could legally vote after first stepping on American soil.

And yet every four years, immigrants become political footballs, flayed at the proverbial whipping posts of democracy for merely existing—usually by both political parties. Right-wing voters waved signs saying "Mass Deportations Now" at the Republican National Convention, while Democrats took a less vulgar approach by appealing anti-immigrant forces with asylum restrictions, hoping it would garner voter support.

Sean Morales-Doyle, writing for the Brennan Center for Justice, asks us to imagine being an undocumented immigrant in the U.S.: "Would you risk everything—your freedom, your life in the United States, your ability to be near your family—just to cast a single ballot?" Not only are there harsh penalties, including prison time, for illegally casting ballots, but even the rabidly far-right Heritage Foundation has found only 85 cases of supposed undocumented voters out of 2 billion votes cast from 2002 to 2023. That works out to a 0.00000425% of the vote.

Let's compare this to the influence of money on elections. The nonpartisan group Open Secrets, which tracks money in poli-

tics, finds that "the candidate who spends the most usually wins." In 2022, about 94% of the candidates for the House of Representatives who spent the most money won their race, while 82% of those running for the Senate who spent the most money won their seats. Much of their donations come from Super PACs, which bundle high-dollar amounts from wealthy Americans.

While billionaires such as Bloomberg have had trouble getting themselves elected, they have had little trouble getting others elected—or unelected as the case may be. Already this year, moneyed interests in the form of the pro-Israel lobby group AIPAC, defeated progressive congressional representative Jamaal Bowman of New York in his primary election, and have their sights set on representative Cori Bush of Missouri next.

Should we be concerned about the imagined influence of undocumented immigrants or the actual influence of billionaire dollars on our elections? In a 2020 poll, Pew Research found that most Americans felt billionaires were neither good nor bad for the nation. Only about a third felt they were bad for the nation—roughly the same percentage that fears there is an effort to replace U.S. voters with immigrants for the purposes of electoral power.

USA Today writer Marla Bautista captured Musk's role succinctly in asking, "Can Elon Musk buy Trump the White House?" It's a valid question, one that we should be centering as election season heats up.

Think of the U.S. democracy as an old, large, sailing ship attempting to cross a vast ocean with all voters on board working to steer it across to shore. Every hole in its sail, every shark circling it, impacts its ability to succeed. In such a scenario, an undocumented person attempting to vote is akin to a speck of dust on the hull. Every million-dollar donation is a wave buffeting the ship. Enter men like Musk, whose money becomes a veritable tsunami aimed directly at democracy to overwhelm and topple it, de-

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ROBERT REICH



The positive energy unleashed by Kamala Harris is in such stark contrast to the negative energy unleashed by Trump for the last nine years.

Why We Need Nauseous Optimism

For the first time in years, I've been walking around with a smile on my face. Maybe you have, too.

The positive energy unleashed by Kamala Harris in late July and early August is in such stark contrast to the negative energy unleashed by Trump for the last nine years that it feels as if America has had a new beginning.

Complete strangers come up to me — also smiling — and say: "At last!" Or "Isn't it wonderful?" Or "I'm so relieved!"

Millions of Americans are mobilizing for Kamala. We're volunteering our time and energy. We're donating to her campaign as we've never donated before.

Hundreds of thousands of young people are creating pro-Kamala content for social media — a new form of political participation, as well as free advertising.

We've all been given new hope that Donald Trump — perhaps the worst human being ever to occupy the Oval Office — will be consigned to the dustbin of history.

(Even Olympic hero Simone Biles is into it — mocking Trump's claim that immigrants take "Black jobs" by calling her gold-winning gymnastic performance a "Black job.")

But wait.

I've been in and around politics long enough to know that our current euphoria

needs to be tempered.

The election is three months away. That may seem soon, but almost anything can happen between now and then. If polls are to be believed, Harris is basically tied with Trump among likely voters.

However much I believe that her positive energy will trounce his negative energy — and gain a major victory 91 days from now — and that Democrats will take control of both houses of Congress — we need to be prepared for Trump and his lackeys to mount a mammoth offensive.

We can't allow our good feelings to drift into complacency.

Trump and his enablers will throw whatever they can at her. Even though nothing has seemed to stick so far, we must be ready for the possibility that something will.

Four reasons to expect trouble ahead:

First, the mainstream media can't abide a love fest for long. They have to sell advertising and eyeballs, so they'll soon turn contrarian — reporting Republican-generated opposition research about Harris. (I'm reminded of the old journalism saw that there are only two media stories — "oh, the wonder of it" and "oh, the shame of it" — and one always follows the other.)

We must be ready to respond to those charges with facts — in letters to editors, interviews with local media, public statements from groups we're associated with, and grassroots organizing.

Second, Trump is getting desperate — and he is capable of almost anything. He knows the upcoming election is likely to mean the difference between going to jail and going scot-free — so he will pull out all the stops, including racism and misogyny.

Expect even more bigotry and lies to flow from him and his enablers. The cesspool will likely turn even more fetid. Sadly, enough Americans are openly or tacitly racist and misogynistic to make this a powerful ploy.

What should we do? Call out racism and misogyny, however and wherever it appears. Shame those who perpetuate bigotry. Mobilize others to call it out, too.

Third, the billionaires are starting to mobilize against her.

To take one example, Elon Musk — the richest man in the world, who has 192 million followers on X (largely because he owns the platform and can maximize his reach on it) — has started a PAC that collects highly detailed personal information. Musk's goal is to target voters in key battleground states with tailored digital ads favoring Trump and harming Harris.

In addition, X's AI chatbot has told millions of users — falsely — that Kamala Harris is not eligible to appear on their state's 2024 presidential ballot.

What can you do? At the least, make it expensive for Musk to use his wealth and ownership of X this way. Boycott Tesla, urge your friends to do the same, and tell advertisers to get off the X platform.

Fourth, most House Republicans are election deniers. Speaker Mike Johnson was one the ringleaders in 2020. If Kamala wins, House Republicans could have enough votes to try to force the presidential election into the House, via the 12th Amendment, where Republicans are likely to have a majority.



Kamala Harris is a Mirror to the Racist Right

By ELWOOD WATSON

One would be hard-pressed to think of a vice president in recent memory placed under as much of a political microscope as Kamala Harris. She can hardly sneeze without someone, somewhere analyzing or dissecting her every move. And let's not get started on how some of her critics attack her supposed "strange" laugh.

Some on the right have insinuated Harris slept her way to the top. Some, including Donald Trump, falsely claim she's not really Black because her father is light-skinned and her mother was from India. The founder of Pastors for Trump, a group of supposedly Christian pastors, called Harris a "Ho."

Shortly after Harris was sworn in as vice president, two White so-called Christian pastors derided her as a "Jezebel," a term with a long, racist history. It symbolizes a return to America's racist and misogynistic history of casting Black women as

uncontrollably sexual, which served to grant slaveholders the license to sexually violate slave women. Though in terms of sheer politics, it's probably not the wisest course of action for the Trump campaign to focus on any rival candidate's relationship history.

Black women seeking the office of the presidency is not new. In 1972, Shirley Chisholm, the first Black woman elected to Congress in 1968, attended a Baptist church in New York City and declared her candidacy. Chisholm was a distinctive entity in American politics of the era. Her ardent support of civil rights and abortion rights demonstrated that was a crucial political bridge between the interests of Black Americans and the emerging, largely White, abortion-rights movement.

Although she was a pioneer, Chisholm's campaign — pitted against a predominately White male field of candidates for the Democratic Party's nomination — was seen as mostly symbolic and not taken seriously.

The Congressional Black Caucus, which was in its genesis stage at the time and of which Chisholm was also a founding member, declined to endorse her. Many of her fellow Black colleagues supported George McGovern, who became the eventual nominee. The reasons for doing so were political as well as pragmatic. As the caucus saw it (sad to say, correctly so at the time),

the nation would not support a Black woman, and the more effective strategy would be to support a viable candidate.

Many Americans have never been comfortable with Black women in leadership positions. It is not accidental that we have only had two Black women elected to the U.S. Senate: Harris and Carol Mosley Braun of Illinois. Sen. Laphonza Butler was appointed by California Gov. Gavin Newsom to fill the seat left vacant by the death of Dianne Feinstein.

As a woman of color and a biracial one at that, Harris has to deal with the twin evils of "Jim Crow and Jane Crow." The term was espoused by pioneering legal scholar Pauli Murray. The intersection of race and gender has undoubtedly contributed to much of the derision toward Harris from certain segments of society.

This reality of Harris as the first Black female nominee of a major party for president is an image that upsets the stomachs and emotions of a large number of right-wing Republicans, and, if we are being honest, a segment of neoliberal and faux Democrats as well. A Black woman being elected president before a White woman would likely be a tough pill for many to swallow and seemingly almost impossible for many Whites across the political landscape to comprehend.

Harris remains immensely popular among Black women, the Democratic Party's most dedicated voting bloc. Her fierce speeches at HBCUs, visits to Planned Parenthood clinics, and passionate speeches on reproductive rights have garnered her admiration among a growing number of people, in particular, younger millennials and Generation Z'ers.

Harriet Tubman, Elizabeth Freeman, Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells, Mary McCloud Bethune, Rosa Parks, Daisy Bates, Septima Clark, Coretta Scott King, Betty Shabazz, Barbara Jordan, Fannie Lou Hamer. One can only imagine what they and so many other faceless, nameless unsung Black women who fought for progress would think of the political events surrounding this current moment.

A Black, biracial woman who, in certain parts of the nation, was not even allowed to vote until 1965, is now poised to make history by possibly becoming the first female president of the United States. Progress, indeed.

Elwood Watson is a professor of history, Black studies, and gender and sexuality studies at East Tennessee State University. His columns are distributed by Cagle Cartoons newspaper syndicate. He is also an author and public speaker. Jesse Jackson is on leave.

The Big Picture

By GLYNN WILSON

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The longer we live and the more changes we see in the world, it's hard to know who to turn to for wisdom on social media these days: Heraclitus, Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr — or Snoop Dogg.

From your reading back in the 20th century, before the explosion of the internet changed all our lives forever, you may recall what Greek Philosopher Heraclitus said some 2500 years ago: "There is nothing permanent except change."

Or you may recall what French writer Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr said in 1849: "Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose" or "the more things change, the more they stay the same."

These days in the 21st century with social media taking over so much of peoples' lives, Greek and French philosophy may seem quaint and outdated. So who are we to turn to for wisdom?

Considering the newfound fame of pimp, blunt head and gangster rapper Snoop Dogg, who was reportedly getting paid \$500,000 a day plus expenses by NBC for comic skits and commentary at the Summer Olympics in Paris, perhaps he is smarter and works harder than anyone knows. Or maybe he just has a great agent.

Whatever. I'm thinking maybe we should listen to him, and that includes the Kamala Harris-Tim Walz campaign for president. If he's not already on the schedule for the Democratic Convention in

Chicago, why not?

"You've got to always go back in time if you want to move forward," Snoop once said, according to Brainy Quotes online.

That's exactly how I feel today writing this column exclusively for *The Progressive Populist* newspaper. It's like taking a trip back in time to write an 800-word column for a print newspaper. I've been breaking news on the web so long now I wasn't sure I could do it when I talked to editor Jim Cullen about making an appearance again in these pages.

Just so you will know, Cullen used to run some of my stories and columns back in the blogging era, back when the Bush Justice Department was helping the Republicans in Alabama take over all three branches of state government — the Supreme Court, the Legislature and the Governor's office — by putting popular Democratic former Gov. Don Siegelman on trial and in federal prison. I spent five years of my life covering that story for my own new web publication then, *The Locust Fork News-Journal*.

I went independent on the web in 2005 when newspapers first started experiencing serious financial difficulties after spending several years in the South covering news for *The New York Times*, *The Dallas Morning News*, *The Christian Science Monitor* and *The Nation* magazine, among other publications in those last heady days for free-lance journalism in America.

But after covering the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico and labor news and politics for several years, with union sponsors, I grew tired of the losing battles in my home

state, as well as the growing global warming heat in the South.

All my life and career I had been interested in spending time learning Washington and covering politics in, D.C. So I moved my aging mom in Birmingham into a retirement community, put the house on the market, and basically moved to the nation's capital in a media camper van practicing mobile journalism. It was also my retirement plan, a way to travel and see more of the country and write as well as photograph some beautiful places, especially national parks.

This summer my new publication the *New American Journal* @NewAmericanJournal.net surpassed a million hits a month again in our 10th year in business. But in June, dreading the Biden-Trump rematch as well as the growing heat and humidity in Washington, I got out and headed for the cooler, higher elevations of the Catoctin Mountains in Maryland and Shenandoah National Park in Virginia.

I also spent some time on an organic vegetable farm, and considered buying property in Maryland myself to retire and start a farm of my own. Journalism and politics seemed nearly dead. Everyone seemed worried that Donald Trump was on the verge of making a comeback to retake the White House in the fall.

This is not something I wanted to see or live through. I felt burned out, ready to embrace part of a Timothy Leary slogan from the 1960s, only I changed it a little: "Turn on, tune out, drop out."

But then, in late July, Heraclitus' thinking came back into play over the weekend

while I was camping in the Owens Creek Campground in Catoctin Mountain (National) Park right down the street from Camp David, where Joe Biden's team had fouled up the debate prep to take on Trump in Atlanta on CNN.

President Biden made the fateful decision to step aside after the halting debate performance, perhaps due to all the pressure to do so from Democrats and even what seemed like the entire staff of *The New York Times*, which seemed to go on a holy crusade to pressure Biden to end his campaign and endorse his Vice President.

So I announced a heroic return from retirement on the farm to cover one more campaign. It may be my last, but hopefully Kamala Harris will turn out to be the game changer we need.

My best advice: Don't ignore the social power of an influencer like Snoop Dogg. Taylor Swift will be there too, in Chicago, to fire up the women.

But don't forget how Hillary Clinton basically lost to Trump in 2016. It was Black males in cities and suburbs like Philadelphia, Detroit, Minneapolis and Atlanta who fell for Trump's big, rich, reality show and pro-wrestling fake news appeal back then and voted for him instead of the Democrat. Some of those voters along with some White males and union types came back to support Joe in 2020. It will take a creative coalition to stop Trump in November, 2024.

Come on Snoop Dogg.

Glynn Wilson is editor and publisher of New American Journal (NewAmericanJournal.net)

Kolhatkar...

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stroying everything and everyone on board.

Sure, we may have sailed successful voyages most of the time (with the years 2000 and 2016 being among the worst exceptions). But with billionaire influence becoming larger every election, there's an ever-increasing chance that democracy may not reach the shore. Will we be distracted by the dust on our hull or the massive wave rising before us?

Sonali Kolhatkar is the founder, host and executive producer of "Rising Up With Sonali," a television and radio show that airs 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 was produced by Economy for All, a project of the Independent Media Institute and originally appeared at Znetwork.org.

Haake...

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Over-stimulation, overall, reduces our ability to think

It seems logical that over-stimulating the human brain with loud colors and noises would, over time, reduce our capacity for nuanced and critical thinking. Just as over-reliance on crutches can cause leg muscles to atrophy, over-exposure to electronics and addictive but thoughtless social media can atrophy the learning centers of the brain.

Smart phones aren't the only culprit. Recent studies have also shown that high levels of noise, including exposure to high-decibel music at home or in the car, and loud, omnipresent television, also leads to cognitive impairment and oxidative stress in the brain.

It's been reported that 100 million people are exposed to dangerous environmental noise due to traffic, personal listening devices and other sources. Noise pollution has emerged as a risk factor for depression,

cognitive impairment and neurodegenerative disorders of the central nervous system leading to emotional stress, anxiety, cognitive and memory defects.

It seems the entire nation could use a long walk in the woods, or an extended visit to one of our 429 national parks — sans devices.

Education levels are affecting U.S. politics

America's growing political divide may have more to do with education and cognition levels than policy differences. By wide margins, the mostly highly educated Congressional districts in the U.S. elect Democrats, while the least educated districts elect Republicans.

According to data compiled by Politico, Democrats control 77% of the most highly educated Congressional districts, while Republicans control 64% of the least educated districts. The rural poor love Trump even though Democrats deliver kitchen table results that benefit them most: jobs, infrastructure, broadband, healthcare, and

industry regulations so trains don't derail and parts don't fly off aircraft at 16,000 feet.

Maximilien Robespierre, one of the most influential figures of the French Revolution, was known for his attacks on the monarchy and his advocacy of democratic reforms.

As he astutely observed, "The secret of freedom lies in educating people, whereas the secret of tyranny is in keeping them ignorant."

Even though Trump's former advisors widely regard him as an undisciplined moron, he has a preternatural skill: the manipulation of ignorance.

Call it a conman's intuition.

Sabrina Haake is a Chicago trial lawyer and left-of-center policy wonk. See sabrinahaake.substack.com. Katrina vanden Heuvel is off this week.

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The Progressive Populist.
Email populist@usa.com

Abortion Bans: Pandora's Box

The *Dobbs* decision, outlawing *Roe v. Wade*, sent abortion to the states. And zealous state legislators, keen to protect zygotes at the expense of the women carrying them, opened Pandora's box of idiocies.

First idioy: abortion-travel, a modern variation on the Fugitive Slave Act. Women now face dilemmas: If I am diagnosed pregnant in one state that bans abortion, can I travel to a state that will allow it (assuming I can find a clinic, take the time, and muster the funds). Initially states tried to ban not just abortions, but travel out of state for an abortion; but both the Constitution and the Supreme Court have upheld interstate travel as a right. So states backed down, though a few states threaten anybody who aids in the travel with civil penalties. Women in Alabama, Missouri, Idaho, should tread cautiously. Forget the legalities though. Women often will need money to make this happen; and while Planned Parenthood used to subsidize medical care, they now are financial travel agents.

Next: obstetrician deserts. Some pregnancies can go awry, for instance, ectopic pregnancies, preeclampsia, potentially fatal fetal anomalies. An abortion can save the life

of the mother. A physician, true to the Hippocratic oath, cannot cavalierly cite state law, and leave the patient to die. Then there is incest and rape. They happen; and whatever legislators proclaim about the impossibility of pregnancy from rape or the redemptive power of giving birth to the child of such a union, many victims desperately seek abortion; and their physicians, pledged to "do no harm," face a dilemma when state strictures tell them to do grievous harm to these victims. The emergence of "obstetrician deserts" is understandable: why practice in a state that forces you to "do harm"?

Third idioy: surgical procedures in lieu of abortion. Instead of a medication-induced abortion (the case with 63% of abortions in the United States today) or a minimally invasive procedure, why not a full Caesarean, or induce labor? The fetus might survive for a few hours, maybe, giving the parents time to grieve ... but also making the woman undergo a major surgical procedure, with its complications, and prolonging the time when she might try to become pregnant. "Do no harm" morphs into "Do a lot of harm," in the name of legislative legerdemain, when a cesarean becomes an end-run around a safer abortion. This idea, promulgated by the Charlotte Lozier Institute, is cruel.)

Fourth idioy: the war on pills. The FDA has approved mifepristone and misoprostol as safe and effective. Since most abortions rely on pills, zealous legislators in 14 states have taken a new tack: ban the pills. Or reclassify the pills as a controlled substance, as Louisiana just did. Or prohibit a physician from treating a woman in an emergency room if she may have taken the pills. The Comstock Act bars distribution through the Postal Service of pornography. Why not add mifepristone and misoprostol to the list? A ban-the-abor-

tion-pill campaign opens the door to ban-the-contraceptive pill, already hinted at in polemical tirades. The Heritage Foundation's Project 2025 proposes forcing the FDA to rescind its approval of "chemical abortion drugs" and to put contraceptive pills under the Comstock umbrella. This attack on medication marks an attack on science. In effect, "government" is silencing the science-based pronouncements of physicians.

Fifth idioy: banning in vitro fertilization. Ironically, the people intent on assisted reproduction desperately want families. A lot of babies (in 2021, 86,146 or 2.3% of all babies) are born through "ART." Nationally, Senate Republicans blocked legislation that would make IVF a right for women. (Senators Lisa Murkowski and Susan Collins did not vote with their colleagues.) That bill did not pass. The IVF decision falls to states. But state legislators, true to their ban-abortion mindset, face a quandary. A lot of babies represent a lot of voters — parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings, friends. So a lot of anti-abortion legislators are standing back, even in Alabama, which in February outlawed IVF but in March passed a law to protect providers.

Final idioy, one that is hard to squash: distrust of women, fearing that they are too stupid? Too narcissistic? Too immoral? Too whatever (fill in the misogynist blank) to decide, in consultation with their physicians, their partners, and their clergy their choices.

At election time this November, voters can put these idiocies back into Pandora's box.

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

Taking Chances with Health Care

By SAM URETSKY

Accidents happen — sometimes for the best. In 1928, Alexander Fleming went on vacation without cleaning his laboratory. When he got back, he discovered penicillin, which is still the basis for many of the antibiotics used today.

In the 1950s, a team studying N,N-diallylmelamine (DAM), found that the patients in their study were growing hair, and that was the discovery of minoxidil, now sold over the counter for male pattern baldness.

The most recent accidental discovery are the glucagon like peptide -1 (GLP-1) agonists used to control blood sugar in patients with type 2 diabetes (maturity onset diabetes). GLP-1 causes the pancreas to produce more insulin after eating and helps keep blood glucose levels within the normal range. These drugs mimic the action of GLP-1 made by the body and can affect glucose control through several mechanisms including increase of glucose-dependent insulin secretion, slowed gastric emptying, and reduction of postprandial glucagon and food intake.

There are a number of drugs in this class. The Washington State Health Authority made a list:

- Dulaglutide (Trulicity)
- Exenatide (Byetta)

- Exenatide Extended Release (Bydureon BCise)
- Liraglutide (Victoza)
- Lixisenatide (Adlyxin)
- Semaglutide subcutaneous. The version of semaglutide for weight loss is sold under the name of Wegovy and is a 2.4 milligram dose administered weekly as subcutaneous self-injection

- (Ozempic, Rybelsus)
- Tirzepatide (Mounjaro)

Some are a daily tablet, some are given by weekly injection, but they work the same way. By virtue of a great advertising budget and a less than great jingle (Oh Oh Oh Ozempic to the tune of Oh Oh Oh It's Magic) the brand name is commonly used to refer to the entire group. All of these drugs work the same way and have the same possible untoward effects;

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Constipation
- Stomach pain
- Loss of appetite
- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Mild tachycardia (increased heart rate)
- Indigestion (upset stomach)

The big one is loss of appetite — weight loss. The goal of weight loss without diet and exercise has been the el dorado of quacks for well over a century — and this one works. The Food and Drug Administration released a notice: "The FDA approved semaglutide, also known by the

brand name Wegovy, in June 2021 as the first new drug for chronic weight management since 2014. It's the same drug as Ozempic, but in a slightly higher dose for a different use. Wegovy is most effective when combined with a healthy diet and exercise." The approval for weight loss is intended to help people whose obesity is great enough to jeopardize heart function, and not for cosmetic purposes, although it will undoubtedly be used for that purpose.

The GLP-1 agonists have one serious problem — the price, and the infamous donut hole. Medicare Part D has a limit to what insurance will pay. Medicare.gov puts it this way: "Most Medicare drug plans have a coverage gap (also called the 'donut hole')." This means there's a temporary limit on what the drug plan will cover for drugs. Not everyone will enter the coverage gap. The coverage gap begins after you and your drug plan have spent a certain amount for covered drugs. Once you and your plan have spent \$5,030 on covered drugs in 2024, you're in the coverage gap. This amount may change each year. Also, people with Medicare who get Extra Help paying Part D costs won't enter the coverage gap."

The numbers are rough, but paying for the drug can get rougher, since the price of the GLP-1 drugs run to about \$1,000 for a month's supply, so that in five months, insurance takes a vacation, and the patient has to pay full price. This lasts until the patient has paid \$8,000 for the drug, and then insurance kicks in again. That's expensive. Senator Bernie Sanders has issued a

press release. "WASHINGTON, March 27 — Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee, on Wednesday called on Novo Nordisk to lower the list price of Ozempic and issued the following statement after the release of a new study, which found that the diabetes and weight-loss drug could be profitably produced for less than \$5 a month."

Sanders said: "Today, a new Yale study found that Ozempic costs less than \$5 a month to manufacture. And yet, Novo Nordisk charges Americans nearly \$1,000 a month for this drug, while the same exact product can be purchased for just \$155 a month in Canada and just \$59 in Germany." Novo Nordisk has claimed that, while the drug is inexpensive to produce, it costs billions of dollars in research and development, which has to be compensated for, and critics just don't understand.

Donald Trump, the Republican candidate for President, has been all over the lot in his plans for Medicare and Medicaid, but he has been open to cutting the entitlement programs: Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security. The Republican Party seems to want to turn these programs into fixed grants to the states, to develop their own programs. Their own programs — like they managed to do with abortion, leave it to the states.

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SATIRE/*Rosie Sorenson*

How Do You Spell C-R-I-N-G-E?

J.D. Vance's road to the White House began in 2011 when, as a Yale Law student, he attended a lecture by billionaire tech entrepreneur Peter Thiel who had invested in PayPal, Facebook and others. J.D. has said that he was transformed by Peter's libertarian belief that government should get out of the way of very smart people who knew how to develop technologies for the good of everyone.

J.D. read a 2009 article Peter published in *Cato Unbound* where he espoused, "Since 1920 the vast increase in welfare beneficiaries and the extension of the franchise to women—two constituencies that are notoriously tough for libertarians—have rendered the notion of capitalist democracy into an oxymoron."

"Couldn't agree more," J.D. muttered as he read.

J.D. and Peter kept in touch after their

first meeting. Peter recognized in J.D. an empty vessel, greedy for acceptance, one into which Thiel could pour all of his extremist views about the incompatibility of freedom and democracy, including the notion that tech entrepreneurs should not be saddled with pesky government regulations which only hold them back from creating prosperity for all.

Over the next several years, Peter's success was made manifest by J.D.'s transformation from a never-Trumper to a fierce, anti-democratic MAGA bot.

Concerned, however, that J.D. had not been co-opted sufficiently by libertarian thinking ("What about poor children?"), Peter met with Elon Musk, an Asperger's compatriot, whom Thiel knew was working on brain manipulation via his Neuralink research, ostensibly to help quadriplegics walk again by installing implants into their brains. They discussed such an implant for J.D., but ruled it out for lack of adequate research on using the technology to change a human's political beliefs.

However, Elon told Peter that he'd developed a formula—"A-Kappa-Kappa-Alpha-X"—just for the purpose of getting people like J.D. back on track. It was still in its research infancy, but he believed it might help J.D.

Elon also informed Peter about a scientist at MIT who was devising a method of engineering a common parasite to deliver a particular drug across the blood-brain barrier, heretofore deemed impossible. Such a system would be ideal for transporting his new formula into J.D.'s brain.

Now, all Peter had to do was convince the scientist. Armed with a check for \$500,000, Peter's request met little resistance. The scientist delivered the vials the following day.

Peter mixed the appropriate dose with J.D.'s favorite Virgin Bloody Mary. In no time, J.D. was on the stump for the Ohio Senate, decrying Joe Biden's record and praising Project 2025's unpopular plans—kill Medicaid, Social Security, Medicare, the Department of Education; fire all "Deep State" employees and replace them with MAGA loyalists; enact a national abortion ban, no exceptions; create tracking software to run down those women who obtained abortions and lock them up. Install Donald Trump as the new Monarch.

The drug was working well until J.D.'s TV rant about the country being run by childless cat ladies. Viewers noticed that he kept pawing the air as he spoke and fidgeted as if he were wagging a tail. His comments enraged millions of women, with or

without cats, including many Republicans. Some in the GOP began questioning his fitness for the VP job.

"What the hell's going on with him?" hollered Peter to Elon in a late-night phone call.

"Well, didn't you know what was in that formula?" Elon fired back.

Peter shook his head and said, "No."

Elon continued, "The parasite the lab is using for transporting drugs across the blood-brain barrier is 'Toxoplasma gondii,' which in humans causes cat scratch fever. You've turned J.D. into a cat!"

"Why didn't you tell me?" cried Peter.

"You never asked, bro."

"What can we do now?"

"Nothing!"

When J.D. learned of the horrendous mistake, he hollered, "You've turned me into a cat? How dare you! You've got to help me—get me fixed! Right away!"

"Sorry, Bro. You're a cat now," said Peter as he walked away.

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WAYNE O'LEARY

Sunset Over Milwaukee

As darkness descended over the mass genuflection masquerading as a political convention that concluded in Milwaukee the evening of July 18, it was apparent we were witnessing something new and unsettling in American public life. The MAGA coronation of Donald Trump and his running mate J.D. Vance, for all its forced merriment, harked back to some of the ugliest episodes of this country's past.

Beyond the clever, if tasteless, representation of cultish worship expressed by the faux surgical dressings sported by the Trumpian conventioners was a clear call to stir politics and religion into an unsavory stew. No doubt pleasing (and confirming) to the Trump evangelical base was the Donald's claim of an endorsement of his candidacy by the Almighty in the wake of his survival of the Pennsylvania rally shooting.

Although blood was "pouring everywhere" in Trump's exaggerated recounting of the assassination attempt, he felt safe and serene because God was on his side (this by someone of no known religious convictions or discernible morality). "I was not supposed to be here tonight," the nominee informed his rapt audience, but God interceded; it was, he said, "a providential moment."

The crowd, Trump continued, was reluctant to leave the scene out of concern for him; in fact, according to reports, it exited in near record time. However, one spectator did not leave; that was firefighter Corey Comperatore, the sole fatality, a first-time Trump rally attendee there with his family; he died shielding them, a genuine hero.

Sadly, Comperatore, by all accounts a decent, upstanding individual, was immediately appropriated by MAGA convention organizers for political purposes. His fireman's uniform became a prop for Trump's acceptance speech, when the nominee melodramatically crossed the stage to kiss the victim's mounted helmet in a transparent attempt to transfer to himself and his campaign some reflected glory and emotional resonance.

The Trump team evidently views Comperatore, not even a committed MAGA partisan, as a useful sacrificial symbol, a modern-day counterpart to the martyred Hitler

supporter Horst Wessel, a prominent leader of the fuhrer's street-fighting "brown shirts" assassinated in 1930. Aspiring authoritarians need martyrs.

The rally shooter, meanwhile, has been conveniently demonized by Trump as someone "trying to stop our movement," when he was, in fact, a confused young man of no particular political beliefs. Had Joe Biden crossed his path that day, he would have shot Biden instead. Gun fetishism — his family owned 12 firearms, including the one his father provided him — was a prime motivation, along with obvious mental instability and free-flowing, directionless anger.

But back to Trump's acceptance speech. It was, first of all, less a speech than a rambling, incoherent, self-indulgent word salad that went on too long (the longest such address by far in political history) and meandered to and from disconnected thoughts and bizarre references, much of it seemingly hatched on the fly. Topics weirdly ranged from Washington crossing the Delaware and men playing women's sports to Russian submarines off Cuba and Hannibal Lecter's cannibalism!

The candidate called for comity and unity, then viciously attacked his opponents. He talked about love, then suggested mass deportations. He pledged peace and reconciliation, then proposed a Fortress America defense system against a world of enemies. He called for an end to political demonization, then engaged in it.

Some observers, watching this exhausting, undisciplined harangue, said it recalled Fidel Castro holding forth in Havana's central square for hours at a stretch. In the end, even Donald seemed bored with his own extended "eloquence." He finished up rather abruptly amidst shouted assurances that "We will WIN, WIN, WIN."

By comparison to the hodgepodge of strange Trumpisms offered by the man at the top of the ticket, the speech of the GOP's number two, J.D. Vance, was merely dull, flat or bland (choose your adjective). It was also poorly delivered and forgettable as a piece of oratory. Surprisingly, there was little raw, viscerally enraging rhetoric for the MAGA multitude. Trump himself looked unimpressed with what he'd wrought by his choice of understudy.

Vance tried mightily for a heartland effect, but his Yale Law School training obviously got in the way. A promise to be buried with umpteen prior generations of Vances in the hills of Kentucky was a heavy-handed appeal to presumed Appalachian, red-state values. One wonders what his second-generation Indian wife, also part of the future interment it appears, thought of that.

But the real *pièce de résistance* the ultimate raw-meat offering, was undoubtedly Vance's depiction of his substitute parent, a profane, salt-of-the-earth grandmother with 19 guns (locked and loaded, we assume), whose resurrection from the author's memoir "Hillbilly Elegy" (2016) surely saved and solidified Vance's reputation among the MAGA faithful and legitimized the Ivy League v.p. nominee in their eyes. ("Grandma," "Grandma," the gun-loving crowd chanted.)

These, then, were the televised highlights of the Milwaukee gathering that clutter the memory bank. To make real sense of their meaning, however, it's necessary to delve into the Republican convention's prior paper trail. Milwaukee was really the prelim to arranging a sequence of events that, if the MAGAs achieve power, will result in implementing something called Project 2025.

At present, Project 2025 consists of a 920-page, 30-chapter document that details plans for a second Trump presidency. It was published in April 2023 by the Heritage Foundation, the preeminent conservative think tank that in recent years has become a branch of the Republican Party; it covers every conceivable area of government policy, with contributions from Heritage staffers, former Trump officials and cabinet members, and dozens of right-wing activists organized by a Washington network called the Conservative Partnership Institute. Heritage President Kevin Roberts characterizes the Project 2025 proposals as a "second American Revolution."

Roberts is not exaggerating. The following is a mere sampling of agenda items: (1) banning Medicare drug-price negotiations and cutting funds for Medicaid; (2) criminalizing pornography and aspects of contraception and abortion; (3) reducing corporate and capital-gains taxes; (4) introducing a flat-tax system and a national sales tax; (5) converting federal civil servants into partisan political appointees; (6) terminating the Department of Education; (7) placing independent federal agencies under direct executive control; (8) eliminating environmental and climate-change regulations; (9) using federal troops as a presidential police force to arrest political demonstrators; (10) defunding the PBS and NPR broadcasting networks.

The sideshow in Milwaukee was just a light-hearted preview.

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Why Are We Subsidizing Mexican Electric Vehicles?

By JOEL D. JOSEPH

Congress, in its infinite wisdom, provides for a \$7,500 tax credit to lease an \$80,000 Audi Q5 that is made in Mexico with 51% Mexican parts, 42% German parts and 1% U.S./Canadian content. This is part of the Inflation Reduction Act that was supposed to encourage electric vehicle production in the United States. We are subsidizing a car that is at most 1% American!

The U.S. federal tax credit for electric vehicles (EVs) applies to vehicles that are assembled in North America, which includes Mexico. The credit can be up to \$7,500 for new, qualified plug-in EVs or fuel cell electric vehicles (FCVs) purchased in 2023 or later. However, the amount a taxpayer can claim depends on several fac-

tors, including the vehicle's manufacturer's suggested retail price (MSRP), the taxpayer's modified adjusted gross income (MAGI), and certain battery components and critical mineral requirements. Not all EVs qualify for the full \$7,500 credit.

The Audi Q5, including its plug-in hybrid version, is produced in San José Chiapa, Mexico. The Audi Group's plant is located on 1,000 acres, more than one square mile, near Puebla, Mexico.

The Honda Prologue electric car's final assembly in Mexico makes it eligible for the full \$7,500 federal EV tax incentive. Sales of the fully electric Prologue began in March, 2024. At the same plant in Ramos Arizpe, Coahuila, Mexico, General Motors manufactures the 2024 Chevrolet Equinox EV and the Blazer EV, which also qualifies for the \$7,500 tax credit.

U.S. taxpayers bailed out General Motors in 2009 with billions of dollars. We should have required GM to use the bailout to manufacture cars in the United States, not Mexico or Canada, but failed to do so.

The Ford Mustang EV is also made in

Mexico and qualifies for the tax credit.

Mexico's EV production reached 106,180 units in 2023: 94,436 Ford Mustang Mach-E EVs were produced as well as 11,744 Chevrolet Blazer EVs. In 2024, Mexico's electric vehicle production will more than double.

Thanks to a loophole in the IRA law, many new battery-powered vehicles—even those that don't qualify for the credit if purchased, can receive the full \$7500 credit if they're leased. You cannot personally claim an EV tax credit on a leased vehicle, because the automaker's lender is the owner. However, many manufacturers are passing these savings on to consumers via lower monthly payments and/or upfront costs.

The Chrysler Pacifica Hybrid PHEV (2022 through 2024 model years, MSRP \$80,000 or below) is made in Canada. The Pacifica also qualifies for EV tax credit.

According to the Council on Foreign Relations, the U.S. auto sector has lost some 350,000 workers since 1994—a third of the industry—while Mexican auto sector employment spiked from 120,000 to

550,000 workers. NAFTA was passed in 1993.

Mexico built one million cars in 1992 before NAFTA was passed and now produces four million cars per year. At the same time U.S. car production has decreased from 13 million to 10 million cars.

NAFTA 2.0 was passed in 2020 under the Trump Administration. It mandated that cars made in Canada and Mexico be treated the same as cars made in the U.S.A. Big mistake. This law is the reason that Congress passed subsidies for cars made in Canada and Mexico.

Because NAFTA 2.0, formally called the U.S. Mexico Canada Agreement, was not passed as a treaty, it can and should be repealed by Congress. The United States should not be subsidizing its own demise by encouraging automakers to produce cars in Mexico rather than the United States.

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Thanks to Trump's Withdrawal From Deal, Iran Nears Production of Nuclear Weapons

By JASON SIBERT

Secretary of State Anthony Blinken recently said Iran may be "one or two weeks" away from being able to produce the materials necessary for nuclear weapons.

Blinken told an audience at the Aspen Security Forum in Colorado that "where we are now is not a good place," because Iran has continued development of its nuclear program but has not produced a weapon yet. This would mark the closest the country has come to having that capability. He also said that the U.S. will continue trying to prevent Iran from ever having nuclear weapons.

"What we need to see," Blinken said in

a report, "is that if Iran is serious about engaging, it is actually pulling back on the work that it's been doing on his program."

He added that the U.S. government was "maximizing pressure on Iran across the board." Blinken also said we have imposed more than 600 sanctions on Iranian persons and entities.

One must put Blinken's remarks in historical context. Iran is a rogue state, an Islamic theocracy that funds terrorist factions that wreak havoc in the Middle East. The terrorist factions target innocent Israeli citizens, although Israel's conduct in the war against Hamas has been controversial.

Our country sealed a deal with Iran in Barack Obama's Administration, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. Many supporters of the treaty admitted Iran's status as an outlaw country, but thought the nature of the regime meant it didn't need a nuclear weapon. Most arms control professionals agree that the deal kept Iran from developing a nuclear weapon. However, President Donald Trump removed our country from

the JCPA. Then, the rogue state started enriching uranium.

For international law to work, there must be continuity in the laws for as long as possible. Otherwise, U.S. power isn't trusted and will be weakened or ignored entirely.

We went from one policy in the Obama Administration to another in the Trump Administration. The switch occurred because of the polarization of our politics, as the Trump Administration didn't want to take a sober look at the JCPOA and admit the Obama Administration might have done something right on the issue.

The political polarization in our country has gone from bad to worse since Obama left and Trump came in. A recent assassination attempt on Trump's life is just one example of political violence in our country. If we're so polarized as a country that each major political party wants to undo what the other one did in foreign affairs and political violence becomes the norm, there's no way we can use our tremendous power as a force for international good and peace.

If we are to move forward in the realm of international law, we will have to strengthen our democratic republic, respect the various political opinions that exist in that republic, and engage in serious discussion on what's good for the republic and what's not, on both foreign and domestic policy.

In addition, we must defeat the right-wing populism represented by Trump. It offers citizens an authoritarian way forward, which does not respect anyone who opposes it and doesn't engage in serious discussion on foreign or domestic issues. The way to fight these trends is for a significant group of the American people to stand up for our democratic institutions and save them from current threats. Once those threats are gone, perhaps we can return to a reasonable discussion of international relations and make progress in that realm.

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Walz Called Gaza Situation ‘Intolerable,’ Sought Ceasefire, Praised Uncommitted; Shapiro Did Not

By JUAN COLE

ANN ARBOR – Presumptive Democratic Party standard-bearer Kamala Harris’ pick of Minnesota Governor Tim Walz as her running mate has widely been implied to have something to do with his stance on the Gaza genocide. That proposition is likely almost entirely untrue. Governors of states don’t usually have much to say about international politics, so Walz’s record is slim. Moreover, where his stances are better than those of some other Democratic Party politicians, it is mainly a matter of rhetorical style rather than policy. In politics, however, that matters.

On March 5, Super Tuesday, Abby Phillip at CNN asked Walz about the Gaza protest vote: “We’re seeing a fairly sizable, about 40,000 votes right now, 20 percent of the vote going to uncommitted. And we’ve seen that already in this primary in Michigan. What message are voters in your state trying to send to President Biden? And what do you want to see President Biden do in response?”

Walz replied, “Yeah, look, they’re engaged. We’re really proud of Minnesota civic responsibility. We have some of the highest voter turnouts. These are voters that are deeply concerned as we all are. The situation in Gaza is intolerable. And I think trying to find a solution, a lasting two-state solution, certainly the President’s move towards humanitarian aid and asking us to get to a ceasefire, that’s what they’re asking to be heard. And that’s what they should be doing. We’ve gone through this before. And we know that now we make sure we’ve got eight months. We start bringing these folks back in. We listen to what they’re saying.”

The important thing here is that Walz did not simply dismiss the Uncommitted movement or condemn it. He heard their concern and said it mirrored his own. “The situation in Gaza is intolerable.” He approved of getting “to a ceasefire” and humanitarian aid.

Asked by Jen Psaki at MSNBC on March 10 if a third-party candidate could spell trouble for Joe Biden’s reelection, Walz replied, “I think they should be worried, even in my state, where we had folks that were expressing a deep desire and a dissatisfaction with the situation in Gaza.”

Note the positive diction for the protest vote. They had “a deep desire.” Note too that he perceived the Uncommitted movement to boycott Biden in the Democratic primaries as a real danger signal for the president’s prospects.

Walz is said to have called for a “working ceasefire” in Gaza to allow humanitarian aid this spring. He appears to have been trying to support President Joe Biden’s (tepid) attempts to do something about the Israeli total war on Pales-

tinian civilians. He was enthusiastic about the now-defunct US Navy floating pier built off the Gaza coast, which broke up in heavy waves and appears to have been wholly impractical.

Walz is being contrasted to Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro, the nation’s most prominent Jewish politician. Most U.S. commentary on Shapiro seems skittish about using the term “Zionism,” but that is ridiculous. Shapiro is a Zionist. In his youth he was such a hard-line Zionist, i.e. Jewish nationalist with a belief that Jews have a right to make their state in Palestine, that he opposed Bill Clinton’s Oslo Peace Accords and dismissed Palestinians as savages too wedded to conflict ever to responsibly direct their own state.

It is Shapiro’s brand of Zionism that made him controversial, not his Judaism. The Democratic left, myself included, supported Bernie Sanders over Joe Biden and we were crushed when the South Carolina primary gave the nomination to Biden. Nobody came out against Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker for veep. It has nothing to do with Judaism.

Shapiro now says he is in favor of a two-state solution and has spoken out against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. (This criticism of Netanyahu came only in the past couple of years, however; Shapiro had waxed eloquent about Netanyahu a decade ago). We all know, in any case, that a “two-state solution” is a chimera and this phrase is a mantra used by American politicians to avoid having to deal with the far right Israeli government’s determined colonization and ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. There is no longer a place to put a Palestinian state, with Gaza in rubble and hundreds of thousands of Israelis squatting on the West Bank. Nor does Shapiro really mean a state with sovereignty. Walz uses the diction, as well.

The hard line of Shapiro’s Zionism comes out when he declines to call for a ceasefire in Gaza, or to condemn the massive and deliberate civilian toll – in the tens of thousands – of the Israeli total war.

It comes out when he complains about students wearing kuffiyehs to show support for Palestinians, which Shapiro inaccurately took for a necessarily anti-Israel article of clothing, telling Jake Tapper, “We have to query whether or not we would tolerate this, if this were people dressed up in KKK outfits or KKK regalia, making comments about people who are African American in our communities, certainly not condoning that, Jake, by any stretch.”

I wrote in April, “Supporters of the Israeli genocide against tens of thousands of innocent Palestinian women, children, and noncombatant men in Gaza have fixed upon an unlikely villain in their denunciation of the slightest protest against this century’s worst act of barbarity. They are denouncing the patterned black-and-white scarf of cotton called a kuffiyeh or keffiyeh, which is worn by many Palestinians but also by Iraqis, Saudis and others in the Arabian Peninsula (where it is called a ghutra). The scarf is useful in dusty climates. It can be drawn up over the face when dust is heavy. It can be worn on the head against the sun or the cool desert night, fixed by an agal, a thick, doubled, black cord. The latter can also be used as a horse or camel whip. This ordinary item of apparel has become associated with

Palestinian culture in North America, though it isn’t only Palestinians who wear it, and in the 19th century it appears to have been mainly worn by Bedouins.”

Shapiro is the one who is ignorant of history or culture here. And what he said is outrageous, as though a White nationalist should say African Americans wearing a dashiki is a sign of hating White people.

There is nothing wrong with supporting the Israeli people living in peace and security. I do myself. Some brands of Zionism, however, are more than that. Many Zionists have a militant commitment to Israel keeping everything it has won by war and remaining on a war footing to ensure its rogue actions are unchallenged. It is a commitment to shutting people up when they point to Israeli atrocities. Some Zionisms are a form of militant nationalism.

Shapiro may not be as militant now as he was in his 20s, but that is where he came from, and he still has some of the militancy on occasion.

Walz does not. He is a typical American Democrat of his generation, very pro-Israel. But he supported the UNSC Iran nuclear deal and objected when Donald Trump torpedoed it. He calls the situation in Gaza “intolerable.” He spoke for a working ceasefire.

We don’t hear those things from Shapiro, because his form of Zionist nationalism gives him a set of blind spots. My guess is that while he regrets the destruction in Gaza, he thinks it is legitimate as a way to destroy Hamas, which he in turn thinks is an existential threat to Israel. This is Biden’s “people die in war.” It is naive about what Netanyahu and his far right buddies are up to in Gaza. It is a blind spot.

Whereas the University of Minnesota came to a peaceful resolution with students who set up protest encampments on campus, Shapiro called for police intervention against the encampment at the University of Pennsylvania, and under Shapiro’s pressure, the university fired its president for declining to crack down on student protesters chanting “from the river to the sea,” which Zionists brand “anti-Semitic.” The phrase, by the way, appears in the charter of the Israeli Likud Party that is led by Netanyahu.

Shapiro sees citizens’ choice to boycott Israel as “anti-semitic” and used the full force of the state’s unconstitutional anti-BDS law against Ben and Jerry’s ice cream for not wanting to sell its goods to squatters in the occupied West Bank. Shapiro also attempted to implement a speech code for Pennsylvania state government workers that outlawed “scandalous” speech and “hate speech,” which seemed aimed at preventing people from protesting the Gaza genocide in that state, and which is clearly unconstitutional. Florida Governor Ron DeSantis even applied such standards to university professors, attempting to outlaw the teaching of slavery as a historic wrong.

When some of your initiatives look more like those of a DeSantis than like those of a Tim Walz, you really shouldn’t be on the Democratic Party ticket.

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State Brutality In the Name of ‘Austerity’

By N. GUNASEKARAN

From the 1990s, most of the Asian countries pursued neoliberal policies with significant downsizing of many social welfare schemes. The governments shifted the essential services like healthcare, education and pension from public sector to private sector and focused on targeted social programs rather than universal benefits, excluding marginalized groups.

The low-income populations and disadvantaged groups have been deprived of health and quality education due to commercialized health care and expanding private education. The working people have been deprived of labor rights and protections. The regressive tax policies, favoring the big corporations, had disproportionately impacted vulnerable households.

Most countries across the world experienced a decade of such adjustments, particularly from 2010. Such structural adjustments, the austerity and fiscal consolidation measures were promoted by international financial institutions including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, G20 countries and others. Many underdeveloped countries were forced to implement the draconian austerity measures. Most Asian governments continued the neoliberal onslaught, and from 2021 onwards reduced their public spending drastically. They adopted budget cuts for social programs.

This kind of fiscal austerity measures,

privatization and labor market flexibilization pushed millions of people into debt and poverty. The workers in the informal sector, without any social security, were more vulnerable to all kinds of abuse. Women and children were also severely affected by these policies.

Central Asian countries and the Middle East had highly contracted expenditure in 2021. In 5 out of 8 countries of the South Asian region, the budget cuts were high. These countries till now did not reverse the course. The privatization of healthcare and education in the Philippines along with reduction in government spending on many social programs, had a negative impact on the lives of working population. South Korea, for over a decade, had been winding up labor protections resulting in increased inequality. Indonesia introduced conditional cash transfers with reduced labor protections. The ongoing cash-transfer program in Thailand was criticized by Thailand’s National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC). The NESDC revealed that half of Thailand’s poor did not receive the cash handout and 90% of those who were receiving it were not under the national poverty line.

In Sri Lanka, the current economic crisis that affected 12.34 million people out of Sri Lanka’s 22.16 million was certainly the outcome of neoliberal policies of the ruling elites. Sri Lanka’s social welfare programs were in complete shatters.

Last year, fulfilling the conditionalities of IMF, the Sri Lankan government decided to restructure its domestic debt by using pension funds. Citing its devastating impact on employees’ life savings, more than 80 Sri Lankan organizations and trade unions

wrote a letter to the IMF. They said that subjecting workers’ pension funds to domestic debt restructuring “will diminish the returns to wage-earners and deplete the fund to half its current value.”

They also blamed IMF for crushing Sri Lanka’s economy through their economic prescriptions. They said:

“Your (IMF) debt restructuring program is crippling working people in Sri Lanka who run our economy and create value in our society. The economic reforms you have imposed on us, without reflecting on the negative consequences of the previous reforms enacted over 16 IMF interventions, are crushing our economy.”

According to the studies of the International Labor Organization (ILO), austerity pursued in the name of macroeconomic stability, had destructive social impacts on low income populations. It caused detrimental impact on low-income women in Asia and it perpetuated their oppressive and subordinate status in society. The so-called successful Asian economies achieved their aggressive economic growth by marginalizing women and pushing them into unsafe and poorly paid informal jobs. About 95% of women in South Asia are employed in informal jobs, without any labor law protection or social benefits. Also, increasing migration was breaking down their family structures. Shrinking of government-funded services had further been impoverishing women, aggravating gender inequality.

One of the austerity measures that affected youth including young women was the meager funding for unemployment protection. In a 2021 report, the ILO stated that unemployment protection remained the least widely implemented branch of so-

cial security. In 2020, its legal coverage was 36.6% in the Asia and the Pacific, compared to 64.2% in the Americas and 82% in Europe. The unemployment coverage is not enough considering the employment situation in Asia. Unemployment in the Asia-Pacific region is at 4.2%, i.e. 87.8 million out of work in 2024.

The neoliberal-driven austerity measures, imposed on the people, further aggravated the problems of poverty, inequality, and social exclusion in many Asian countries. The working people in Asia have all along been raising their united voices against neoliberalism. Only the might of the unity of working people could pressurize the ruling establishments to give priority for the social welfare and protection of the weaker sections, while planning for the domestic economic development.

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Virtual Fences: Are We All 'Phono Sapiens' Now?

By JAMIE STIEHM

Free things are now being colonized across social spaces and public squares. Since 2020, for example, togetherness at work retreated to the private virtual sphere.

There's no better time to beware the social price we pay for privatizing time, water, air, news, and human attention and conversation.

America is enmeshed in a loneliness epidemic, says the surgeon general. Teens, especially girls, suffer anxiety, and one in three have mental health issues and suicidal thoughts.

"Social" media is too much upon us and them.

Walking on the avenue, I'm often accosted by some dude wearing earbuds walking with his head in his phone. He's listening to a podcast or a song more vital than the Zoo neighborhood. The sidewalk over the bridge is there just for him, nobody else.

It's the same on the metro or on the bus, with everyone looking at a phone, like

yours truly. No chance for chance conversations with fellow travelers.

Have you noted nobody asks you for the time of day anymore while we wear Apple watches and use various brands of phones? With our stylish gadgets and devices, we don't look to grand outdoor clocks anymore.

Just the sight of clocks built for everyone at the same time gave a unifying rush. You still see them in train stations but not airports.

Big Ben, the Great Bell, shall always chime and keep time. The British preserve the past a bit better.

Here's another thing, small as it seems. Public water fountains are growing scarcer. Free, clean and cold water should be available everywhere in the United States as a public health measure, especially in a summer, when the climate burns across the country.

In the Midwest fountains are called "bubblers," and they saved many a day for a girl playing tennis under the sun.

Vast swaths of Americans buy fancier brands of water than their faucet brand. Glacier, spring, sparkling and mineral water have a significant social cost, however, in filling land with used plastic bottles.

As a journalist, I long to live in a country where the straight news is news — facts that everybody reads, watches and agrees

on.

Truth cannot be fractured into a thousand little pieces by supposed experts or bloggers. Nine years ago, Donald Trump poisoned the public trust in the press with his hostile chants of "fake news!" Recently, Fox "News" had to settle an election defamation suit for \$787 million.

In an age when anyone — including political candidates — can say or post anything, no matter how low, ugly or wrong, you wish to call up James Madison, author of the Constitution, and ask: Is this what you meant by freedom of speech? Really?

At Trump's behest, internet chatrooms were the way a violent mob organized a conspiracy to attack the Capitol on Jan. 6.

Online was once terra incognita. Now we practically live there. I've made new friendships and renewed old ones, don't get me wrong.

Yet, during the pandemic, white-collar workers became remote. That became a habit, for better or worse. I'd argue worse, as I thrived on the bells and whistles of a city newsroom. Workplaces are missing a buzz now.

Amazon reinforced our collective turn inward. Millions ordered stuff to come to their doors, instead of going out to Main Street to shop. Everyday contact is lost in transition.

My contention: Zoom calls and Ama-

zon clicks serve in some cases but can't replace the art of live conversations and relationships. Facial recognition in real life is great. Try it sometime.

This great change echoes "enclosure" in England, around 1800, when open common land — for freely walking, planting, grazing, gathering wood — was taken over and fenced by private landowners.

Reckoning with the social harm of "social" media is near. Schools are banning cell-phones. Adults may feel that constant texting and screentime is changing our brains and behavior.

As Matthew Gasda writes:

"People ... can't read a novel anymore, sit through a film without looking at their phones, sit through a TV show without pausing it to check their emails, finish an article online — in short, can't really do anything without multitasking."

We can master our virtual universe. Can't we?

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.

Six Weeks in America

By BARRY FRIEDMAN

It was the best of summers, it was the worst of summers.

Depends who you ask.

Looking at just six weeks in America, it's a wonder we're not all on benzodiazepines.

Week One (June 23-29): In the lead-up to the presidential debate between Joe Biden and Donald Trump on June 27, there is the sense among Democrats that things are looking OK for the president. His poll numbers and approval ratings are inching up, and while nobody is chilling the champagne, there is the sense that the president, coupled with ex-President Trump's legal problems — he is about to be sentenced on his felony convictions in New York — is in decent shape heading into the last lap of the 2024 election. But then, on debate night, a tentative Joe Biden shuffles across the stage in Atlanta like Tim Conway's "Old Man" from *The Carol Burnett Show*, and the disaster has begun.

Afterward, during a debate in which millions of Democrats sat in living rooms and bars wondering what the hell it was they just saw, commentators sympathetic to Biden talk about how the real story was Trump lies and how, actually, Biden had a good second half of the debate. But it is clear: Joe Biden isn't Joe Biden anymore — and it has nothing to do with fact-checking. Some immediately intimate the president should drop out of the race.

Week Two (June 30-July 6): The Supreme Court issues Donald Trump a stack of "Get Out of Jail Free" cards in *Trump v. United States*. The sentencing phase of his New York criminal case is postponed until September. As the week progresses, the

intimations from Democrats that Biden should drop out are now whispers. On July 5, Biden does a taped interview with ABC's George Stephanopoulos, which not only doesn't stem the bleeding, it reminds Democrats why there's so much blood. Biden blames his poor debate performance on it being a bad night, on being tired from cycling, sick, distracted by the madman next to him. He challenges Stephanopoulos. He is petty. He sounds like Trump. And while the poll numbers aren't cratering, they are crumbling. Minnesota and New Mexico are now toss-ups. Michigan, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, North Carolina, and Arizona look terrible.

By the end of the week, the whispers are now guest editorials.

Week Three (July 8-13): Donald Trump survives an assassination attempt, emerging, literally, bloody and defiant. He is now not just supported by the GOP, he is worshipped. He has been sent and spared by God to save America. Democratic officials are now begging Biden for the sake of American democracy to step aside, while rank-and-file Democrats on social media skewer one another for defending/abandoning the president.

Week Four (July 14-20): Trump picks J.D. Vance to be his vice president, and Milwaukee, which is hosting the GOP National Convention, runs out of ear gauze. Aileen Cannon, a Florida federal judge, dismisses the classified-documents case against the ex-president. Later in the week, the White House announces President Biden has contracted COVID-19. Democrats are wondering why the gods hate them. Trump's acceptance speech at the convention is long, repetitive, unfocused, interminable, and mendacious. He doesn't get a post-convention bump, but he doesn't need one.

Week Five (July 21-27): Biden an-

nounces he is stepping out of the race and anoints his vice president, Kamala Harris, to be the party's standard-bearer, an announcement that inexplicably unites Democrats who had otherwise hoped for Gavin Newsom, Pete Buttigieg, Michelle Obama, George Clooney, or a contested convention. Suddenly, it is remembered that three years ago, Vance said something about cat ladies. He once called Trump "America's Hitler," and that Trump should fire "every single midlevel bureaucrat, every civil servant in the administrative state." There are stories about a sofa, and how Vance loves his wife, even if she's not White. They're ridiculous, taken out of context, patently false, but the narrative doesn't go away. Vance, who was born with one name and changed it to another before settling on this last iteration, looks ridiculous, and Trump, like Jack Woltz in "The Godfather," cannot be made to look ridiculous. Trump is reportedly having second thoughts about Vance. This is not the rollout the campaign wanted. The totality of GOP media strategy, all designed to destroy Biden, has to be scrapped and reconfigured. Harris rakes in more than \$200 million during her first week as the party's nominee, many from first-time donors. Minnesota is suddenly blue again.

The run of GOP good weeks is over.

Week Six (July 28-August 3): Donald Trump tells a Christian group that, after November, there will be no need to vote again. Republican leaders say he's joking. A deep dive into the Heritage Foundation's Project 2025 reveals its desire to end overtime pay and contraception, and for America to embrace Christianity and a time when Robert Young came home from work on *Father Knows Best* with only a lesson he could give Bud. It's New Coca-Cola. Nobody likes it. Trump, his ear healed, distances

himself from the plan, even though his vice president wrote the foreword for it. Trump then goes before the National Association of Black Journalists and mocks and disparages the identity and upbringing of Kamala Harris, whose father is Jamaican and whose mother was Indian. Days later, Joe Biden negotiates the release of American hostages, including Evan Gershkovich of *The Wall Street Journal*. Trump had previously said that only he could get Gershkovich returned because of his special relationship with Vladimir Putin — but he'd do so, Trump added, only if he's re-elected.

It's only August, so who knows the ebbs and flows that are coming, but Kamala Harris, the new leader of an emboldened, energetic, well-funded Democratic Party, will receive the nomination in Chicago at a convention that suddenly has hope, light.

August for Republicans could be what July was for Democrats.

In early September, Donald Trump will be sentenced for those 34 felonies.

If there's another presidential debate — and Trump has agreed, canceled, proposed another one, and give an ultimatum about yet another — Kamala Harris will walk to the podium and stand feet away from the only old man left in the race.

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Black Jobs?

By SETH SANDRONSKY

"I love my black job," tweeted Simone Biles, an American and Olympics star who is arguably the greatest gymnast in history.

The context of her pointed comment on social media is a response to what former US President Donald Trump said about black employment and immigrants.

"Coming from the border are millions and millions of people who happen to be taking Black jobs," Trump said at the National Association of Black Journalists convention in Chicago July 31. "They're taking the employment from Black people."

"Black jobs" have a history, one that

Biles' tweet casts light on, critically. Call it the national past of an unpaid part of the working class.

The forced migration of Black labor for chattel slavery in the US fueled the Industrial Revolution. That forced migration propelled the rise of racial capitalism as a world system, which continues to this day.

Income and wealth flowed away from — not to — the enslaved human beings from Africa. Their daily labor stateside was central to the birth and growth of the current global system.

The gymnastics achievements of Biles at the Paris 2024 Olympics refutes Trump's definition of "Black jobs." The millions of viewers around the world who have watched her powerful talent see that, and are free to interpret Biles' critique.

This interpretation is global, due to social media that also captured former Presi-

dent Trump questioning the racial identity of Vice President Kamala Harris at the same NABJ convention. Did he go off script or not?

Meanwhile, Biles' life of personal and professional success is due to her perseverance and persistence, and a strong support system. That began with her steadfast grandparents, Ronald and Nellie.

They adopted her and sister Adria after the duo lived in foster care. To say that the 27-year-old Biles has gone from rags to riches is an understatement.

Against that backdrop, migration from the Global South to the US today supplies the American labor market with workers. They range from doctors and nurses to gardeners and house cleaners, and the self-employed.

US foreign military intervention pushing people to migrate from their birthplaces

in the Global South is a bipartisan feature of the American political duopoly. It facilitates the exploitation of migrant labor, key to profitability for private industry buying and selling goods and services.

Driving a wedge between sectors of the employee class benefits the employer class. Such division strengthens the system.

Back in a world of social media, an athlete of Biles' stature is questioning a presidential candidate's claims about employment and migrants, ethnicity and identity. She not he alone shapes that narrative.

Think about it and ask yourself this question. Is it a stretch to call Biles, despite her elite status, a working class hero?

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Labor Day 2024 – Massive Actions for Worker Livelihoods

Labor Day in Reality for Sept. 2, 2024 is a huge, ignored asset, except by the commercial interests offering “sales.” A neglected Labor Day symbolizes the decline of labor unions and the absence of vigorous leadership generating higher levels of energy for Labor supremacy over Capital. Up to now, many labor leaders have had little focused interest in making Labor Day a grand national media day, from appearances on the Sunday news talk shows to producing thousands of events around the country that nourish labor solidarity, regardless of political labels.

Corporatist predations and exploitations make all workers, regardless of their political leanings, bleed the same color. Vibrant Labor Day events would be grounded not in nostalgia or self-anthems, but in the vital need to overcome worsening structural injustices at all levels of the workplace.

Overdue worker necessities include a living wage, affordable universal health care, child tax credits, the Western European safety nets of paid childcare, paid family leave and maternal care. Crackdowns on corporate crimes, fraud and abuse, and ending autocratic workplaces under fine print concessionary contracts which turn workers into modern-day serfs are also needed.

The Trumpsters want to TAKE AWAY many existing worker rights and limit the ability of unions to gain power. The AFL-CIO has highlighted several anti-worker policies of the Project 2025 Agenda developed by the Trumpsters. It includes:

- Banning unions for public service workers;
- Firing civil service workers and replacing them with Trump anti-union loyalists;

• Letting bosses eliminate unions mid-contract;

• Letting companies stop paying overtime and allowing states to opt out of federal overtime and minimum wage laws; and

• Eliminating child labor protections. (See: *AFL-CIO Highlights the Anti-Worker Foundation of Trump’s Second-Term Agenda*, via the online version of this article for more details.)

Communities can organize events on reversing corporate-managed trade agreements. Depending on the location, special events can be tailored, especially in swing states, to give workers a platform to talk about the outsourcing of jobs to low-wage repressive countries and other attacks on labor. Assemblies, rallies, voter registration drives, marches, demonstrations and even agenda-driven parades – a lost tradition in most regions – could build support for a pro-worker agenda. Organizing these events could either induce or demand commitments by invited candidates for office in November. No diverting candidate handshakes, fake smiles and sweet talk on this no-nonsense day.

Firm commitments, wrapped in a “WORKER COMPACT” for America, in the weeks after Labor Day, can be tied to enabling legislation, copies of which can be distributed at the events. Challenging anti-labor laws like Taft-Hartley and weaknesses in NLRB procedures, weak corporate sanctions, coming out for card checks, etc., should be a part of the “WORKER COMPACT.” In truth, Labor Day could also be an occasion for formally summoning senators and representatives and state lawmakers to worker-organized and conducted town meetings. (See: *Sending Citizens Summons to*

earn them. They must identify our problems and develop policies to address them. They must explain why their solutions are better than those proffered by their opponents. They must defend their record. They must explain their mistakes and explain why they will not repeat them.

Harris is not doing any of this. And there’s no sign she plans to.

A social media ad distributed July 27 by the Harris Victory Fund says it all: “I am running to be President of the United States. If that’s all you need to hear, then make a donation to fund my campaign today.” No. It’s not. I need to hear a lot more – and so should you.

Ronald Reagan quoted a Russian proverb: “Trust, but verify.” When a leader asks you to trust her without offering any reason to do so, when she asks for a blank check, when citizens willingly suspend skepticism, when those who wish to wait-and-see are shouted down as party poopers in service to evildoers (in this case, Trump), you are observing a key component of fascism: blind trust in The Leader. Jason Stanley, a Yale philosopher, noted: “Truth is required to act freely. Freedom requires knowledge, and in order to act freely in the world, you need to know what the world is and know what you’re doing. You only know what you’re doing if you have access to the truth.”

What is the truth about Harris? No matter what, her supporters say, she’ll be better than Trump. To which I ask, citing the Boston punk band The Lyres, “How Do You Know?”

This is a tough question to answer. Which is outrageous.

In a democracy, a citizen should not have to resort to Cold War-style Kremlinology to guess how a candidate for president would govern the country. Yet here we are, casting our votes blindly.

Whatever you think of Project 2025, the Heritage Foundation’s ambitious right-wing wish list for a second Trump administration, or whether you believe Trump’s claim that he has nothing to do with it, you have to give Republicans credit for having

Members of Congress at nader.org or my book “Breaking Through Power: It’s Easier Than We Think” for boilerplate formal summons language.)

The publicized focus on concrete improvements in livelihoods and shifts of power advancing the lives of workers where they work and raise their families will excite voters and motivate them to raise their own sense of significance and encourage them to participate in Labor Day actions with fellow workers. The momentum can be carried forward to election day showing the stark contrasts between the pro-worker and anti-worker candidates and political parties.

Labor Day is the opening bell for the final stretch drive before election day. (See my Aug. 17, 2022 column: *To Democrats: Make Labor Day A Workers’ Action Day*.)

In a winner-take-all Electoral College system, a 10% turnout from eligible non-voters and turning out more occasional voters will answer, with jackhammer determination, the age-old voter question of “Which Side Are You On?” Politicians and political party officials who don’t show up due to their indentured corporatism will be exposed in the raw by name. The Labor movement arouses and achieves dominance as stronger and more resolute, sweeping aside the “divide and conquer” manipulations that dominate reporting in the rancid social and mainstream media.

Purposeful Labor Day events will also bring forth support and participation by civic organizations. Nationwide, they have millions of members.

Too much of the AFL-CIO sat out the last election (2022) leaving it up to “the more credible locals” according to Damon Silver. An aroused AFL-CIO can provide the galvanizing strategy and resources to use Labor Day as it should be used, and then some, to build a decisive momentum for November and beyond. Used to defeatism, accustomed to tying themselves unconditionally to the corporate Democratic Party – itself suffering from this trait – this reversal would shock the media and the young generation into attentiveness.

There are many labor leaders who

a plan. Voters can read Project 2025 and watch Trump’s rallies and read the GOP platform and decide, as informed free citizens, whether or not they want to vote for a candidate who, more likely than not, would carry out those policies were he to be reelected. We know who Trump is. We know what he’s for.

The same cannot be said of Harris, a sidelined vice president whose record in the White House is startlingly sparse. New York magazine described the veep last year as “a minor character who has little role in the administration’s domestic and foreign policy.” She only served part of a single term as senator, the highlight of which was her grilling of then-Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh. No bill that she cosponsored ever made it into law.

If anyone owes voters a detailed policy agenda, it’s Harris. Would she be Biden 2.0? Is she a progressive or a corporatist? She’s run as both. Democrats should issue their own version of Project 2025 so we know who and what we’re voting for – or against.

Unless we hold politicians’ feet to the fire, representative democracy is unaccountable and therefore worthless. When we give our votes away without any promises in return, we are reduced to speculation about what they might or may not do. Once elected, they do whatever they want. They’ve promised us nothing. So they owe us nothing. We are worse, and our system is worse, than people in a corrupt autocracy who sell their votes for money or, as in some countries, kitchen tools. As voters, we are worse than whores. We are sluts of democracy – we give it away for free.

Without specific policy promises, our analysis of Harris must, by necessity, ignore the dictum that past performance is no guarantee of future returns. People change. But if Harris has evolved since her days as a prosecutor – the only period of her career that documents her own actions, in a position where she had wide discretion – we have no way to know that. Is she better than Trump? The only hard data we have is her record as a DA and AG.

would spearhead a massive Labor Day event including Sara Nelson of the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA, Mark Diamondstein of the American Postal Workers Union, and other long-time labor union leaders and activists such as Baldemar Velasquez (Farm Labor Organizing Committee), John Samuelson (Transport Workers Union), Carl Rosen (UE General President), Gene Bruskin (National Labor Network for a Ceasefire) and RoseAnn DeMoro (retired executive director of National Nurses United), Larry Cohen (CWA former president) and many others. And the pulsating Culinary Union in Nevada and the UAW have shown some of labor’s true potential to galvanize support for a “WORKERS COMPACT.”

Some elected candidates can bear down publicizing this venture, as well as some suggested sparkplugs such as the great author/speaker Jim Hightower. What is needed, for starters, is a major national call for action and then moving intoperson-to-person outreach. Adequate funding is essential and grassroots outreach will be much more effective than millions of dollars spent on corporate conflicted media consultants craving their 15% commissions from forgettable Democratic Party TV ads.

Imagine a huge rally next to the New York Stock Exchange to demand a stock, bond, derivatives tiny progressive sales tax that can raise over \$300 to \$500 billion a year. New York State has collected and rebated this tax since 1981 – about \$40 million a day to the brokers. Hundreds of billions of foregone dollars could have been devoted to specific necessities of New Yorkers. See the ongoing corporate campaign website: greedvsneed.org

Time is of the essence, but there is still time to make Labor Day a lasting Workers Action Event. A new tradition, if you will.

Ralph Nader’s newest book is “Let’s Start the Revolution: Tools for Displacing the Corporate State and Building a Country that Works for the People”

See: nader.org/books/lets-start-the-revolution/

That record is pretty bleak. Hers is the portrait of ambitious careerist who marketed herself as a tough-on-crime prosecutor with a view toward setting herself up for a situation like the one in which she finds herself now, running for high office at a time when people are freaked out about street crime. (Bonus! Trump is a convicted felon!) Trouble is, like most self-styled crime fighters, she committed a lot of crimes herself. She violated due process, cheated the rules of evidence, fought to preserve flawed convictions, refused to pay wrongfully convicted defendants and worked overtime to keep the innocent behind bars by denying DNA tests.

A different kind of evil than Trump’s – but not a smaller kind. What could be more disgusting than using your position as an officer of the court to oppose the interest of justice?

Fortunately for Harris, she can easily lay these skeletons in her closet to rest. She can apologize, say that she has seen the light, and write up a credible plan for criminal justice reform that shows she has changed her views.

Hopefully we’ll see something before Election Day.

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



TED RALL Make Kamala Earn Our Votes

Democrats were relieved when President Joe Biden finally pulled out of the presidential race. That was understandable. It was easy to see why they quickly coalesced behind Vice President Kamala Harris as Biden’s replacement: Time was short, there’s no standard party process for putting on a snap second round of primaries, and passing over a woman of color who has served dutifully if not impressively would have been a bad look for the party.

Completely inexplicable, on the other hand, is the Democrats’ immediately creating an “I’m with her” cult of personality for Harris – the same slogan that helped sink Hillary Clinton in 2016, because it violated the No. 1 rule of politics: The politician is supposed to be with us. Why are gullible Democrats donating at record levels for a candidate who has yet to make a single campaign promise? They’re lining up to volunteer for an incumbent politician who didn’t accomplish a single thing in her current job – no new law attributable primarily to her, no policy initiative she pushed through, no big idea she championed. And they’re overlooking the prosecutor position where she did get stuff done, defending oppressive state policies and leaving behind a trail of broken lives shattered by injustice she helped perpetuate.

We know why: She’s not former President Donald Trump.

That’s nowhere close to being good enough. Mainly because it’s a faulty assumption. How do we know she’s better than Trump? Until Harris tells us what she’s for, there is no objective way to compare her to her Republican counterpart.

If a politician wants votes, they should

Coal Continues Its Precipitous Decline

By PETER GARTRELL

The coal mining industry reacted with outrage when the Bureau of Land Management recently announced plans to stop issuing new coal leases on the eastern plains of Wyoming and Montana.

From its headquarters in Washington, D.C., the National Mining Association predicted “a severe economic blow to mining states and communities,” while the industry’s political allies likened the move to declaring “war” on coal communities.

The truth is that coal has been steadily falling from its past dominance as energy king for nearly two decades. Domestic coal consumption dropped to 512 million tons in 2022, down 55% since its 2007 peak.

With the downward trajectory expected to continue, the Biden administration’s decision to end coal leasing in the Powder River Basin—the nation’s largest coal-producing region—reflects clear market trends. And far from killing coal, the administration’s plan allows mining to continue as the market transitions.

Billions of tons of previously leased federal coal remain available for mining from 270 tracts across the nation, which combined cover an area larger than Rocky Mountain National Park. One Montana mine has enough coal to keep operating until 2060. Taken together, economic effects re-

lated to ending new coal leasing in the Powder River Basin may not be felt until the 2040s and beyond.

Coal companies are well aware that U.S. energy markets have rapidly changed, a fact they soberly tell investors: “Over the last few years, customers have shifted to long-term supply agreements with shorter durations, driven by the reduced utilization of (coal) plants and plant retirements, fluidity of natural gas pricing and the increased use of renewable energy sources,” Wyoming’s largest coal producer, Peabody Energy, disclosed in its 2023 financial filing.

Even with declining markets, the Biden administration did not come to the decision on its own. Arguing that BLM’s past reviews of coal’s contributions to climate change were inadequate, a coalition of environmental groups sued the government and won. That forced the agency to revisit whether more coal leasing was warranted.

“For decades, mining has affected public health, our local land, air, and water, and the global climate,” said Lynne Huskinson, a retired coal miner. She’s a member of the Powder River Basin Resource Council, a Wyoming landowners’ group that was among the plaintiffs.

Now, she said, “we look forward to BLM working with state and local partners to ensure a just economic transition for the Powder River Basin as we move toward a clean energy future.”

Huskinson lives in Gillette, Wyoming, where a dozen highly mechanized strip mines sprawl across the grasslands of the Powder River Basin. The Wyoming mines alone produce 40% of U.S. coal while employing less than 10% of the nation’s 44,000 coal workers.

The Basin’s mines have leased 8 billion tons of federal coal since the 1990s, a cheap and plentiful supply for the

industry. The leasing process allows companies to nominate desired tracts, and then bid with little or no competition. Winning bidders often pay less than \$1 a ton for coal, plus a nominal annual rent and a royalty after final sale.

There is little question that leasing helped launch and sustain the region’s energy boom. But in his 2022 decision, Judge Brian Morris of the Federal District Court of Montana cast his eye toward the future. Morris wrote that federal law required BLM to consider “long-term needs of future generations” that included “recreation, range, timber, minerals, watershed, wildlife and fish, and natural scenic, scientific, and historical values.”

The judge also gave the federal agency an out: “Coal mining represents a potentially allowable use of public lands, but BLM is not required to lease public lands.”

Morris’ words cleared the way for BLM to stop leasing, a decision that dovetails with a Colorado College poll that found most residents in eight Rocky Mountain states—including Wyoming and Montana—want Congress to prioritize conservation over energy development on public lands.

The legal wrangling will likely continue, with the BLM reviewing protests from the coal industry and its political allies that lay the groundwork for more lawsuits. For now, though, it seems the Biden administration’s decision to keep coal in the ground not only follows the market and the law, but public opinion, too.

Peter Gartrell is a contributor to Writers on the Range, writer-sontherange.org, an independent nonprofit dedicated to spurring lively conversation about the West. He is a consultant in Washington, D.C., and covered coal leasing issues as a journalist and congressional staffer.

The Year the Yankees Bottomed Out

By ROB PATTERSON

Baseball may no longer be our national pastime, but for a sport with its moments of near-Zen calm, it can still be wildly entertaining. Both on the field and off, as shown in the lively new documentary, “Bronx Zoo ’90: Crime, Chaos, and Baseball.”

The three-episode series streaming on Peacock might be sadder if it weren’t so damn entertaining. After all, 1990 was a horrifyingly bad year for the most distinguished franchise in baseball if not all of professional American sports: The New York Yankees, a.k.a. The Bronx Bombers.

I’m a casual Yanks fan in many ways – for instance, I practice Yankees heresy by rather liking their arch-enemies the Boston Red Sox, being disposed towards underdogs – yet my affection for the club is nonetheless lifelong and nearly unbreakable.

My hometown had a Triple A Yankees farm team, The Binghamton Triplets. The

small ballpark with its dark green fences in the middle of a residential neighborhood was a field of dreams in my youth.

Yankee Stadium was the first place I saw a Major League Baseball game. The 1961 race between Mickey Mantle and Roger Maris to break Babe Ruth’s season record of 60 home runs dominated the news for much of that year, when I was 7-years old, as they jockeyed the lead back and forth. As a New Yorker from 1975 to late 1989, heading up to the stadium in the Bronx for a game was a top NYC treat. I loved how ex-Yankees were frequent ad pitchmen on late-night TV. The team was interwoven into the fabric of the Big Apple.

But I missed the drama and zaniness that reigned within and around the 1990 Yankees, having just moved to Texas. Plus the sorrow of the most-successful team in the sport spending much of the season in the basement.

“Bronx Zoo ’90” relates the team’s *annus horribilis* with zing over its three segments. And what an awful year it was. On Christmas, 1989, the death of veteran Yankees player and manager Billy Martin – who had been fired from the latter job five times by team owner George Steinbrenner,

but was rumored to be rehired – died in a auto accident; an omen of what was to come.

It wasn’t just the lousy playing on the field that made 1990 a disaster for the team, such as when pitcher Andy Hawkins threw a no-hitter yet the team lost the game. Its hires and trades were a chaotic mess. Player Mel Hall was dating an underage teen girl, and for some reason brought two cougars into the clubhouse one day; he was later convicted and jailed as a sex offender. Overpaid free agent pitcher Pascual Pérez failed to show for spring training and had to be tracked down at his home in the Dominican Republic. That’s just some of the chaos

And owner George Steinbrenner was banned from baseball after hiring a convicted gambler to dig up dirt on star player Dave Winfield, who Steinbrenner was feuding with. When his ban was announced at the stadium, the crowd cheered.

While watching the doc, I twigged to how much Steinbrenner’s obnoxiousness reminded me of another man New Yorkers loved to hate: Donald Trump. Sure enough, the series documents the future president sucking up to, and taking cues on being ob-

noxious from the Yankees owner.

My only issue with this lively account is how it claims the worst year ever led to building the team into a genuine dynasty. I beg to differ: the Yanks were already a dynasty. But the final part of the series detailing how the club rebounded to greatness makes a sweet ending to a doc that should be of interest to viewers beyond baseball fans.

Populist Picks

TV DOCUMENTARY: “Fastball” – Narrator Kevin Costner is joined by baseball greats and scientists in this fascinating examination of the speediest pitch and question of who threw the fastest one ever.

ALBUM: *Sonic Ranch* by Fastball – The Austin, Texas-based threesome deliver another fine disc of smart, hooky and propulsive rock with a pop accent.

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Tim Walz Unleashes Hell on Earth

“Ope! With Abandon, All Ye Who Enter Here”

By ALEXANDRA PETRI

“He’ll unleash HELL ON EARTH” – campaign email from Donald Trump, Aug. 6, 2024, in reference to Tim Walz.

It was hell. It was a nightmare. And it was all Tim Walz’s doing. A vast landscape, vaguely evocative of Minnesota, with circles within circles of unthinkable torments almost too terrible to set down in words.

Above the entrance was carved “Ope! With Abandon, All Ye Who Enter Here” which seemed to be some sort of Midwestern thing. Donald Trump and JD Vance quailed as Virgil led them inside.

The outside circle, or limbo, was awful enough. There were lots of people practicing religious tolerance. Not just of Christianity, but also of other religions, which seemed like too much tolerance.

In the first circle, some children who could have been happily performing some kind of dangerous, ill-compensated labor were attending school and eating free breakfasts and lunches. All those tiny hands that could have been usefully plunging into

machines, instead performing arithmetic and clutching nourishing sandwiches! What country was this? Donald Trump shielded his eyes as he passed.

In the next circle were people who had paid their debt to society who were having their voting rights restored. Some of them were ice fishing; it was hard to tell if this were a hell thing or simply a Midwestern thing.

And in the next, so-called conversion therapists who were not being allowed to try to force LGBTQ+ people to be straight just sat there twiddling their thumbs. One of them tried to convert a frog, but it hopped disdainfully away.

The next circle was butter sculptures. Tim Walz had made a bus. He was displaying it proudly. “Look,” Tim Walz said, pointing at another sculpture. “The Mall of America!” “You mean the National Mall?” Tim Walz shook his head. “Nope.”

The fifth circle was full of families taking paid leave. They were not just forced to give birth; they were actually getting time to spend with their families after they left the womb. As Trump and Vance looked upon the ghoulish scene, several neighbors from the butter sculpture circle brought over hot dish.

The sixth circle was worse yet! More schoolchildren. They were learning to read ... with PHONICS! Why, who knew what they would read once they could read! Books, perhaps! “Cat has three sounds!” they were saying. “C! C! C!” At the mention of cats, Vance shuddered. Such horrible

sounds! Tim Walz was at a booth there handing out free milk.

In the seventh circle were people with roofs over their heads. Low-income people! It was an appalling use of government funds, almost as bad as providing food to children, and the ghost of a big police tank sadly rolled past, never built thanks to this senseless waste. Donald Trump saluted it. Why weren’t they sleeping outside and being arrested, as the Supreme Court had said they ought to be? Before they could leave the affordable housing circle, another neighbor from the butter circle came by with hot dish. “Socialism,” Vance muttered.

The eighth circle was full of sick people, taking sick leave. Why weren’t they at work, infecting others? Several people from the butter circle brought them hot dish, leaving it outside with a friendly note.

To reach the final circle, you had to walk past a sad cluster of male state legislators who sat, as usual, utterly bewildered by the medical science of pregnancy but trying to pass laws about it. And no one was letting them. It was an awful sight. Also, the temperature was very, very cold; not even the hot dish brought by neighbors from the butter circle was enough to warm Trump and Vance.

The ninth circle was the most frightening of all. There sat a whole coven of women getting to decide, with their doctors’ input, whether to continue or end their pregnancies. Vance shuddered at the sight of all those vessels mistakenly thinking they were people. They were even voting! There

were a number cats in that circle, just as the chanting children had warned. A panicked Donald Trump and JD Vance clambered to the litter box in the center of the circle and descended the staircase hidden behind it, down, down, down until they burst out of the nightmare hellscape.

When they were free, they looked around and beheld once more their policies: forced births, child labor, the Ten Commandments in every classroom. A great sea of red hats. All was as it ought to be.

Tim Walz’s hell was not upon them yet.

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).”



New Museum, Award Honor Woody Guthrie

Singer-songwriter Woody Guthrie, Oklahoma-born composer of “This Land is Your Land,” was doubly-honored at Los Angeles County’s Will Geer Theatrum Botanicum Aug. 3. The folksinger was posthumously given the Will Geer Humanitarian Award during WGTB’s Echoes in the Forest annual gala at Topanga Canyon. Woody’s former cabin there was also opened that day as the Shelter, a museum with artifacts and replicas, including Woody’s lyric sheets and artwork; photos of musicians like Pete Seeger, Odetta, who performed there; a documentary on a big-screen TV; and stills from Will Geer’s movies, etc.

Born 1902 in Indiana, Geer is best known for the 1970s TV series *The Waltons*; portrayed Wyatt Earp in 1950’s “Winchester ’73”; played the Senate minority leader in 1962’s “Advise & Consent”; and co-starred in 1954’s “Salt of the Earth.” Will’s daughter Ellen Geer, Producing Artistic Director of the Theatrum, a 300-seat amphitheater, was interviewed in late July.

Tell us about the Shelter?

ELLEN GEER: The Shelter has become a museum that tells about the background of Will Geer Theatrum Botanicum. We named it “the Shelter” because it was a shelter in the early 1950s during the House Un-American Activities Committee time. My father and mother moved out here because their work was taken away from them in Hollywood. It became a haven for not only blacklisted actors, but for folksingers, people who were put aside in that very strict time.

I was just a child then, but my parents made a living selling fruits and vegetables because my father was a horticulturist. So, not being able to act anymore, he began Geer Gardens ... It was a very poor time, very hard. I don’t know how my family did it actually, the guts they had to create this space for artists to continue to work during that dark period ... Pop stopped being a strong man or father image, he just wandered around and dug in the dirt ...

What’s the Shelter’s connection to Woody Guthrie?

EG: Woody arrived at our door – it was just beginning, his Huntington’s Chorea [neurodegenerative disease]. My father and Woody were really good friends. They met each other at the end of the ’30s. They both had children together. My mother and Woody’s first wife were pregnant at the time, and they both ended up having their babies in the film “Fight

for Life.” They were very close, spent lots of time together.

So, when Woody arrived, of course he became part of our space. He wasn’t playing as much anymore, but he wrote like crazy, so many songs here.

What are some of your personal memories of Woody?

EG: I remember Woody very well. For somebody who was not even a teenager yet, he was somebody I’d sit back and look at. I think he had a thing for my older sister, so I was protecting her. [Laughs.] ... In the 1950s Woody met his wife Anneke [van Kirk] at the Shelter.

When does the museum officially open?

EG: Our grand opening is August 3, when we’re having a big gala ... This year we’re giving the Will Geer Humanitarian Award to Woody at the gala. His grandson Damon is coming down and he’s going to sing one of his songs which he’s written. Previously, Arlo Guthrie and Pete Seeger have been here.

What’s exhibited in the Shelter?

EG: The Topanga Historical Society’s Pablo Capra spent hours in [my home’s] backroom where I have all these archives of my father’s life, his work in theater and labor camps ... Newspapers, pictures, letters from Joan Crawford to Pop, all sorts of wonderful things ... Many artifacts were found by Pablo, who took lots of photos of newspaper clippings [and obtained materials at Woody Guthrie Publications, Inc., the Guthrie family’s archive].

Like when Pop got in trouble ... and got beat up and Kate Hepburn had to bail him out. There are so many adventures of the life of being a liberal and caring about people ... Library of Congress asked for the records, but I wanted this to happen first. To be on the home ground where the actual happenings happened in the ’50s. I thought it would be good – to me it’s hallowed ground, for anybody to have gone through what happened in the early fifties, and for us succeeding in creating a space that continues the passion and education of the arts ...

Other Shelter artifacts include a wonderful bust of Woody. There’s a bust of my great-grandmother, Ella Reeve Bloor [a leftwing agitator]. There’s a letter from Woody to the family in the 1940s [and replica of] the lyrics to “This Land is Your Land” handwritten on paper by Woody.

Is “This Land is Your Land” a socialist song?

EG: It’s a people’s song.

How much is admission to your museum?

EG: Free!

When’s it open?

EG: Around showtimes.

Tell us about WGTB’s summer’s repertory season?

EG: We have Shakespeare’s “Midsummer Night’s Dream” and “The Winter’s Tale.” An adaptation of Moliere’s “Tartuffe” by Freyda Thomas, set in the 1980s about televangelists. In the end the FBI gets Tartuffe, and I always

thought he was Trump. [Laughs.] ... Wendy’s retelling of J.M. Barrie’s “Peter Pan.” Also, Bernardo Cubria’s “The Hispanic/Latino/Latina/Latinx/ Latine Vote.”

Do you know about Woody’s song regarding Donald Trump’s father?

EG: Yes. We actually sang it at one of our Geer Family and Friends biannual story about Woody ... Because Woody lived in New York City he wrote “Old Man Trump.” It just puts down the way Fred Trump treated people as a landlord. Now Donald wants to be a landlord of the country and I don’t think we should allow it.

Your father’s probably best known as Grandpa Zeb, America’s archetypal grandfather, on “The Waltons.” What kind of a dad was he offscreen?

EG: My favorite thing was to go to a nursery with him, because he’d talk to the plants. He was so supportive. He wasn’t like your regular father. He didn’t have rules ... He was a wonderful man, a very good man.

What did your father play in 1954’s pro-union, pro-Latino, feminist film “Salt of the Earth”?

EG: Pop went to New Mexico to play the sheriff. It was one of the most remarkable experiences of his life. They had to work so hard to get this film about working class people being taken advantage of by the mine owners ... I was just 10-years-old then and ... they finished some of it here and I remember hanging clothes on a clothesline as a kid – my first film experience.

Oct. 11, we’re presenting a 70th anniversary commemoration of “Salt of the Earth” at the Theatrum. We’ll show this remarkable film and have a panel you’ll moderate with myself, Becca Wilson, daughter of Salt’s screenwriter Michael Wilson, Bill Jarrico, son of producer Paul Jarrico, and hopefully Eva Bodenstedt, niece of Mexican co-star Rosaura Revueltas. United Farm Workers co-founder Dolores Huerta has also been invited to participate. I’ll also read my father’s 1951 testimony before the House Un-American Activities Committee.

Did Will become an informer and give HUAC names of suspected progressives?

EG: No ... He knew he wasn’t going to speak against his friends; he took the Fifth Amendment. Pete Seeger took the First and Lillian Hellman did it by a letter to HUAC.

For info see: <https://theatrum.com/>.

This is an edited version of a story originally published by Truthdig, you can find the longer version at (<https://www.truthdig.com/articles/woody-guthries-shack-becomes-a-shrine/>).

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.

The Olympics Have Turned Paris Into a Panopticon

The omnipresent high-tech surveillance introduced for the Games normalizes incursions on civil liberties.

By JULES BOYKOFF and DAVE ZIRIN

Noah Farjon, a Paris activist with the counter-Olympics organization Saccage 2024, was about to escort two journalists through the community of Saint Denis on what they call a Toxic Tour. Saccage 2024 has organized these informational tours to show the media the impact of the Paris 2024 Summer Olympics on working-class communities. Before they were able to begin, four police cars blocked them as they emerged from the Saint Denis-Porte de Paris Metro stop, and a platoon of heavily armed officers encircled them. After performing an identity check and search, the police found counter-Olympics leaflets and stickers. The gendarmes then arrested them—including the media members—and took them into custody, where they remained for 10 hours. After his release, Farjon told us that the Paris Olympics have brought on “a lockdown on dissent” and that “Paris is basically under occupation.”

Everything we are seeing bears this out. While people will remember Céline Dion’s rendition of “L’Hymne à l’Amour” at the opening ceremonies, the real soundtrack to the Olympic Games is a police siren.

Security for the Paris Olympics is the shadow spectacle of the sporting spectacle. The Games have given rise to the largest military presence in the city since World War II, with around 10,000 soldiers ensconced in a centralized military camp in

close proximity to all the Paris Olympic venues. Another 45,000 police and gendarmes patrol the city, and that doesn’t even count the 20,000 private security guards.

The Olympic Games not only bring together athletes from around the world; they increasingly unite the world’s security forces. The policing of Olympic Paris includes nearly 2,000 security officials from around 40 countries. Most are from Europe, but there are also forces from Brazil, Canada, Chile, Ireland, Morocco, Qatar, and South Korea. Media accounts of foreign police officers—such as Irish gardai—offering a “friendly face” to help tourists find where they need to go belie the intensity of the security presence in Olympic Paris. Walking around the city often feels like attending an international policing convention.

In addition, an alphabet soup of US intelligence agencies have also helped prepare Paris’s policing agenda, from the CIA, FBI, and NSA, to obscure organizations like the US National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency and the Overseas Security Advisory Council.

The deeply unpopular French President Emmanuel Macron and International Olympic Committee head Thomas Bach say that such measures are necessary to keep athletes and fans safe from terrorism. But that same security architecture can be turned against activists expressing their political beliefs. This is especially the case with the AI software being used throughout Olympic Paris.

In March 2023, the French National Assembly passed the Olympic Games Law, which greenlighted algorithmic video surveillance. This not only etched the technology into French law but made France the first country in the European Union to do so. Using advanced software, algorithmic video surveillance speeds up the processing and analysis of CCTV imagery based on human inputs that narrow the technology’s focus. For example, algorithmic video surveillance can be programmed to target be-

haviors such as people wearing all-black, individuals moving in an erratic way, or even inanimate objects on the ground.

Noémie Levain, an attorney with La Quadrature du Net, a Paris-based digital rights group, told us that the Olympics were a convenient pretext for fast-tracking the technology. She said that algorithmic video surveillance is a tool for the police “to enhance social control on public space.” AI-driven video surveillance “can discriminate,” she said, both “technologically and politically,” allowing security forces to zero in on political activists, migrants, and unhoused people.

She pointed out an important “hypocrisy”: that the experimental technology has been sold to the public for use at the Olympics, but that “it started before [the Olympics] and will end [long] after.” Moreover, French policing officials have already deployed it at concerts, festivals, and other sporting events.

The Olympic Games Law also carves out political space to advance subsequent bills that include facial recognition technologies. In other words, the law, passed amid the Olympic state of exception, may well be the gateway drug to demonstrably racist technology. (Racist policing is an issue France already knows all too well.) Moreover, although the law is slated to sunset in March 2025, it does not take the imagination of Henri Matisse to conjure scenarios through which the French state will endeavor to extend the technology’s use.

Surveillance is not only being used to go after marginalized groups; the entire city is a panopticon. Surveillance technology has been used to monitor French workers hoping to earn a wage as part of the Olympic Games, from bus drivers to entertainers to first-aid providers. According to Levain, nearly a million prospective workers had their digital histories scoured before being employed, with many being deprived of employment if they were found to have attended demonstrations, been arrested at

protests, or done anything that could be perceived as resistance to the French state. This was about politics as much as security.

To be clear, this is not a Paris issue as much as it is an Olympic issue. Security officials in the Olympic city have long used the Games to multiply and militarize their forces. The Games have become a high-tech playground for soft-launching invasive security technologies. This serves to normalize what should be abnormal policing practices, softening up the population for the next round of incursions on civil liberties.

Olympic boosters often defend handling the Games to authoritarian regimes because they say they are bringing democratic values to undemocratic spaces. But far from making autocracies less vicious, the Olympics are making Paris feel more like an autocracy.

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 new documentary “Behind the Shield: The Power and Politics of the NFL.” Jules Boykoff is a professor of political science at Pacific University in Oregon and the author of six books on the Olympic Games, most recently “What Are the Olympics For?”

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AMY GOODMAN



An Israeli human rights group exposed Israel's rapid conversion of 1w prisons into 'torture camps' following Hamas' attack on southern Israel.

'Welcome to Hell': U.S. Silence on Israel's Network of Torture Camps

“When we got off the bus, a soldier said to us: ‘Welcome to hell.’ Those are the words of 45 year-old Fouad Hassan, a father of five from Nablus in the occupied West Bank, who was recently held in Israel’s Megiddo Prison. His words open a devastating report from the Israeli human rights group B’Tselem, exposing Israel’s rapid conversion of Megiddo and 11 other prisons into a network of “torture camps” following Hamas’ Oct. 7, 2023, attack on southern Israel.

Fouad is one of 55 Palestinians interviewed by B’Tselem for the report, 30 from

the West Bank, 21 from the Gaza Strip, and four who are Israeli citizens. Their searing testimonies are supplemented by news accounts and official reports, creating a shocking mosaic of systemic neglect, abuse, torture, and killings inside the Israeli prison system that have intensified since Oct. 7, all at the direction of Israel’s far-right Minister of National Security, Itamar Ben-Gvir.

The accounts B’Tselem has brought to light are shocking. Sari Huriyyah, a 53-year-old real estate lawyer and an Israeli citizen, was arrested over a Facebook post on Nov. 4. He described what happened to Abd a-Rahman Mar’i, a 23-year-old man held in an isolation cell next to him:

“He screamed in pain constantly, begging for a doctor. The guard would come now and then and swear: ‘Eat Sh*t! Shut up!’ In the morning, the guards came to count us. One said, ‘Get up, you animal. Get up, you dog.’ They checked him and the whole place went silent. Finally, the doctor said, ‘There’s nothing to be done.’ One of the guards said to them, ‘My condolences,’ and they all started laughing. They put him in a black body bag, and carried him out like trash.”

Firas Hassan, a 50-year-old Palestinian Authority official, described being beaten by prison guards and hearing that the attack was being live-streamed so Ben-Gvir could watch:

“We were 10 Palestinians in the cell. The forces came in masked and beat us for 50 minutes. They laughed while they hit us, and livestreamed it all. I understand Hebrew and I heard one say, ‘We’re live streaming for Ben Gvir, directly to Ben Gvir.’ Then brought in police dogs, after they tied our hands behind our backs, and blindfolded

us.” Sarit Michaeli is B’Tselem’s international advocacy lead. Speaking on the Democracy Now! news hour, she said the blame for the torture and abuse goes beyond Ben-Gvir:

“I think it’s certainly not the case that Minister Ben-Gvir is the only person responsible, absolutely Prime Minister Netanyahu, who gave him all of this authority, is absolutely responsible and culpable,” Michaeli said, continuing, “These are policies. They’re not the actions of rogue elements. They’re not the actions of individuals who are going against the grain. They’re dictated by the management of the Israeli prison system and by the government.”

Israel’s mainstream TV news outlet, Channel 12, aired a video showing a group of Israeli soldiers apparently gang raping a prisoner, leaving him with serious injuries to his rectum and with broken ribs.

While the U.S. State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller admitted seeing the video and acknowledged, “there ought to be zero tolerance for sexual abuse, rape of any detainee, period,” there are no indications what the Biden administration conveyed to Israel.

But without U.S. pressure, Michaeli explains, the abuses B’Tselem highlights in its report won’t change:

“We do not expect any Israeli investigations to fundamentally alter the situation. We’ve appealed to all nations and also to all relevant international institutions to look into the situation. Specifically, we’ve also appealed to the International Criminal Court, because these offenses that we list in our reports are war crimes. They also reach the magnitude of crimes against humanity. This

is the responsibility of the international community, including the United States government.”

On Aug. 5, the United Nations issued a statement that began, “Reports of alleged torture and sexual violence in Israel’s Sde Teiman prison are grossly illegal and revolting, but they only represent the tip of the iceberg.”

Turkey has asked to join South Africa’s genocide case against Israel in the International Court of Justice, while the prosecutor at the International Criminal Court is seeking indictments against Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant.

Palestinian solidarity activists are focusing on presidential candidate Vice President Kamala Harris, who opted not to preside over Netanyahu’s recent address to a joint session of Congress. Activists disrupted her speech in Detroit on Aug. 7, in the key swing state of Michigan, chanting, “Kamala, Kamala, you can’t hide. We won’t vote for genocide.” Harris replied, “You know what? If you want Donald Trump to win, then say that; otherwise, I’m speaking.”

With Palestinian solidarity actions planned both inside and outside the upcoming Democratic National Convention, all eyes are on Vice President Harris, as demands for a Gaza ceasefire continue.

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.”

The Olympics Teach Us To Practice Good Sportsmanship in Our Everyday Lives

By BONNIE JEAN FELDKAMP

I don’t have a favorite Olympic sport. I’m not an athlete. High school marching band was my team sport. But I do love the Olympic Games, and for me, it’s all about the stories — stories of perseverance, camaraderie and sportsmanship. I love watching athletes show us what they’re made of and who they really are by how they rise to the challenge and how they support one another.

Stories of competitors like Stephen Ne-

doroscik, the “nerdy” mechanical engineer who focused on his strengths to make it against all odds. He dominated the pommel horse despite a rare eye condition that would render most people incapable of athletic participation, much less being an Olympic medalist. He’s been deemed a “unicorn” by medical doctors, but thanks to his perseverance, he achieved his dream and landed on the podium with a bronze medal. Let him be an example for every child who is told they can’t. The whole world will tell you no. Don’t do it for them by not ever trying.

It’s athletes like Simone Biles who came back after withdrawing from several 2020 Olympic events in Tokyo. She showed us all that it is OK to listen to your body and recognize when you need to step back. The lesson her story offers is to not let others tell you to keep up the hustle when you know you need to pause. Taking a break is not a

failure. It’s preservation. Each of us should have such confidence and also learn such grace. Biles came back stronger than ever for herself, for her teammates and for her sport.

Beyond the athletes, it’s also watching Snoop Dogg living his best life with such joy and authenticity. From carrying the torch and hanging with Martha Stewart to swimming with Michael Phelps and wearing the best outfits through it all, hip-hop icon Snoop Dogg teaches us to savor the joy in life and lean into your identity. Show the world who you truly are.

Each of these stories shows us exactly what the world needs right now: a coming together, not political rhetoric and fighting. The Olympics show us triumph in every sport, sure. But they also show us respect for fellow athletes from all over the world while each are examples of people striving to be

and become their best selves.

While we root for our favorite teams and athletes, we must also learn from this international display of sportsmanship. How do we apply it to our daily lives? How do we take a minute to recognize that this is exactly what each of us should do in our daily lives? Like Simon Sinek says, life is an infinite game, so show up every day to do your best while also believing that everyone else is also doing their very best. Let’s learn from these elite athletes in the Olympic Games.

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 ...

Continued from page 5

• Michigan +4 Harris v. Trump, +5 Harris when Kennedy, Stein and West are included.

• Pennsylvania +4 Harris v. Trump, +2 Harris with Kennedy, Stein and West included.

• Wisconsin +4 Harris v. Trump, +6 Harris with Kennedy, Stein and West included.

McCarter concluded: “The surge Harris experienced after President Joe Biden stepped aside and endorsed her as the Democratic candidate wasn’t a blip or a bounce, either. It’s sustained, and it has changed this race.

“And Trump can’t take it.”

DON’T IGNORE INVESTIGATION INTO WHETHER TRUMP TOOK \$10 MILLION FROM EGYPT.

The *Washington Post* produced a deeply reported story (8/2) concerning a transfer of \$10 million in small bills from the National Bank of Egypt that, through a bizarre chain of custody, wound up in service to the campaign of then-president-elect Donald J. Trump in January 2017. Charles Pierce noted at *Esquire.com* (8/6), “The whole thing sounds like a Donald Westlake novel—a ‘request’ comes from someone with ties to Egyptian intelligence asking the Egyptian bank to fork over most of the American currency it has on hand. This amounts to filling two large bags with 200 pounds’ worth of American greenbacks. Then four other guys show up and carry away the bags. With us so far? Good, because it gets really weird now.

“The feds got wind of this remarkable episode in banking back in 2019. As it hap-

pens, they were already investigating a case from 2016 wherein Egyptian president Abdel Fattah el-Sisi was alleged to be trying to find a way to slip a cool \$10 mil to then-candidate Trump. The feds presumed this would not be so that Sisi could outfit his entire army in red ballcaps.” From the *Post*:

Since receiving the intelligence about Sisi, the Justice Department had been examining whether money moved from Cairo to Trump, potentially violating federal law that bans U.S. candidates from taking foreign funds. Investigators had also sought to learn if money from Sisi might have factored into Trump’s decision in the final days of his run for the White House to inject his campaign with \$10 million of his own money.

“Guess what happened next? The American people installed El Caudillo del Mar-a-Lago in the White House, and he installed William Barr in the Justice Department as attorney general, and suddenly political appointees began stonewalling the investigators until Barr determined that, hey, there’s no evidence here. This set off the kind of run-of-the-mill chaos characteristic of the previous administration.”

Barr directed Jessie Liu, the Trump-appointed U.S. attorney in D.C., to personally examine the classified intelligence to evaluate if further investigation was warranted. Barr later instructed FBI Director Christopher A. Wray to impose “adult supervision” on FBI agents Barr described as “hell-bent” on pursuing Trump’s records, according to people familiar with the exchange. It is unclear what, if any, actions Wray, who was also appointed by Trump, took in response.

“Almost nobody the *Post* talked to about this thinks that anything but crude political meddling turned off this investigation. (Except, of course, for the officials of the former president*’s current campaign, who activated their political Tourette’s in reply. Deep state! Fake news! Trump haters! I can have cookie now, Yanky?) But the *Post* story appears to delineate quite clearly that el-Sisi, who’s been known to bribe foreign officials in the past, was trying to buy himself a president.

“This can’t be something that we just drop” Pierce wrote. “This can’t be something that cedes pride of place in our campaign coverage to J. Divan Vance’s gun-totin’ Mamaw and Doug Emhoff’s first marriage. If the *Post* investigation is correct, it sure looks like very first offense mentioned in the Constitution as grounds for impeachment. In his notes on the constitutional convention, writing as always in the third person, Mr. Madison offered an encompassing view of government corruption that did not stop at bribery, because government corruption never stops at bribery.”

NEW POLL SHOWS KAMALA HARRIS GAINING TRUST ON ECONOMY.

More voters trust Vice President Kamala Harris than Donald Trump on the economy, according to a new poll. It’s the first time a Democrat has led Trump on the issue this cycle.

The new poll, conducted Aug. 1-5 on behalf of the *Financial Times*/University of Michigan Ross School of Business, shows that 42% of registered voters trust Harris most on the economy, while 41% trust Trump most. It’s the first time this poll has shown “the Dem-

ocratic presidential candidate leading Trump on the economy since it began tracking voter sentiment on the issue nearly a year ago, the *Financial Times* reports.

While Harris’s lead is statistically insignificant, what is not insignificant is the change since she replaced President Joe Biden as the Democratic candidate, gaining 7 percentage points on his result in the July poll.

The economy under Biden has been doing quite well, with the strongest recovery any nation has made post-pandemic, according to the US Treasury Department.

“[T]he United States has performed better than other G7 economies (and the Euro area) with real GDP just 1.4 percent below trend,” Treasury reported last June. “The fast recovery in the United States reflects a more complete recovery in domestic consumption. In fact, US household consumption expenditures returned to their pre-pandemic trend by the second quarter of 2021.”

The Biden administration in fact oversaw substantial gains in the GDP, employment, and wage growth. In fact, earlier this year, wages finally started growing faster than inflation. Biden’s economic recovery is absolutely real, but voters have stubbornly refused to accept that as fact.

Until now, it seems.

REPUBLICANS SMEAR GOV. TIM WALZ WITH LIES. Sen. J.D. Vance (R-Ohio) faulted Gov. Tim Walz for choosing to retire from the Minnesota National Guard after 24 years of service, rather than risk being sent to Iraq in 2005.

Continued on next page

Trump's 'Disciplined' Campaign is unraveling

The out of control Trump — suppressed in recent months with varying degrees of success — is back.

By DANA MILBANK

For the last year, we've been hearing about the "disciplined," "competent" and "professional" campaign Donald Trump is running. After his chaotic 2016 and 2020 campaigns, he brought in long-time Republican operatives Susie Wiles and Chris LaCivita to lead a "low-drama" operation.

Well, the cat lady is out of the bag. The trauma caused by the broadly panned choice of Sen. JD Vance as a running mate, combined with President Joe Biden's withdrawal from the race and the massive outpouring of support for Vice President Kamala Harris, have had a terrible effect on Trump: They have caused him to revert to being himself.

Discipline has broken down, and the out-of-control Trump is back on full display.

"Christians, get out and vote just this time," he told an evangelical audience in July. "In four years, you don't have to vote again. We'll have it fixed so good you're not going to have to vote."

His Fox News ally Laura Ingraham tried to tone down this apparent promise by Trump to make this election America's last. "You will leave office after four years?" she asked him.

"Of course," Trump replied. "By the way, and I did last time."

How reassuring.

Vance, for his part, defended his attack on Harris and other people who do not have children as "childless cat ladies," even as other Vance comments came to light, calling for a "war" against those who say it's okay not to have children, attacking the "childless cabal" and proposing that people

with children should have more votes in elections than the childless, who are "sad, lonely, pathetic."

Campaigning in Reno, Vance expanded his oeuvre of ugliness, invoking the racist "great replacement" conspiracy theory. Harris, he said, "won't stop until every single illegal immigrant that she let in becomes a voter, handing over control of your country to people who shouldn't even be here."

And then came Trump's tour de force at a gathering of the National Association of Black Journalists, where he repeatedly attacked his questioners and challenged the ethnicity of Harris, the daughter of an Indian mother and a Jamaican father, who went to Howard University and joined the Black sorority Alpha Kappa Alpha. "She was always of Indian heritage and she was only promoting Indian heritage," Trump said on July 31. "I didn't know she was Black until a number of years ago when she happened to turn Black. And now she became a Black person."

As if that weren't evidence enough that the Trump campaign has gone off the rails, Trump ally and former adviser Sebastian Gorka could be seen on television calling Harris "a disaster whose only qualification is having a vagina and the right skin color. She's a DEI hire, right? She's a woman, she's colored. Therefore she's got to be good."

Trump, that paragon of self-control, was on Truth Social the following week posting or reposting messages declaring Nancy Pelosi "BAT S— CRAZY" and an "evil witch"; calling the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol an "inside job" and Election Day 2020 "the real insurrection"; proclaiming himself to be what "God has ordained"; railing against Fox News (running ads from "perverts"); repeating a common QAnon slogan; and lamenting that low fuel prices could help "CRAZY KAMALA HARRIS WIN."

Above all, he was attending to his top priority: enriching himself. He urged his social media followers to "Get your Bitcoin Sneakers now" and directed them to a website where they could pay up to \$499 for a pair of high-tops that say "Trump Crypto President." The sneakers, along with "Victory Cologne," coolers and other sneakers commemorating the failed assassination at-

tempt on Trump, are being sold by CIC Ventures LLC — a company owned by Trump. "FIGHT FIGHT FIGHT" announce the \$299, shooting-themed sneakers, showing an image of a bloodied (but lean and muscular) Trump raising his fist.

Trump is now using his assassination attempt to make a buck — not for his campaign, not for the family of the man killed in the shooting, but for himself. Meet the new Trump, same as the old Trump.

It's as though the near-death experience brought out all of Trump's worst attributes. "They all say, 'I think he's changed since two weeks ago. Something affected him,'" Trump told a rally crowd in Minnesota. "No, I haven't changed. Maybe I've gotten worse, actually."

At his speech to evangelical Christians, he said of Harris, "She doesn't like Jewish people." (She is married to one.) He said he "took a bullet for democracy. ... I might have taken it because of their rhetoric." (The shooter was a registered Republican and a motive hasn't been identified.)

THERE WERE PROBLEMS with the sound system at the NABJ conference — and, in retrospect, it would have been better for Trump if the microphones didn't work at all.

ABC News's Rachel Scott opened with a reasonable question: Asking why Black voters should trust him after his long history of racist remarks and his dining with a white supremacist at Mar-a-Lago.

Trump exploded. "I don't think I've ever been asked a question so — in — in such a horrible manner," he said, then railing: "fake news ... very rude introduction ... invited me under false pretense ... you were half an hour late ... couldn't get the equipment working."

He asserted that he was "the best president for the Black population since Abraham Lincoln," before railing some more: "35 minutes late ... hostile manner ... a disgrace." The questioning moved on to other topics, but Trump was stuck. "A very hostile, nasty tone," he said, before claiming that migrants are "taking Black jobs."

"What, exactly, is a 'Black job,' sir?" Scott asked.

"A Black job is anybody that has a job,"

Trump Forces Republicans Out of the Closet on Race

By GENE NICHOL

The North Carolina Republican General Assembly has, in the past 14 years, amassed one of the nation's most imposing records of racial discrimination in electoral regulation.

According to the federal courts, lawmakers have repeatedly deprived Black North Carolinians of "a constitutionally adequate voice in the state legislature." No other set of legislators has "done so much, so fast, to restrict access to the franchise." Lawmakers have "interfered with the very mechanism by which the people confer their sovereignty"; and called into "question their capacity and willingness" to comply with the Constitution. Some record that.

But here in the Tar Heels State, Republicans like to carry out their racial work on

the down low. Whenever they target Black voters, Republicans explain they were just pressing common sense measures, or seeking ballot accuracy, or electoral security — race had nothing to do with it. This isn't 1860 or 1898 or 1954. We're all decent folks here. Good gentlemen. Then the federal courts explain that the General Assembly's position was mere pretext, or, more simply, a lie.

It's now clear, though, that the ruse, the North Carolina feint, won't satisfy Donald Trump. If Trump is going to have to undergo the indignity of running against a Black woman, it's time for clarity — regardless of what century it may be. To traditional Tar Heel Republicans, it must seem unfair.

Trump again ratified his commitment to overt bigotry at the National Association of Black Journalists conference. He began by intentionally mispronouncing Vice-President Harris' name — apparently because lots of other folks do it too. Such class.

Next, Trump was asked by Rachel Scott of ABC News whether it was acceptable that some of his supporters derisively referred to Harris — the former San Francisco district at-

torney, California state attorney general, U.S. Senator, and sitting Vice-President — as a "DEI hire." Trump replied: "Could be." (Making me wonder how he would characterize J.D. Vance, or himself.)

Trump then made it worse: "I didn't know she was Black until a number of years ago when she happened to turn Black, and now she wants to be known as Black ... is she Indian or Black?" So much for Howard University and Alpha Kappa Alpha. Echoing his earlier attacks on President Obama's birth status, Trump suggested Harris should be investigated. He thinks he retains the power to determine her worth and meaning. Then, of course, he derided the noted Black journalist's questions as "rude" and "nasty". Trump as final arbiter. Imagine.

Trump then resurrected his claim that illegal immigrants were stealing "Black jobs." Offended when asked what "Black jobs" might be, Trump's muttered response was "anybody who has a job." The great Olympian, Simone Biles, tweeted: "I love my Black job." She's probably DEI too.

N.C. Sen. Thom Tillis (R) tried to re-implement the dodge. He was unwilling, of

Trump shot back.

When Fox News's Harris Faulkner, a sympathetic questioner on the panel, asked about credit-card debt in the Black community, Trump again referred to Scott: "This woman was unable to get the right equipment," making it "very hard for me to hear you."

And when Semafor's Kadia Goba asked a question about his age, Trump went right back to attacking Scott. "Look, if I came onto a stage like this and I got treated so rudely as this woman treated me ..." Trump began.

"Oh my goodness!" interjected a stunned Faulkner.

Trump's staff then yanked him off the stage, 34 minutes into the scheduled hour-long session.

His campaign issued a statement denouncing "liberal mainstream media malpractice." And Trump, on Truth Social, resumed the assault, saying Harris is a "stone cold phony" in her racial identity. "The questions were Rude and Nasty, often in the form of a statement, but we CRUSHED IT!" Trump announced.

Trump moved on to a friendlier reception at a rally in Pennsylvania — but his words were no less zany. He announced that Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.), who is Jewish, "has become a Palestinian" and "a proud member of Hamas."

And Trump confessed to being disoriented by his new opponent. "Two weeks ago, I was talking about Biden," he told the crowd. "I didn't even know her name. Nobody did. Kamala. Hello! Beautiful. I didn't even know her name."

Now, he has a chance to meet her. "Well, Donald," Harris said at one of her own boisterous rallies, "I do hope you'll reconsider, to meet me on the debate stage. Because, as the saying goes, if you got something to say, say it to my face."

For the Trump aides trying to impose discipline on their unraveling candidate, the very notion must be terrifying.

Dana Milbank is a political columnist for the Washington Post, where this appeared. Follow him on Twitter @Milbank. Email dana.milbank@washpost.com

Dispatches ...

Continued from previous page

"When Tim Walz was asked by his country to go to Iraq, do you know what he did? He dropped out of the Army and allowed his unit to go without him. ... I think it's shameful." At a different event, Vance used the phrase "stolen valor" to describe his accusations against Walz.

Walz retired from the Minnesota National Guard in May 2005. He had submitted retirement paperwork five to seven months beforehand, Fox News reported, citing the Minnesota National Guard.

In March 2005, Walz's battalion had been notified about a possible deployment to Iraq within two years, Walz's congressional campaign said in a news release that month,

citing the National Guard Public Affairs Office. The Minnesota National Guard said the battalion then received an official order about mobilizing for deployment to Iraq in July 2005, after Walz retired.

PolitiFact ruled (8/7) that Vance's statement misleads by distorting the timeline. Walz had not been "asked by his country to go to Iraq," as Vance said. He had been given a two-year window for a potential, not definite, deployment. And the official deployment notice came after Walz's retirement.

Walz has said he retired from the National Guard to run for Congress. He filed his candidacy paperwork in February 2005, before the March 2005 notification about the potential deployment.

This is not a new line of attack. When Walz ran for a second term as Minnesota gov-

ernor in 2022, his Republican opponent, who did not serve in the U.S. military, criticized Walz for leaving the National Guard before his unit deployed to Iraq.

Walz enlisted in the Nebraska National Guard on April 8, 1981, two days after his 17th birthday. In 1996, Walz transferred to the Minnesota National Guard, where he served in the 1st Battalion, 125th Field Artillery until he retired May 16, 2005, Army Lt. Col. Kristen Augé, Minnesota National Guard's state public affairs officer, told PolitiFact.

During his service, Walz responded to floods and tornadoes, specialized in heavy artillery and was recognized for his proficiency in sharpshooting and hand grenades, Minnesota Public Radio reported.

On Aug. 3, 2003, Walz and his battalion were deployed to Italy to support U.S. opera-

tions in Afghanistan under Operation Enduring Freedom. Walz returned to Minnesota in April 2004, Augé said.

In May 2005, Walz, then 41, officially retired from the Minnesota National Guard to campaign for Minnesota's 1st Congressional District. He filed his statement of candidacy paperwork with the Federal Election Commission on Feb. 10, 2005. Walz was elected to Congress in November 2006.

PolitiFact also declared that Donald Trump falsely claimed he called the Minnesota National Guard to protect Minneapolis from violent protests because Walz refused to do so. Walz called up the Guard Feb. 28, 2020, the day after the Minneapolis mayor requested it, but before Trump called to offer federal assistance.

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