



A State of Shock in North Carolina

Posts to a pornographic website may have grounded North Carolina Republican Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson's campaign for governor. But the flak also hit his Orange Republican friend who's running for president.

By HAL CROWTHER

As a voting, tax-paying citizen of the troubled state of North Carolina, I have nothing against Mark Robinson or his Big Orange Brother Donald Trump. I hope that when their public careers have ended — and I pray that's very soon — they'll get the kind of professional help they require, including therapy, isolation and possibly anti-psychotic medication. Though anti-psychotic medications often cause dramatic weight gain, and God knows neither of them could survive that. Sitting at the top of our November ballot, aspiring to become our governor and our president, are two of the strangest, largest and most repugnant individuals who ever rose to power or prominence in the United States of America.

Trump's weekly attempt to dominate the news cycle fell short in late September, with nothing near the front page except the 26 women who accuse him of rape or sexual assault, most of whom he flatly denies ever meeting, though many photographs contradict him. He couldn't compete with the scandal that enveloped our Lt. Gov. Robinson, a CNN exposé of bizarre posts on a pornographic website called Nude Africa. Robinson not only described himself as "a Black Nazi," espoused slavery ("I wish they would bring it back") and disparaged Rev. Martin Luther King as "a f...ing commie bastard" and "Martin Lucifer Koon." He called himself a teenaged "perv" who spied on women in gym showers and admitted a passion for porn that featured transsexuals. Robinson's posts were expressed in language even coarser and more profane than the worst of Big Donald, exposing a mega-hypocrite who has spent his political life preaching rightwing gospel from the pulpits of evangelical churches.

Many of the posts date back more than a decade, and of course he follows his Orange Leader, denying that any of them are his. But it doesn't take much close analysis of the CNN investigation to see that they've made a lawsuit-proof case against Mark Robinson. Barring a capital crime by his opponent, his campaign is finished, and wouldn't it be sweet if he could take Trump down with him, at least in North Carolina.

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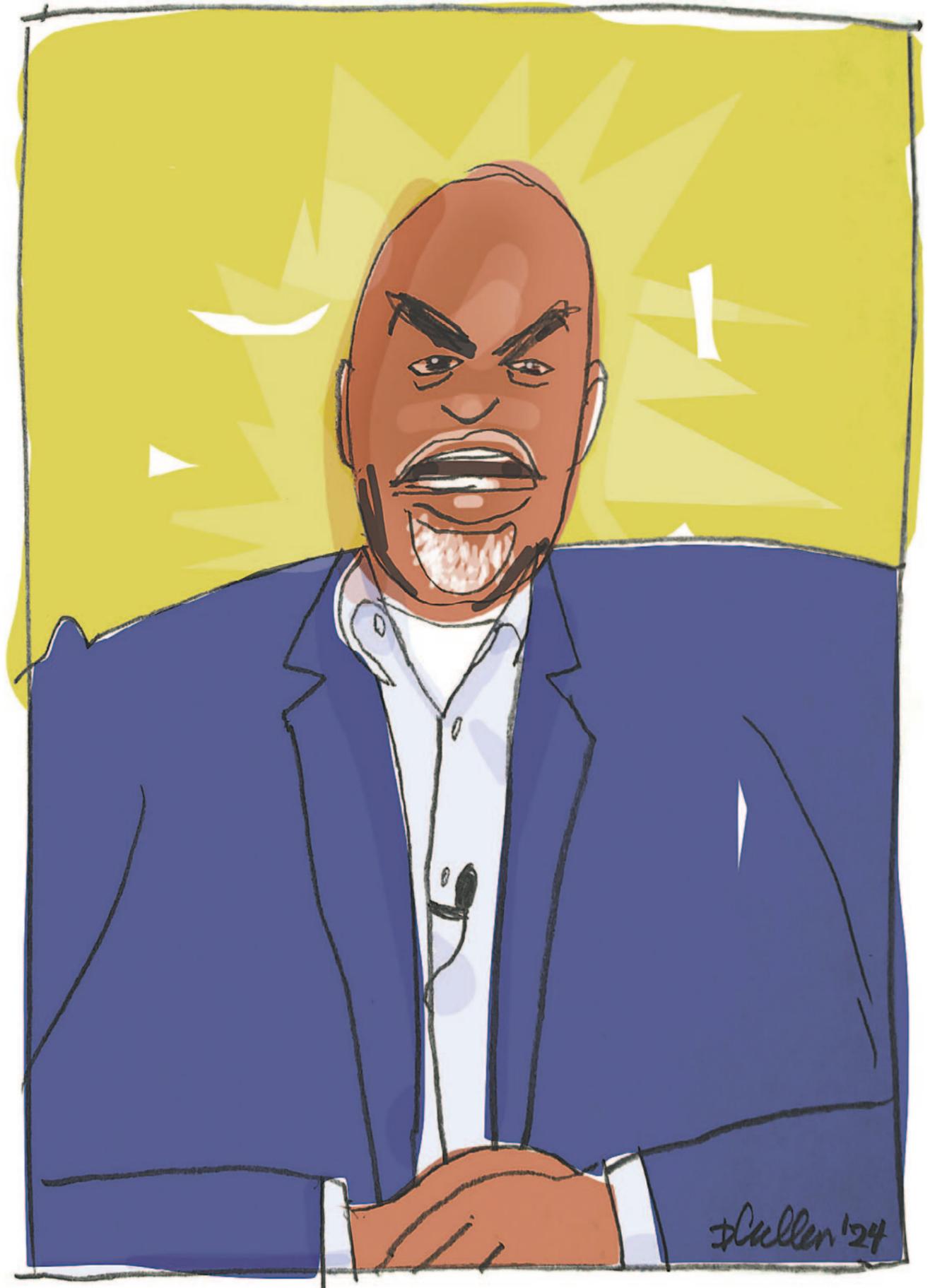


Illustration by DOLORES CULLEN

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AN EDITORIAL

Climate Changes; Trump Still Lies

The vast damage Hurricane Helene did to the southeastern United States from Sept. 26 to 29 was another demonstration that climate change is real. Republicans whose political careers have been financed by Big Oil and other polluters have been in denial about climate change for decades. But farmers know climate change is real, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz noted at the Vice Presidential Debate Oct. 1. "They've seen 500 year droughts, 500 year floods, back to back."

Hurricane Helene made landfall with Category 4 intensity on the evening of Sept. 26 in the Big Bend region of western Florida, near the city of Perry, with maximum sustained winds of 140 mph. Helene weakened as it veered north inland but it still had plenty of rain to dump before it dissipated on Sept. 29, leaving many in its path without working roads, power food, and water. Catastrophic rain triggered flooding in western North Carolina, eastern Tennessee and southwestern Virginia, and spawned numerous tornadoes. The death toll attributed to the storm was at least 231 across six states.

Scientists at the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory estimate that "climate change may have caused as much as 50% more rainfall during Hurricane Helene in some parts of Georgia and the Carolinas" in its 500-mile path inland.

Helene's huge size and speed are linked to increasingly hotter water in the Gulf of Mexico. Steve Curwood noted at InsideClimateNews.org, hurricanes have usually weakened when they make landfall, but Helene's impact was just as devastating in the inland mountains of western North Carolina as on the Gulf Coast of Florida.

During the storm, President Joe Biden put the Federal Emergency Management Agency at the service of the stricken states.

In reaction, Donald Trump told outrageous and reckless lies, as he tried to take political advantage over the catastrophe. He even blamed immigrants as well as the administration for hampering the response.

Trump wrote on Truth Social Monday, Sept. 30, that he planned to go to North Carolina, "but don't like the reports that I'm getting about the Federal Government, and the Democrat Governor of the State, going out of their way to not help people in Republican areas." But there is no evidence that the Biden administration was ignoring Republican areas. In fact, Republican governors in Virginia, South Carolina and Tennessee praised the Biden administration for its fast response, and FEMA designated counties in several states — including dozens won by Trump in the 2020 presidential election — as eligible to apply for federal assistance.

At a news conference Sept. 30, Trump said of Republican Georgia Gov. Kemp, "He's been calling the president, hasn't been able to get him." But earlier in the day Kemp said he had talked with Biden the previous day. Kemp said he missed the president's initial call Sept. 29. "He just said, 'Hey, what do you need?' And I told him: 'You know, we got what we need. We'll work through the federal process.' He offered that if there's other things we need, just to call him directly, which I appreciate that. But we've had FEMA embedded with us since a day or two before the storm hit in our state operations center in Atlanta; we've got a great relationship with them."

Republican South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster said at an Oct. 1 press conference that federal assistance had "been superb," noting Biden and Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg had both

called and told him to let them know whatever the state needed. McMaster also said FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell had called.

Still, in a social media post Oct. 3, Trump wrote that Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris "are universally being given POOR GRADES for the way that they are handling the Hurricane, especially in North Carolina."

CNN's fact checker, Daniel Dale, wrote, "That wasn't even close to accurate. Though the Biden administration's response had certainly received criticism, it had also been praised by various state and local leaders — including the Republican governors of some of the affected states and the Democratic governor of North Carolina, plus local leaders including the Democratic mayor of the hard-hit North Carolina city of Asheville," which saw historic water level rises after it received 13.98 inches of rain Sept. 25-27.

In a Michigan rally Oct. 3, Trump placed Kamala Harris at the helm, lying that "Kamala spent all her FEMA money, billions of dollars, on housing for illegal migrants, many of whom should not be in our country." He added a related conspiracy theory: "They stole the FEMA money, just like they stole it from a bank, so they could give it to their illegal immigrants that they want to have vote for them this season."

First, there is no scheme to get undocumented immigrants to vote illegally in November. Voting by noncitizens is a felony.

Second, there is no basis for claiming FEMA disaster assistance money was stolen — by anyone, let alone Harris personally — for housing migrants. No disaster funding has been spent on those shelters.

In late September, President Biden signed into law short-term funding that extended 2024 fiscal year funding levels through Dec. 20. It specifically gave FEMA access to a full year's worth of disaster relief funding.

"FEMA absolutely has enough money for Helene response right now," Keith Turi, acting director of FEMA's Office of Response and Recovery said. He noted that Congress recently replenished the agency with \$20 billion, and about \$8 billion of that is set aside for recovery from previous storms and mitigation projects.

Trump repeated his debunked claim about migrants getting FEMA money to reporters at least twice on Friday, Oct. 4 — and then said it again at a Friday night town hall in North Carolina.

Saturday, Oct. 5, Trump falsely claimed at a campaign rally in Pennsylvania the federal government was only giving \$750 to people who lost their homes. "Think of it: We give foreign countries hundreds of billions of dollars and we're handing North Carolina \$750," he said.

As FEMA explained earlier in the week, trying to combat misinformation, \$750 is merely the immediate aid survivors can get to cover basic, pressing needs like food, water, baby formula and emergency supplies. Survivors may apply for additional forms of assistance, such as for temporary housing and home repairs, that can be worth thousands of dollars; the current maximum amount for home repair assistance, for example, is \$42,500.

Trump also claimed at the Pennsylvania rally there were no helicopters doing rescues in North Carolina, which was nonsense as National Guard helicopters were delivering supplies, picking up stranded people, dropping off firefighters and search-and-rescue crews and radioing for assistance for others who could be cessed from the ground.

Meanwhile, as another hurricane, Milton, heads toward Tampa, Fla, the lies of Trump and running mate J.D. Vance are magnified on social media and have an impact on low-information voters who respond to wild rumors. All Kamala Harris and Tim Walz have to offer in response is competent leadership. — JMC

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Cover illustration by Dolores Cullen
See our blog at progressivepopulist.blogspot.com

JIM HIGHTOWER



Advance true media democracy by creating your own, non-corporate newspaper. Across the country, communities are taking charge.

To Get Good Local News, Try Do-It-Yourself Journalism

Perhaps you've noticed from the shrinkage (or total elimination) of your local newspaper that this source of hometown journalism has become monopolized, nationalized and trivialized by conglomerate owners.

How uplifting, then, to see a national consortium of saviors rallying to reestablish a "thriving news media" for our democracy. How? Well, say the saviors, by promoting "brand stability" for potential advertisers. Huh? Who are these "saviors"? Unfortunately, they are predatory media giants such as the *USA Today* chain and other national news conglomerators and shrivelizers. Hello — they are the cause of the real instability in local news! These powers are using the people's cry for media decentralization and localization as a ruse to goose up their own ad revenue, allowing them to further monopolize and trivialize print journalism.

But here's a better idea: Advance true media democracy by creating your own local, noncorporate newspaper. Ha, scoff the barons of Big Media, that's impossible! But as an activist friend of mine puts it: "Those who say it can't be done should not interrupt those who're doing it."

Across the country, communities are taking charge. Here in Texas, the *Caldwell/Hays Examiner* was launched in 2022, with a focus on rural issues up and down the I-35 corridor. In western Iowa, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Art Cullen has co-founded a nonprofit that supports local news efforts through grants. And in Colorado, a group of folks mobilized to buy a local newspaper chain before a hedge fund operation could sweep in and snatch it up.

This is Jim Hightower saying ... To learn more about how you can rebuild your local news outlets, visit the Institute for Nonprofit News at inn.org.

Corporate Bosses are Working-Class Heroes! And Other B.S.

Oh, swell — here it comes again. It's the "Great Man" theory of history, trotted out periodically by plutocrats, patricians, royalists and assorted other proponents of an elitist social order. They insist that great progress does not come from political movements, unions and other grassroots forces but from the genius and benevolence of individual, dering-do, capitalist innovators.

In a declaration this month, for example, a group of laissez-fairlyland hucksters asserted that it wasn't labor's long bloody struggle that advanced worker rights, but industrial America's generous bosses! These befuddled revisionists of corporate history proclaimed that "unions did not create weekends, the 8-hr work day (or) a 'living wage.'" No? Who, then? "Henry Ford did (it) in 1926," they say, adding emphatically that "CAPITALISM & COMPETITION creates higher wages and better working conditions."

Excuse me, boss, but capitalism constantly tries to destroy any competitive market, and it thrives by holding down wages, repressing worker rights and elim-

inating jobs.

Forget the right wing's cartoonish portrayal of Henry the Great as a working-class savior. He was a Nazi-admiring, antisemitic business magnate. Contrary to the revisionists, unions did indeed create their own progress, having fought for wage and hour protections since the 1860s. They rallied popular support with this slogan: "Eight hours for work, eight hours for rest, eight hours for what we will."

This is Jim Hightower saying ... And here's an inconvenient fact that causes the hair of today's corporate mythmakers to burst into flames: It was not some genius capitalist who first established the eight-hour day as our national standard — it was government! President Ulysses Grant instituted it for all federal workers in 1869 — over half a century before Ford finally trailed behind.

School Lunch, Christian Nationalism and Jesus

An iconic Texas band, the Austin Lounge Lizards, has a song that nails the absurd self-righteousness of Christian supremacists: "Jesus Loves Me (But He Can't Stand You)."

I think of this refrain when I behold today's right-wing proselytizers wailing that the blessed rich should not be taxed to assure that everyone has the most basic human needs. Seems very un-Jesuy to me.

One bizarre focus of their religious wrath is a wholly sensible and biblically sound national policy: subsidizing school districts to assure that every child has healthy meals to fuel their daily learning. Yes, in the Christian nationalists' book of public abominations, government feeding of children is a holy no-no. Project 2025, the Republican blueprint to impose theocratic rule over America, proclaims school meals a socialist/Marxist evil to be eradicated.

The extremists cry that if there is any free lunch "giveaway," it must be narrowly restricted to truly destitute students. But wait — publicly singling out those children would stigmatize them. Plus, how odd to hear Republicans demanding an intrusive, absurdly expensive bureaucratic process empowering government to decide who's eligible to eat!

In fact, the student lunch subsidy runs as low as 42 cents a meal, so it's far cheaper, fairer and (dare I say it?) more Christian simply to offer it to all. Indeed, the program is akin to the biblical story of Jesus providing fishes and loaves to the multitude. He imposed no income test — everyone got a fish.

Interestingly, the same lawmakers opposing 42-cent meals for kiddos today routinely and enthusiastically feed billions of our tax dollars to corporate, ethically challenged profiteers who love money above all. As I recall, Jesus couldn't stand people like that.

What Should Politics Do? Ask Woody Guthrie.

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

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

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

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

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

That platform reshaped America's po-

Will UN Conferences Finally Get Real?

By FRANK LINGO

This fall there will be two United Nations-sponsored conferences on different continents. First in Colombia, a biodiversity conference will address the growing threats to the world's plants and animals. Then in November, Azerbaijan will host the COP (Conference of the Parties) to tackle the climate crisis.

Your faithful correspondent hopes that meaningful progress will be made at these gatherings — for a change. Last year's COP in Dubai was considered by many enviro activists to be more show than substance. And this year, the host country is again a petrostate, meaning a great deal of its revenue comes from fossil fuels.

Many of the countries congregate with scant commitment to accomplishing conference goals. That's because they are authoritarian regimes which treat the Earth exactly as they treat their citizens — like garbage. About 70% of the world's population live under dictatorship or other oppressive rule, according to Sweden's Varieties of Democracy Institute. China and India together are almost half the humans on the globe yet their people hold no rights to pursue sustainability.

If Trump wins, America will join the majority of Earth's denizens and descend into dictatorship. Any chance of climate chaos getting mitigated goes up in smoke.

The World Resources Institute (wri.org) detailed the severity of our ecological crisis in a Sept. 30, 2024 report. In 2023, tropical forests were destroyed at the amount of 10 football fields per minute. One million plant and animal species are at risk of extinction, and almost 70% of the world's wildlife populations have died off in just the last 50 years.

On the bright side, Brazil and Colombia substantially reduced their rate of rain-forest losses in 2023, after their voters restored democracy to those countries. That's an important example for the rest of the world to follow.

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

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At a similar convention in 2022, the landmark Global Biodiversity Framework was passed with its participants pledging to protect at least 30% of the world's land and water by 2030; and restore 30% of degraded ecosystems as well. Those are ambitious aspirations that will require great cooperation among nations, a rare occurrence on any issue. Oh, and incidentally there is a \$700 billion shortfall between the world's annual funding for nature and what is needed by 2030 to protect ecosystems.

Another goal of the Framework is to recognize the land rights and authority of Indigenous Peoples, a subject in which the United States has an abysmal record. Native tribes generally treat the land more sustainably but they seldom get the chance to show it.

With the Azerbaijan conference approaching, *The New York Times* ran an article headlined: "The World Is a Mess. That Makes the Climate Crisis Harder to Solve." *The Times* cited 3 big things that have sunk the prospects of global climate cooperation.

First, China dominates the global clean-energy supply chain, fueling economic and political strains that undermine cooperation. China's capitalist dictatorship has no incentive to stop bullying the world on trade.

Second, rich countries, which have produced most of the pollution that causes global warming, have failed to keep their promises to help poor countries shift away from fossil fuels. This has been happening for decades with little change despite worsening world conditions.

Third, widening wars have become an impediment to climate consensus. Like a barroom brawl in an old cowboy movie, the Earth loses all wars as we squabble among ourselves and destroy our domicile.

Bottom line is that the biodiversity conference and the climate conference are terrific opportunities for ecological evolution. But it will all be for naught unless the Earth's democracies do their duty and follow through with their pledges to protect the planet.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Price At The Pump

Convicted felon Donald Trump is promoting his “drill baby drill” mantra to increase domestic oil production, promising to roll back Joe Biden’s environmental restrictions. In language reminiscent of Sarah Palin’s 2008 appeal to the Tea Party, Trump told Big Oil he would eliminate these directives in return for a \$1 billion political pledge for his re-election and legal woes.

Not so fast. Big Oil, not government policy, is the prime player in setting gas prices at the pump. Who is Big Oil? Five of the Top Ten companies are American, led by #4 Exxon-Mobil and #5 Shell, trailing #1 Saudi Aramco, #2 China Petroleum and #3 PetroChina.

Gas prices below \$2/gallon under Trump were caused by lower demand generated by COVID-19 worldwide quarantines and working from home. Trump played no role in this price relief. Simple economics.

The U.S. now produces more oil than anyone, ahead of #2 Saudi Arabia and #3 Russia, and has been since the 2009 fracking revolution expanded output. According to *Forbes Magazine*, 2023 was the first time oil was the top US export.

Usually the US imports more oil than it exports, but in 2023 that also changed. The Obama administration removed export restrictions in place since the 1973 OPEC embargo, and Big Oil took full advantage. The US exports to 173 countries and imports from 86, with Canada providing over half our current imports.

Why does Big Oil both import and export? Because they seek the best deal on the open market. Factor in different types of oil — sweet vs. crude, light vs. heavy. Blended oil requires mixing. Crude involves other byproducts like kerosene. And don’t forget transportation costs, where tankers can be cheaper than controversial pipelines.

Stock buybacks, once illegal, now reward Wall Street oil execs but reduce money for drilling. Don’t expect corporate elites to lower their lucrative compensation packages to help lower the price at the pump. Trump won’t rattle the cage of donors feeding him \$1 billion.

With all these factors, “drill baby drill” might sound appealing to the masses, but it is Big Oil, not public opinion, that manipulates output and price. From Palin to Trump, such rhetoric will provide little relief for your wallet.

Should government mandate price controls? How can any patriotic MAGA advocate such socialist attacks on free enterprise? So Marxian.

ED ENGLER, *Sebring, Fla.*

Trump is Not a Madman – Yet

I wasted my time reading Barry Friedman’s column in the 9/15 edition of *TPP*, wherein he writes that he cannot understand why his friends in Tulsa, who operate an upscale restaurant, strongly support Donald Trump’s political career. In my opinion, Friedman needs a refresher course in history.

After Adolf Hitler’s army was routed in 1943 at Leningrad, Russia, and during the time the Allies were bombing German cities and during the time of food rationing, Hitler gave a public speech in Munich to a cheering crowd, who applauded his rambling statements, which blamed all of the problems of the German people on a vast world Jewish conspiracy. Sound familiar?

There is nothing to try to understand about the German situation! Hitler was a madman who appealed to people of a similar mind. The military-industrial complex in

Germany, a.k.a. the conservative capitalists, supported Hitler to the very end.

Donald Trump is not a madman, at least not yet. But he is a dangerous, evil, cruel psychopath.

The possession of a good character is not a prerequisite in order to obtain a vote from a Republican. They elected crook Nixon twice, the actor phony Reagan twice, and coward Bush II twice!

Birds of a feather flock together!

STEPHEN LANDUYT, *Quincy, Ill.*

Be Careful of Sexist Slurs

In the 9/1 column, “Make Kamala Earn Our Votes, Ted Rall writes, “We are sluts of democracy — we give it away for free.” The terms, “sluts” and “whores” are mostly slurs at women.

Men who enjoy sex, especially a lot, are considered cool. But for women there is a double standard. Women who enjoy sex, especially a lot, are considered dirty and disgusting.

Do men give it away for free? How disgusting.

Using these terms, especially in an article about the first woman who might be our president, is insulting to all women.

S.D. ROSENBAUM, *New York, N.Y.*

Can Israel Get Away With ‘War’?

How can “war” exist as its own thing, when all “war” is the ability to get away with doing it. “War” is so lame.

The U.S. government did the Iraq “War” for 20 years because it could get away with it, and Iraqis could not “defend themselves” the way the Israelis are now “defending themselves,” because Iraq could not get away with it. Iraq did not have the “war” capabilities to attack the U.S. mainland the way Israel is attacking Gaza and Lebanon.

It is all quite obvious what’s going on with this recent “warring” in the Mideast. As with the U.S. in Afghanistan and Iraq for 20 years, the U.S. was in no hurry to do any ceasefires, because neither “war” could do any real damage to the U.S., same is true for Israel in Gaza and Lebanon.

At this point, Israel wants “war,” because they can get away with doing anything in Gaza and Lebanon. The fighting factions in both Gaza and Lebanon are defenseless going up against Israel’s modern military. Animals are more

civilized than us humans. Giraffes have more combat integrity than humans. Giraffes only fight with other giraffes that are the same size.

The exploding pagers and walkie-talkies was nothing more than embarrassing and goading Hezbollah and Lebanon into more “war,” so Israel could destroy and butcher even more people.

The golden opportunity that the Israeli government has to “war” upon whoever, is worth more to them than the remaining hostages. The Israeli government is willing to sacrifice the remaining hostages because this window of opportunity to “war” upon defenseless people in Gaza and Lebanon is something they cannot pass up.

FRANK ERICKSON, *Minneapolis, Minn.*

Citizens Should Tap Business Profits

Thank you for the 8/15/24 *TPP*, especially Kali Joy Gray’s “Why you shouldn’t vote for Trump, according to J.D. Vance.”

Now is the time for a per share fee on stock market transactions. Also helpful would be a cap on gas prices in United States. Big oil uses our natural resources without a remuneration to citizens.

WILLIAM SHAW, *Jackson, Mich.*

Why I Love My Print Edition TPP

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“IF THE ELECTION WERE HELD TODAY, WHO WOULD YOU SAY RIGGED IT?”

Kris Kristofferson: A Sublime Yearning

By DON ROLLINS

Even though nearly three decades past the peak of a storied career, Kris Kristofferson still deserved a better venue than the backroom of a smoky Minnesota gambling casino. The sound was bad, the lighting was bad, and the grizzled storyteller occasionally cussed aloud at his inability to grab barr chords on the Gibson J-45 that fit his voice so well. It was raw music in a raw place.

But the 50 or so brave fans who’d inched their way through a cold February night could give a damn about raw. Low rent surroundings and all, the author of some of the most roughshod, poignant songs in the great American songbook was close enough to shake hands. They’d come to hear their old friend sing and talk his way through the soundtracks of their best and worst days. That was it. No veneer required.

That intimate solo tour wasn’t Kristof-

erson’s last, but the declining voice and guitar skills would soon limit him to performing with group ensembles - often with younger artists he’d influenced along the way to the Country Music Hall of Fame.

He pushed through a few more years, then stopped performing and recording in 2021. There were a few exceptions, but very few. Sept. 28 Kris Kristofferson died at his home on Maui, at age 88.

As with the characters in some of his best songs, Kristofferson’s life was anything but linear and conventional: A singer/songwriter who was alternately a Golden Gloves boxer, Army helicopter pilot, Rhodes scholar, Columbia Records custodian, in-demand actor, one-quarter of a country music supergroup and husband to a talented pop music star/songwriter (Rita Coolidge).

The resulting genius — and it was just that — was an innate ability to capture human yearning, and bring it forth with simple tunes and chords: “Help Me Make it Through the Night” and “For the Good Times” are pleas for intimacy; “The Pilgrim, Chapter 33” and “Me and Bobby McGee” depict the despised, looking not for respectability, but respect; “Jesus Was a Capri-

corn” and 2009’s “Sister Sinead” (written following Kristofferson’s onstage support for Sinead O’Connor) are bald supplications for those who have been scapegoated, even despised.

And then there’s the cut many consider Kristofferson’s finest, “Sunday Morning Coming Down” (1970) - a universal yearning for another time, another place, another self. Some references are straight out of Hank Williams (beer for breakfast, frying chicken), others from the 17th century English poets Kristofferson read while at Oxford (sidewalks that sleep, lonely bells that echo through urban canyons).

There is a recognizable yearning shot through Kristofferson’s best songs, And beyond.

Kristofferson’s personal lives (plural) were many. There were periods of stability, and there were dumpster fires. He did not spare himself and others the drinking, drugging and infidelity that plagued most of his peers. People got hurt, some badly.

Some people were helped, too. The short list of charities and causes Kristofferson adopted included aid for small-scale farmers, fair working conditions for migrant

workers, aid and support for Palestinians. He was outwardly critical of U.S. involvement in Central America during the Reagan and George Walker Bush administrations, and endorsed Democratic candidates on several occasions.

Sadly, much of Kristofferson’s catalog came in for the same overproduction other “realism” musicians faced in the late ’60s and early ’70s. Too many strings, too many walls of sound that threatened to bury his turn of a homespun phrase, or a veiled reference from John Bunyan. Such were the times.

But in the end, not even the drone of studio backwash could separate us from his sublime yearning, within and without:

“And he keeps right on a changin’ for the better or the worse/And searchin’ for a shrine he’s never found/Never knowin’ if believin’ is a blessin’ or a curse/Or if the going up is worth the comin’ down” - *The Pilgrim, Chapter 33*”

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New Voices Needed in Political Coverage



A TV announcer can show us human damages from a bomb, but human damages from paycheck troubles are too hard to assess.

Here we are. Crunch time. And the fun never stops. Even after a fairly civil debate from the VP candidates, we suffer through lots of media-driven drama and a smidjeon of issues. Instead of leading the civil discourse, it seems that the average news anchors can never see the longterm effects of their discourse.

This year the drama comes from Ukraine, Israel, and abortion. The longterm issues — cost of living, climate change, health care — are rarely mentioned and in fact hardly affected by the drama. In fact, while media occasionally nods at how current decisions impact the future, the nuances are too subtle and thorny for media to handle. A TV announcer can show us human damages from a bomb but human damages from paycheck troubles are too hard to assess. Immigration is an international tragedy, currently affecting countries in all parts of the planet, but it is always treated as a horror and a travesty without any understanding of the immigrants' points-of-view.

Voters addicted to the media drama, and I count myself as one, might agree with

a newscaster's stance on most subjects because we consume the media that echoes our views. For those of us leaning left, PBS, *The Nation* and CNN might be our go-tos. For those leaning right, it's Fox News and *National Review*. But there are usually sticking points on which we don't agree. In this election cycle, one sticking point is Israel.

Armchair observers on both the left and right have said from the start that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu could pull the entire region into conflict. Media, however, defends him and the U.S. participation in his wars. According to the Council on Foreign Relations, the U.S. has sent more military aid—more than \$230 billion—to Israel than to any other since that country's founding. That's more than three times what we've sent to Ukraine at \$70 billion.

Most of us peacenik types insist that we stand on moral high ground. Aid to Israel, we say, is killing innocent civilians with our U.S. weapons. The arguments haven't changed since the 1960s when the innocents were Vietnamese. Aid to Ukraine, on the other hand, is protecting that country's

right to democracy and independence against an aggressor. We try not to see Ukraine and Palestine as parts of a political game. But, always, political gamesmanship is in the equation.

Gamesmanship was clear during the Democratic Convention when pro-Palestinian protestors rallied for a chance to speak. They were denied but they didn't go away. Now it seems pro-Palestinians might cast votes as uncommitted or third-party or even vote for Trump. So let's say that the Palestinian vote contributes to a Trump win. Will it accomplish what the pro-Palestinian voters want? Will Trump insist on a ceasefire? Will Trump stop military aid to Israel? Will Trump persuade Israel to stop expanding the war? Not hardly.

"When I was 20, I voted morally. Now I vote strategically," Mark Rudd (formerly of the 1960s anti-war group the Weathermen) told Andrew Marantz of *The New Yorker*. His point is that there are potential and unimagined gains and losses beyond the immediate drama. If the media could adopt that strategic approach, our decision-making could be better.

The strategic approach makes us look farther down the road. Pew Research Center reminds us that in 2020 and 2024 the major issue has been the economy (both years, around 80% were concerned).

Climate change, even more important in the long view, has lost ground with only 37% being concerned in 2024. That could change if media will connect current weather horrors like Hurricane Helene to the reality that warmer oceans are creating more violent storms.

How can we reduce the near-term drama so voters concentrate on the best

long-range outcomes? We consumers must insist on changes in the media. On Oct. 1, CBS made a good beginning with fact checking during the aforementioned VP candidate debate. Perhaps the knowledge that their facts were being scrutinized kept the candidates civil and honest. Fact-checking should be an integral part of all campaign events.

Next, we need to get more points-of-view into the conversations. Start with the complexities of immigration. While many of our pundits and politicians travel to ports where immigrants are dying, literally dying, to get to our country, we rarely hear voices that explain why folks leave home. Seeing the situation from their point of view will help us imagine long-term solutions.

And now the hard one, the economy. Can we imagine a future where everyone's fed, where kids are cared for, where all lives have meaning, where the planet is safe? How can understanding today's problems help us get to a sustainable future?

We need new voices. It's gratifying that so many women, minorities, LGBTQs are moving into positions in media. At present, most of these newbies are voicing scripts that mimic their male colleagues. The day will come, however, when they find their own voices. And, then, we can begin to imagine the future that we need.

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

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DISPATCHES

HOW BAD WAS TRUMP AT HANDLING DISASTERS? Donald Trump and his allies have been misinforming the public about the federal response to Hurricane Helene after it ravaged six southeastern states Sept. 26-29, be it with lies or conspiracy theories, Walter Einkenkel noted at DailyKos.com (10/7).

Trump's first administration was a disaster for our environment—but he and his friends are far from done. Project 2025, the Heritage Foundation's agenda for a potential second Trump administration, includes dismantling the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Agency—the U.S. agency that forecasts weather—and greatly limiting the Federal Emergency Management Agency's ability to respond.

Here are some examples of how poorly the Trump administration managed our country's toughest times in his first term.

They didn't staff the federal agencies tasked with disaster response. Trump's administration did not sufficiently staff FEMA or NOAA with administrators for months after he came into office. Worse, he imposed a government-wide hiring freeze that affected hundreds of unfilled positions at the National Weather Service, and that was called "a contributing factor" in a renewed decline in NOAA staff.

Trump initially refused to send aid to California during wildfires because it was a blue state. When wildfires ravaged California in 2018, Trump attacked the state for its "mismanagement" of the fires. Meanwhile, a former senior director on Trump's National Security Council staff told E&E News that when Trump resisted sending wildfire assistance to the Golden State, staffers "went as far as looking up how many votes he got in those impacted areas . . . to show him these are people who voted for you."

Trump delayed and obstructed getting federal aid to Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria. The Trump administration's initial neglect in helping Puerto Rico was overshadowed only by his administration's continued delays in sending allotted aid for years after. At every step, Trump looked to block further aid to the U.S. territory. Trump also reportedly joked about trading Puerto Rico for Greenland as he faced criticism for his response to Hurricane Maria.

Hurricane Dorian and the infamous black marker. In 2019, during the leadup to Hurricane Dorian, Trump made an incorrect assessment that the state of Alabama was in the projected path of the approaching storm. His assessment was then corrected by the National Weather Service office in Birmingham, leading Trump to double down on being wrong. Eventually, he held a press conference where he showed a conspicuously doctored map of Dorian's path to support his lie. The sloppy use of black marker on the map became emblematic of how unserious Trump's approach to disaster was.

Trump used flooding in Michigan to try and stop absentee voting. When flooding hit Michigan in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, Trump tweeted out a threat to withhold federal aid if absentee ballots were sent out to voters ahead of the 2020 primary and general elections. Of course, the only thing being sent out at the time were applications for absentee ballots.

COVID-19. Research finds that Trump's mishandling of the COVID-19 pandemic led to hundreds of thousands of ex-

cess deaths. His incompetence began early on as he downplayed the severity and spread of the global pandemic. He then offered up a barrage of fake cures and other misinformation, from shilling for the ineffective hydroxychloroquine and ivermectin to disinfecting the blood with something like Clorox.

Trump's history of (mis)managing disasters is pretty craven, and his lies about the current administration's management of this newest natural disaster are a true new low for that lowlife.

On the other hand, here is an example of leadership. As Hurricane Milton, upgraded to Category 5 with winds of 175 mph approached the western Florida coast, President Biden tweeted (10/7): "I just approved an emergency declaration from the State of Florida and ordered federal assistance to supplement response efforts that may arise due to emergency conditions resulting from Hurricane Milton."

"We expect this storm to again make landfall in western Florida and are working quickly to preposition federal response personnel and assets."

Meanwhile, the reluctance of House GOP leadership to return to Washington, D.C., to pass additional disaster relief reflects Republicans valuing their partisan agendas over the urgent needs of their constituents.

CONSERVATIVES STRUGGLE TO SEE THE BAD IN GOOD JOBS REPORT. The Oct. 4 jobs report from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics exceeded expectations, with 254,000 jobs added, dropping the unemployment rate to 4.1%. This was far better than the Dow Jones-forecast 150,000 jobs.

So, of course, the right had to frame it as confusing and catastrophic, Morgan Stephens noted at DailyKos.com (10/4).

After a panel on Fox Business' "Mornings with Maria" predicted the worst minutes before the report dropped, participants struggled to find a way to spin it—and the swift stock

market surge that followed—into something to fear.

Host Maria Bartiromo was desperate for someone to agree that she would be wrong to say "good news is once again good news." It took a few minutes to recalibrate their rage, but the panel did get there, lamenting low unemployment and increased consumer spending.

"This good news brings into question, 'how much longer will this easing of inflationary pressures last,'" shouted guest economist John Lanski. "I think the economy is slowing," he added later. "Until we get past the elections, I don't think we have a clear reading regarding what businesses plan to do on spending, on staff, and capital equipment."

Except economics is based on numbers and data, and the numbers and data say President Joe Biden's plan for a post-pandemic "soft landing" continues to succeed.

At least one pundit was willing to admit the report bodes well for the country, even if he expected the worst.

"I thought there would be more red flags than at a communist parade in this report, and there's not a single one," said MDB Capital Holdings president Lou Basenese on Fox News. "There's not one data point in here that I can point to that's not good."

Likening Democrats to communists is uninspired, and sooo 1950s-era McCarthy witch hunts, but at least Basenese admitted he was wrong. But as Basenese continued to share his optimism, "America's Newsroom" host Bill Hemmer cut him off.

Ohio Sen. JD Vance couldn't resist blaming immigrants for taking American jobs. Trump's running mate was swiftly corrected by Justin Wolfers, a professor at the University of Michigan's Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, who literally wrote a (text)book on economics.

"Senator, I don't want to get caught up on facts, but the share of American-born folks in their prime working years who have

Continued on page 22



FROM HARROP



Biden's new policy stopped migrants from asking for asylum if they crossed the border illegally. But the specter of uncontrolled immigration haunts the public.

Bottom Line on the Border: It's Already Orderly

There were fewer arrests at the Southern border in July than in the last month of the Trump presidency. Shelters have seen a massive drop in migrants. And Texas Gov. Greg Abbott is having a hard time finding enough recent arrivals to fill buses headed north.

The reason for this development is

President Joe Biden's new border policy, which basically stopped migrants from asking for asylum if they crossed the border illegally. Vice President Kamala Harris just called for even tighter restrictions.

Still the specter of uncontrolled immigration, even when that's no longer the case, continues to haunt much of the voting public. And Donald Trump polls better on the issue than Biden's vice president.

Is this fair? Perhaps not, but it's understandable. Biden spent much of his early presidency watching "caravans" of migrants march over the border, claim asylum and then be given dates for asylum hearings years in the future. What took him so long to stop that easy entry remains a mystery, including to his supporters.

Biden did champion that bipartisan immigration bill, the strongest border enforcement measure in decades. Seeing calm at the border a threat to his campaign, Trump then had Republicans kill it. In February, he called the legislation "a death wish for the Republican Party." Trump needed a chaotic border for personal reasons and cowed Republican lawmakers into providing him one.

When the border became quieter than when he left office, Trump switched to racist attacks on the migrants themselves. For those more attuned to his sabotage of a gen-

uine fix, he invented a fraudulent reason for killing the bill. It was the provision that would have shut the border once encounters reached a seven-day average of 5,000.

That relied on confusing the public — and many legislators — about the definition of "encounters." To quote Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson at the time, "Apparently, we're concocting some sort of deal to allow the president to shut down the border after 5,000 people break the law ... that'd be a million more illegals into our country every year before we take remedial measures."

That was untrue.

Encounters are not green lights into the country. An encounter may be with someone who attempts to enter the country illegally or is otherwise deemed inadmissible. Trying to sneak in is not the same as succeeding. Some may be processed for further immigration review, but most are detained or sent back. And a single person who repeatedly gets caught can represent several encounters.

Harris says she would tighten the border further, adding 1,500 Border Patrol agents, 4,300 asylum officers and 100 immigration judges. A shortage of such authorities enabled much of the mess. And she vows as president to sign that serious immi-

gration bill.

Back to the bottom line: Migration at the border, measured by encounters, is lower than it was during Trump. Do voters want as president a big mouth who tanked the tough immigration bill and now — with the facts no longer in his favor — has resorted to clown talk about migrants eating pets? Or do they want the vice president whose administration went far in getting the job done and who promises even more controls if elected?

Republican-leaning voters should strongly consider whether a Republican nominee who came right out and said that an effective immigration bill would have been "a death wish" for his party should lead the country. There's a thing called the national interest and another thing called Donald Trump's interest. They're not the same thing.

Hats off to the growing number of prominent Republicans who recognize the difference. And extra kudos to those who are publicly supporting Harris for the good of the country.

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

How Do We Talk to Each Other Anymore?

By ART CULLEN

What comes after Nov. 5? Most Americans and the betting markets believe that Kamala Harris will win the election. She's even close in Iowa.

No matter what happens, we need to find center again. Quick like.

American democracy withstood one assault from Donald Trump and likely can hold up under another four years. What the Republic cannot endure, and which gives enemies of freedom oxygen, is the contempt that has taken hold American-to-American.

We talk past each other and grow apart. How do we talk to the other side?

That was David Beckman's question last week at the Okoboji Writer's Retreat. The seminar I led was supposed to be about writing simply. Inevitably, discussion turned to civic affairs. The retired attorney from Burlington (and husband of Storm Lake native Susan McCoy) asked the \$69,000 question.

This is the sort of place it gets an-

swered, in a small town where you have to get along even when you want to spit at each other.

We know what we want in Iowa: clean air and water, safe schools that teach you how to be a citizen, good food and good basketball, smooth roads and friendly neighborhoods, easy access to comprehensive and affordable health care. The ability to prosper. That's pretty much it.

We're not getting what we deserve, except for the basketball.

Trump and Harris voters can agree on that. So we should start there.

Farmers who vote Republican are not gung-ho for pipelines going wherever the power brokers would like, and neither are environmentalists. Each likes supporting more on-farm conservation. White males and Black women are suspicious of unchecked corporate power. A lot of union members will vote Republican for a whole host of reasons, but find common cause with Democrats on basic human equity.

We all want to strengthen rural health care. We like independent producers and businesses. We realize that Iowa's unique strength is in its 99 counties.

Our increasing cancer rates scare nearly everyone.

It's not as if there is not common ground. The deck is stacked. That speaks to Trump's appeal with people in rural Iowa

who feel left behind and unheard. Seldom do they ever consider the fears of a Black woman traveling the state as an Extension educator. Sometimes she felt like she was in a sundown town. She was in that writing seminar, too, and intends to tell her story eventually.

Gov. Kim Reynolds's popularity keeps sinking because she starts where we differ instead of where we might agree. State Auditor Rob Sand, the only statewide-elected Democrat, wishes there weren't parties but he is in one. Sand has always positioned himself as bipartisan while the Republican legislature emasculated his authority. He had no organized support behind him.

The places left behind, the two-thirds of Iowa counties declining in population and prospects, are where the conversation starts. The strategy of the political parties has been abandonment.

Right-to-repair is not left or right. Neither is enforcement of anti-trust laws. Nobody in the county seat town wants to lose the maternity ward or the hospital. We all recognize that it is tough filling jobs in food and agriculture because it's tough work. Nobody expects to get rich, but they expect respect and a wage that lets them get ahead.

Iowa is of a scale where problems can be solved without political war. The best program to come along in my career was Vision Iowa, created by Democratic Sen.

Mike Gronstal and Republican Sen. Jeff Lamberti and Democratic Gov. Tom Vilsack. It transformed Storm Lake and Dubuque because the people wanted it. King's Pointe Resort in Storm Lake is the result, and the American Rivers Museum in Dubuque.

The people did not ask for an abortion ban, really. They asked for low taxes but got a book ban and private school vouchers. The judicial nomination process was not broken, so Gov. Reynolds fixed it. Nobody in Newell wanted to reform Medicaid payments so the Good Samaritan Center would close.

This is why people are anxious and don't think that things are working their way. They're not. Things work for people with a firm grip on power. We can organize ourselves around how to make our place better, instead of how we can lock up our adversaries. It starts with city hall, the courthouse and the school house. It starts by us talking about issues and confronting power that prevents progress. It starts by listening to the Black educator and the White farmer.

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.

Tough 2024 Gets Tougher

By ALAN GUEBERT

Late September, 200-mile drive through the sunny center of northern and central Illinois reveals blue sky, yellowing fields, and not one roaring red, green, or silver combine gathering in any of the anticipated abundant crops.

"We're a solid 10 days from corn harvest," a central Illinois farmer relates in conversation later that day. "Delayed planting and a wet May put everything back." An early week moisture test on his corn showed "27, 28 percent, so we'll wait."

And for good reason. With local cash corn prices hovering in the \$3.80 per bu. area, few need a hefty grain drying bill to bite into already pinched profits. Thus the standing corn sunny mile after sunny mile: it's old-school drying in the field.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) agrees with the waiting farmers. Its September World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE) ratcheted anticipated 2024/25 average corn price down a dime to \$4.10 per bu., or about 75 cents per bu. less than 2023's season average.

For this year's estimated 15.2 billion bu. crop, the forecasted year-to-year drop means 2024's crop will generate an esti-

mated \$11.4 billion less in gross farm income. That's a hard hit to the wallet.

The outlook is equally tough for Midwest farmers' other top crop, soybeans. Central Illinois cash prices hover in the \$10 per bu. range, a solid \$2 under June prices just three hopeful months ago. That, too, will cut into 2024/25 gross income.

According to USDA's September price forecast, farmers can anticipate an average price of \$10.80 per bu. this coming year, or \$1.70 per bu. less than the 2023/24 soybean crop. If that estimate holds—and nothing on the horizon suggests it won't—collective gross receipts for American soybean growers will drop by \$7.5 billion this year over last.

None of these headed-south prices, however, will bring lower food prices. In late August, USDA estimated "prices for all food are predicted to increase 2.3% in 2024 and 2% in 2025. The biggest increase will be in "food-away-from-home... predicted to increase 4.1% ..."

The building gloom in today's ag commodity markets—wheat, barley, oats, and cotton farmers all face increased production and decreased prices—has caught the attention of a long-distracted Congress. Two Republican senators recently said they are interested in adding a request for some level of "ad-hoc relief" to must-pass legislation yet this fall.

In early September, USDA stoked the

move by noting 2024 net income forecast will again drop, this time from \$146.5 billion in 2023 to \$140 billion this year. That modest 4.4% drop, however, comes on the heels of 19.5% plunge in 2023.

Moreover, the University of Missouri's Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute predicts the now two-year tumble will carry into 2025 when, it noted in mid-September, net farm income will drop to \$129 billion "before a modest recovery in 2026."

Today's falling grain prices, falling net farm income, and falling farm spirit, however, have combined to reignite Congress' waning interest in completing the long-delayed 2024–2025?—Farm Bill.

Although disagreements over proposed House cuts to food aid, USDA's green energy programs, and current conservation spending all remain unresolved, the current push centers on raising "reference prices," the mechanism that triggers crop insurance subsidies—the Farm Bill's main income support element.

Private reports suggest that Republicans hope to raise the reference prices "15%+ ... while Stabenow," the Democratic Senate Ag Committee boss, "suggests 5%."

Which points to a likely split-the-difference, 10% deal, right?

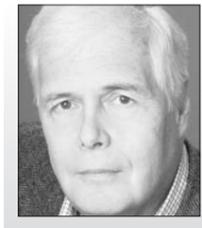
Sure, but what's likely in any harvest season is most unlikely in any election season.

Editor's Note: Congress has adjourned until after the election without passing the farm bill.]

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



GENE LYONS



From my point of view, what appears to have left the old duffers bereft and lonely is they took work too seriously all along. They need friends and hobbies.

Interests Outside Work Will Fuel a Happier Retirement

Odds are I won't have to deal with it: the latest thing men are doing wrong according to the (largely female) writers of the *Washington Post's* Well+Being: Healthy Living articles.

"It" being the shame of living alone, "a retired, forgotten old man who dithers away the days," as one retired physician described himself in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* last May.

My wife's maternal grandmother lived

to be 102; her mother to 97. So, chances are she'll be the one left to mourn me. Apart from her diminished eyesight (macular degeneration), she's in good health for somebody who is 81 years old. A litany of minor complaints, but Diane has a small army of friends, and she stays busy maintaining her relationships and bickering with her great nemesis, that smug bitch Siri.

Me, I make the coffee, pour the wine and serve dinner, tasks she can't do for herself anymore. I also run a neighborhood-only taxi service, do the grocery shopping and load up all four dogs for their daily outing to the dog park. Martin the cat pretty much takes care of himself. Our older son Gavin drives Diane around on errands outside the neighborhood. I quit driving on the freeway a couple of years ago. Too fast; too many aggressive jerks.

I also quit riding horses. Got dumped, broke three ribs, retired.

I'm also 81, see, and ever mindful of Philip Roth's observation that "Old age isn't a battle: old age is a massacre." We've been married since 1967, and if I close my eyes, I can still see her standing there in a little shirtwaist dress at a reception for new graduate students at the University of Virginia. I think it's imprinted on my retinas. I confess to having had what our spiritual advisors would have called an "impure thought," and often enough I still do.

I definitely wouldn't want to have to face life without her. But if I had to, I could. I'm pretty much never bored; along with a houseful of books, Amazon says I have 779

titles on my Kindle.

My own health was perfect until earlier this year, when a bout of COVID left me with a number of tiresome but treatable maladies that had me visiting more physicians over six months than the previous seven decades. Even so, it's all systems go, and I experience no serious pain. So as the Joe Walsh song goes: "I can't complain, but sometimes I still do."

Now then, from my point of view, what appears to have left the old duffers whom *Washington Post* columnist Judith Graham describes as bereft and lonely is that they took work too seriously all along.

A physician or marketing executive accustomed to 80-hour work weeks pretty much loses the capacity for entertaining himself away from the job. Being widowed or divorced on top of that leaves them entirely at a loss for things to do and people to talk to. Often, their wives appear to have been their only portals to the outside world.

"He had no friends or hobbies," reads one profile. "[H]is work as a doctor had been all-consuming. Former colleagues didn't get in touch, nor did he reach out."

The same fellow lamented that the deaths of his three dogs left him all alone in the world. So why not adopt a couple more? The shelters are overrun with needy animals eager to be your best friend. They make you get out and about, dogs do. They help start conversations among strangers — turning them into friends.

Also, this is why you should have taken all those "pointless" liberal arts courses in

college. Or today. Keep learning. Study French. Or art history. Me, I took it a bit far. Reading storybooks was my childhood pastime, then my profession, and now my principal hobby. One thing I've found is that re-reading classic books decades later is to encounter them again for the first time.

Also, watching Boston Red Sox games. If push came to shove, I could make new friends at any bar in New England. Are they really going to let Triston Casas go? How can we stop them?

Not that I could live there. I'm not a fan of Massachusetts winters.

I think it's broadly true what research psychiatrist Robert Waldinger told the *Post* columnist. "Men have a harder time being connected and reaching out." Waldinger directs the Harvard Study of Adult Development, which has studied men's lives over eight decades.

The men who did worst, he said, "didn't have friendships and things they were interested in — and couldn't find them." For all my smugness, it will be noted that my own major pastimes are largely solitary. (I partly blame living in Arkansas, where I've never quite fit in.) But as I say, I'm never bored and remain engaged.

Could I handle it alone? I pray I never have to find out.

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.

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There Just Aren't Enough Services to Prevent Homelessness

When I worked with people experiencing homelessness, I kept hearing about the obstacles to help. Then I experienced them myself.

By ANNABELLE ORTIZ

Do you know who experiences homelessness in the United States? Often, it's hard-working parents who give back to their communities — maybe people just like you.

I worked with people experiencing homelessness and helped women who were survivors of domestic violence. Then I experienced domestic violence myself and lost my own home. After that, I knew first-hand

what it was like.

I'm a woman of faith and married an elder from my church. It came as a terrible shock when I suffered a severe injury from violence at his hands and had to take my children from a previous relationship and flee our home.

There weren't safe openings in the shelters where my children and I could be together, so I sent them to be with their father while I tried to survive homelessness and get back on my feet.

I applied to my state's crime victims compensation fund to help secure housing and reunite with my children, but this process took over two years. In the meantime, I had major surgery whose complications resulted in permanent disability and left me unable to sustain meaningful employment.

I was disabled, separated from my children, homeless, and in shock. Life wasn't supposed to be this way.

When my victim's compensation funds finally came through, I got my children and relocated us to another state where we would be safe. I was accepted into a leadership institute and began cooking meals for those in need. I started my own ministry.

The leadership program even used my story to train social workers.

Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) helped us through the hard times. With prayer and a modest safety net, I was back on track.

Then COVID-19 hit. The homeless shelter I cooked for closed down due to insufficient funds. SSDI mistakenly halted my payments due to a clerical error that would take months to sort out. My rent skyrocketed overnight. I quickly fell behind on rent and ended up back on the street.

Here's what I've learned from the people I've ministered to — and my own bad luck: There are precious few services that help prevent homelessness. The obstacles to assistance when we need it are many. You must be destitute to receive help, and as soon as you begin to get back on your feet, that critical assistance can be pulled away.

Further, it's more expensive to have assistance programs kick in after the tsunami and toss us a sponge for cleanup. We need to prevent the storm from happening in the first place. We aren't homeless due to desire. Grave things have happened to us, most of them beyond our control.

If we are ill, we need health care. If our partners are abusing us or our children, we need assistance safely relocating. If our rent skyrockets, we need rental assistance and a Renters Tax Credit. If there isn't enough affordable housing, we need to build it.

If we're disabled or lose work, we need reliable and sufficient disability and unemployment insurance. And if our children are hungry, we need help putting food on the table.

None of this is as expensive as the huge tax breaks politicians give the wealthy or the over one trillion dollars a year spent largely to increase the profits of the defense industry. These are questions of priorities.

Ask yourself, if what happened to me happened to you or your loved one, what would you want?

Policies that ensure our safety, security, and prosperity. That's what we all want. Together, we can demand it.

Annabelle Ortiz is a mother, founder of GHB911 Community Outreach, and a passionate advocate with RESULTS from New Hampshire. This op-ed was distributed by OtherWords.org.

OMG! The Venezuelans Took Over!

By JOHN YOUNG

I had just turned off MSNBC when the doorbell rang.

A dark-skinned man stood outside. He pointed a menacing weapon at my head (later Googled as a laser-sighted bazooka).

"Salir de su casa," he ordered.

Venezuelan for, "Get outta your house."

We exited onto barren streets, hands aloft.

"So, Trump was right," I said.

We didn't believe him. He said Venezuelans had taken over Aurora, Colo., with weapons "never imagined" even by our military. "Ultimate guns," he said.

Indeed he said "large sections of an area of Colorado" had already been taken over by the Venezuelans. Well, heck, I thought, "Oh, maybe Commerce City or Broomfield. Possibly Hugo or Holyoke." He wasn't talking about my section of Colorado, surely.

Well, as the ball caps say, "Trump was

right." And how gullible was I?

When he talked about an immigrant takeover of my state, I shouldn't have listened to Colorado officials like our governor, who said the tale about Venezuelans taking over Aurora (as opposed to causing problems at one run-down apartment complex there) was just another insane claim from a man desperate to monopolize the conversation.

It all sounded improbable. Aurora, after all, is a Greater Denver community of 400,000. City officials said the Venezuelan gang that sparked stories Trump exploited was, maybe, 10 young men. Eight were in jail.

I had trouble understanding therefore how two Venezuelans could subjugate 400,000 Venezuelans.

Some people think big. That's not me. That's Donald Trump.

I should have ignored comments in *The New York Times* by Aurora Mayor Mike Coffman, a former long-serving member of Congress and a Republican.

Coffman said Trump's warnings about Venezuelan gangs were "overstated claims fueled by social media and through select news organizations."

Apparently, I should have selected news organizations better. Sean Hannity would have told me straight. Then I'd have

had my Louisville Slugger ready when the doorbell rang.

Instead, we didn't listen to Donald Trump. While we slept, those two Venezuelans took over our state. Your state is next.

Don't laugh. Look at what the Haitians have done to Springfield, Ohio.

Hundreds of thousands of dark-skinned Haitians! Illegal Haitians! Dogs and cats for dinner! (Well, there are only a few hundred. And they're all legal residents. No pets eaten. None. Details. Details.) Trump does have one pertinent fact correctly. The Haitians are dark-skinned.

JD Vance first sounded the alarm for all that which had pinged through the social media vine.

The mainstream media did the expected — asking city officials who might have known pets were on the grill.

This affirms Trump's "enemy of the people" assertion. The mainstream media are wholly incapable of sheer hysteria when a sagging political campaign needs it.

Fortunately, people like Vance will hear what people in authority — Springfield police, Springfield mayor, Ohio governor — say about the claims in question and simply disregard it. And so, hysteria can be ours.

Knowing how two Venezuelans took over a whole state — Colorado, ski resorts and all — and left me homeless, I take of-

fense at Ohio Democratic Congressman Tim Ryan's statement that Trump and Vance "don't give a damn about who they use, what bodies they step over to gain power."

Listen, Trump and Vance are just trying to warn us.

In the news: Haitians in Springfield have filed a criminal affidavit against Trump-Vance for causing panic and deathly recriminations based on wholly baseless and criminally reckless claims.

Why, sure: What Trump-Vance did in Springfield is like shouting "botulism!" in a crowded pizza parlor. It's unconscionable. But isn't that what the First Amendment is for?

Meanwhile, in Colorado ...

How I wish I had listened to Trump when he warned what the Venezuelans — all two of them — would do.

I miss my backyard. I miss my bed. Two pieces of cold pizza have my name on them in what used to be my fridge.

They even confiscated my baseball bat.

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Cover Story...

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Most of his staff has just resigned, and prominent Republicans have advised him to drop out of the race. In a tone that sounded like anguish, his rival, NC Attorney General Josh Stein, told *The New York Times* “I cannot have that man be my governor.”

What’s Robinson’s political future? He has none, most people would answer. But the more intriguing question is how such a man came to be. There is no obvious social or political narrative that could produce a Black White supremacist, as I described him in a previous column (“Tar Heel Trauma,” May 1 *TPP*). It’s almost as if poor Mark was stolen from his mother as an infant and raised by some chapter of the Klan or the Proud Boys as an experiment, to see if they could produce an ebony version of the classic back-roads racist known in the South as the “killer redneck.” He checks all the boxes, despising Jews, Muslims, homosexuals and school-shooting victims, as well as the civil rights movement and its heroes. “Worse than a maggot,” was his verdict on Rev. King. Women get no respect either. His only loves, to judge from his rhetoric, are guns and fetuses. Where did the Republicans ever find this sad creep, deranged and disfigured with what appears to be self-hatred? (Greensboro, North Carolina.) Among his frequent targets are Black celebrities like the Obamas, Oprah Winfrey, Al Sharpton, Bill Cosby and Serena Williams. Robinson is so weird he seems almost extraterrestrial.

After November, we can leave this strange, damaged man to the psychiatrists. But it’s not so certain that an equally demented candidate with an orange face will be joining Mr. Robinson in obscurity, or in the locked back wards where they both belong. We need to keep reminding ourselves that Robinson was not a fringe candidate who hoped to poll in double figures. He was the chosen candidate, already in prominent public office, of a national political party that represents close to half the voters in North Carolina. In our state he could pass for a candidate of the establishment.

North Carolina politics don’t often make the nation’s front pages, and when they do it’s rarely for something we’re proud of. There was our one-term congressman Madison Cawthorn, a paraplegic wild child who tried to carry a loaded pistol onto a commercial flight, and managed several attempts at sexual assault from his wheelchair. There’s congresswoman Virginia Foxx, who has set new standards for

Paleolithic ignorance. And before them a man I voted for, U.S. Senator John Edwards, who sank his presidential campaign by filming a sex act with his mistress. Before them all, our Neanderthal Sen. Jesse Helms.

The most recent Tar Heel to achieve a front-page moment was the would-be assassin Ryan Routh, a psycho from Robinson’s hometown of Greensboro, who apparently plotted to shoot Trump on his golf course at Mar-a-Lago. Even those of us who deplore Routh’s homicidal impulse might empathize with his unhinging sense of alarm as this election looms. With all this unappetizing history, few of us are in the mood to wave our state flag or sing “The Old North State” (Tho’ the scornor may sneer at, and wittings defame her/ Still our hearts swell with gladness whenever we name her...) But some good may come out of our latest debacle, the tragicomic rise and fall of Mark Robinson. In this polarized republic, there must still be a few detached, uncommitted voters who will respond to the Nude Africa posts with sheer astonishment, and take a long, hard second look at the whole Republican Party.

To see Trump and Robinson together, this mismatched set of hulking, raving monsters spitting out lies, insults and profanity, is to wonder if the Republican Party has gone off the rails entirely. It’s long been obvious that the GOP recruits and embraces the lunatic fringe. You saw them at the Capitol Jan. 6. But in this chaotic third decade of the 21st century, the MAGA-poisoned party of my forefathers has become *the lunatic fringe*. When J.D. Vance appeared at a Pennsylvania event organized by Lance Wallnau, an “evangelical influencer” who preaches medieval theocracy and accuses Kamala Harris of witchcraft, it marked a closer union with the unfettered, unhinged Ultra-Right than the GOP has ever risked before. When you embrace Laura Loomer and Alex Jones as your teammates, the last trace of reason is receding in your rearview mirror.

Where civilized conservatives once held court, we see a wilderness of conspiracy and paranoia, ruled by a madman and haunted by odd and threatening creatures like J.D. Vance, Tucker Carlson and Marjorie Taylor Greene. A great dark swamp, where fascist fantasies grow wild. In North Carolina, as in much of the South, the parties have switched identities, to the bewilderment of young and old. I’m old enough to remember when Tar Heel Republicans were some of the good guys, mostly tolerant mountain moderates who opposed the segregationist Dixiecrats. But those Jim Crow

Dixiecrats are all Republicans now, and they’re the harsh kind of Republicans who would have puzzled Ronald Reagan or even Richard Nixon, who implemented Pat Buchanan’s infamous “Southern strategy.” A few years ago when this transition seemed complete, a reporter asked the great Negro League baseball player Buck Leonard, our neighbor up the road in Rocky Mount, how he could still call himself a Republican. Leonard replied “Y’all ever hear of Abraham Lincoln?”

It’s merciful that neither Mr. Leonard nor Mr. Lincoln is here to see what Mr. Trump has done to their Grand Old Party. North Carolina, which voted the high road with Barack Obama as recently as 2008, has to answer for the bizarre career of Mark Robinson. Online, a woman dismissed by a conservative website as an academic “wacko” declared that the devastation of our mountain counties by Hurricane Helene was divine punishment for our support of Donald Trump and MAGA acolytes like Robinson. But after a period of awakening that included progressive presidents from Texas, Georgia and Arkansas, much of the red-state South is backsliding toward its reactionary race-shaped roots. This runs much deeper than the dubious charms of the MAGA cult and its demented messiah. At a N.C. symposium a few years ago, focused on the legacy of the W.J. Cash classic “The Mind of the South,” the Alabama-bred *New York Times* editor Howell Raines suggested that his South has “a habit of political servitude, a habit of obedience that is deeply rooted in our psyche, and is influencing the political choices of voters up to this day.” The White South, Raines meant, and its weak resistance to a belligerent authoritarian might explain Trump and many other lamentable politicians— all of them now Republicans.

Mark Robinson is a nasty piece of work. But the extent of his party’s hypocrisy was exposed when ranking Republicans including Trump, who had hailed him as “Martin Luther King on steroids,” quickly threw him under the bus. Not because the Nude Africa posts offended them, of course, but because they might have cost Trump votes in North Carolina. Robinson now carries “too much baggage,” said one Republican senator. Baggage? He’s never been accused of raping or molesting anyone, as far as I know, or convicted of multiple felonies. Comparing Trump’s baggage to Robinson’s is like comparing a shipping container to a change purse. From impeachments to felonies to public behavior that would shame a baboon, Trump invented

baggage. He is *baggage* — way too much, I hope, for his captive party to carry across the finish line

The irony of the Republican Party’s rapid retreat from sanity is that it has always presented itself as the party of “real” Americans, of wholesome mainstream, Main Street citizens opposed to any radical change. “Normal” men and women. There’s no way to work out a common, widely accepted definition for “normal.” But aren’t most of us able to recognize what isn’t — a candidate like Donald Trump or Mark Robinson, some vulgar, flamboyant psychopath with an ego the size of Bolivia? You wouldn’t want one of them to meet your family or mow your lawn, far less dominate the Western world. That ought to be a huge advantage for the Democrats, for Kamala Harris and Tim Walz. If either of them lived on your street, you could imagine waving good morning, sharing a backyard barbecue, exchanging Christmas presents. If Trump or Robinson came waddling up your driveway, you’d drop your pruning shears and run the other way.

The media, even the responsible media struggling to defeat Trump, haven’t been honest with their readers about the width and depth of the ex-president’s mental illness or spectacular unsuitability for any public office. How crazy is he? You’ve heard of projection? At a rally in Wisconsin the Orange Crusher called Kamala Harris “mentally disabled” and “mentally impaired,” prompting Gov. J.B. Pritzker of Illinois to observe, “Whenever he says things like that, he’s talking about himself but trying to project it onto others.”

I’m grateful to *The New York Times* for running interviews, with photographs, of many of the women who accuse Trump of sexual assault. But in most ways, even the *Times* treats the 2024 presidential election as if it were the usual horse race, with two candidates to cover, two to choose from. It isn’t, not at all. There’s only one intelligent, responsible, cognitively stable adult at the top of your ballot. Her name is Harris.

Hal Crowther is a longtime journalist whose latest essay collection, “Freedom Fighters and Hellraisers: A Gallery of Memorable Southerners” (Blair, 2018) won the gold medal for nonfiction at the Independent Press Awards, as well as the gold medal for essays at the Foreword Review Awards. A winner of the Baltimore Sun’s H.L. Mencken Writing Award, he is the author of “An Infuriating American: The Incendiary Arts of H.L. Mencken” (Iowa, 2015) and four previous collections of essays. Email deleennis1@gmail.com.

Neighbor Helping Neighbor Takes Many Forms in Hurricane-Hit Western N.C.

A renowned craft school in rural North Carolina shifts from instruction to serving victims of Hurricane Helene. Down the mountain, the town of Spruce Pine struggles to restore essential services.

By SARAH MELOTTE, Daily Yonder

This time of year, Penland School of Craft in Western North Carolina is usually welcoming artists from all over the country to participate in a semester-long session with world-renowned instructors in sculpture, book-binding, print-making, and more.

In early October, instead, they fed and sheltered people who have been uprooted by the disastrous force of Hurricane Helene.

The craft school’s quick pivot from normal operations to serving as an impromptu disaster-relief facility is being replicated across Western North Carolina, as people who were spared by the flood figure out

how they can help their neighbors who weren’t.

The century-old school has residential and food-service facilities, which make it uniquely suited to help people who are trapped or made homeless by the storm. But Penland’s first qualification for the job is that it didn’t suffer catastrophic damage from the storm.

“Compared to the immediate surrounding areas, we’re really lucky,” said Ian Henderson, director of operations at Penland School of Craft, in a phone interview with the Daily Yonder.

The school has canceled its fall sessions, according to its website.

Penland sits on top of a mountain in Mitchell County, one of the North Carolina counties hit with deadly flooding and landslides from Hurricane Helene the last weekend of September. Helene dropped 24 inches of rain in the Mitchell County town of Spruce Pine, about a 15 minute drive down the mountain from Penland.

Hurricane Helene claimed 130 lives and counting, 56 of which are in North Carolina alone.

Western North Carolina is essentially closed because of damage to roads and bridges. The storm chewed up everything from mountain back roads to Interstates 40 and 26, the main arteries serving the region. Secondary and tertiary roads fared even worse from erosion, mudslides, and tree-falls.

Photos of the Penland campus show large numbers of downed trees but none of the extensive flood damage that struck other areas.

Just down the mountain in Spruce Pine, for example, the North Toe River inundated downtown. Water, sewer, power, phone, and internet were out. The town government posted on social media Oct. 1) that it had limited phone and internet service at the police and fire departments. Staff from the city of Greensboro, North Carolina — three hours away with I-40 closed — were helping with water lines and rebuilding the road to the dam that holds the city’s water supply. The town had placed a generator at the sewage treatment plant, but the road to the plant was gone.

“We are down but not out,” the post said.

Unlike other small towns that Helene has left in desperate straits, Spruce Pine (population 2,200) has gotten some national press attention. That’s because the flood closed down a nearby high-quality quartz mine that supplies the tech industry with materials for microchips and solar panels,

according to National Public Radio.

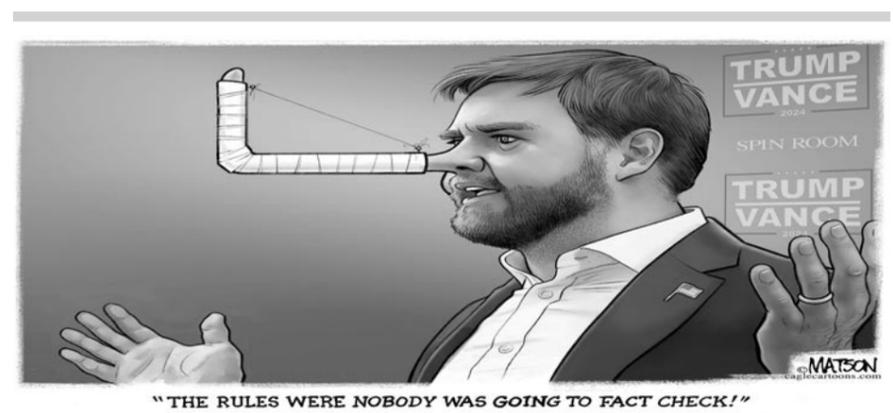
Search the internet for “Spruce Pine, North Carolina,” and, as of Oct. 1, the first page-and-a-half of headlines focus on the flood’s impact on the tech industry.

At Penland, employees, students, and instructors were on campus when the storm hit, and most of them are finding shelter on Penland’s campus, living in the school’s lodging facilities and receiving three meals a day through the school’s dining facility and kitchen staff.

Penland is also temporarily housing local Mitchell County residents who have nowhere else to go, including some neighbors who hiked up the mountain in search of aid. Volunteers are also compiling lists of community members who haven’t been accounted for and providing wifi connections through a donated Starlink satellite hookup.

Volunteers at Penland make supply trips to Johnson City, Tennessee, 54 miles

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“THE RULES WERE NOBODY WAS GOING TO FACT CHECK!”

The Climactic Moment When Walz Pierced Vance's Slick Veneer and Exposed His Totalitarianism

By DICK POLMAN

We all know that vice presidential debates rarely move the public opinion needle. In 2020 Donald Trump was thrown out of office by a record 81 million voters because he was Donald Trump, not because a fly took up residence on Mike Pence's head. In 1988, the senior George Bush won 53.4% of the popular vote – we haven't seen a percentage that high in all the years since – despite the fact that his understudy, Dan Quayle, was roundly mocked in the veep debate as a callow lightweight.

So it's highly unlikely that the Oct. 1 Walz-Vance showdown will reshape the '24 campaign. Both guys were too intent on playing it safe, per the instructions from higher-ups. J.D. Vance's goal was to sheath his claws, hide his MAGA zealotry, and ooze calculated compassion – whereas Tim Walz's goal was to soft-pedal his progressivism and stress bipartisanship. Vance never brought up his summertime lie that National Guardsman Walz chickened out of Iraq. And Walz never mentioned Vance's "childless cat lady" weirdness.

Indeed, Walz in Minnesota Nice mode did not assail Vance for what he is: a slick serial-lying extremist...until finally, as the debate clock was set to expire, we got the

moment many of us had been waiting for. It's already a viral sensation.

Four years ago, Vance refused to accept Joe Biden's election victory. That made him fair game for this question from the moderators: "The governors of every state in the nation, Republicans and Democrats, certified the 2020 election results and sent a legal slate of electors to Congress for January 6th. Senator Vance, you have said you would not have certified the last presidential election and would have asked the states to submit 'alternative' electors. That has been called unconstitutional and illegal. Would you again seek to challenge this year's election results, even if every governor certifies the results?"

His instinct was to slip-slide away: "I think we're focused on the future." He never answered that crucial question. Instead, we got this:

"What President Trump has said is that there were problems in 2020. And my own belief is that we should fight about those issues, debate those issues peacefully in the public square. And that's all I've said. And that's all that Donald Trump has said. Remember, he said that on January 6th, the protesters ought to protest peacefully. And on Jan. 20th, what happened? Joe Biden became the President ... (Trump) said that protesters should peacefully protest on January 6th ... He peacefully gave over power on January the 20th, as we have done for 250 years in this country."

Trump "peacefully gave over power"? Need we bother to annotate Vance's lies and diversionary drivel? Like the fact that 62 judges, including Trump appointees, said there were not "problems" with the balloting; that Trump's own cybersecurity chief and his own attorney general said the bal-

loting was secure; that Trump goaded his thugs to attack the Capitol and then watched it on TV for hours while people died and more than 100 cops were beaten; that "Joe Biden became president" on Jan. 20th only because Trump's violent putsch failed; that "peaceful" Trump is still raising money for the jailed Capitol rioters?

Over to you, Tim Walz:

"January 6 (was) the first time in American history that a president or anyone tried to overturn a fair election and the peaceful transfer of power. And here we are four years later in the same boat...This was a threat to our democracy in a way that we had not seen. And it manifested itself because of Donald Trump's inability to say – he is still saying – he didn't lose the election."

He then posed a simple question to Vance: "Did he lose the 2020 election?"

Vance: "Tim, I'm focused on the future."

Walz: "That is a damning non-answer." Damning, predictable, and pathetic. Vance couldn't muster a simple "Yes" because he is tethered to a fascist. And when you're tethered to a fascist, you gotta stay in goosetep.

Walz took that ball and ran with it: "I'm pretty shocked by this. (Trump) lost the election ... When Mike Pence made that decision (on Jan. 6) to certify that election, that's why Mike Pence isn't on this stage. What I'm concerned about is, where is the firewall with Donald Trump? Where is the firewall if he knows he could do anything...? So, America, I think you've got a really clear choice on this election of who's going to honor that democracy and who's going to honor Donald Trump."

Granted, many urgent issues were

raised during the debate – with Vance lying at virtually every turn, like when he said that Trump "saved" Obamacare (as president, Trump repeatedly tried to kill it); like when he said that VP Kamala Harris hasn't invested in clean energy jobs for American workers (Harris broke the 50-50 Senate tie to pass the Inflation Reduction Act, which funds billions in clean energy jobs for American workers); like when he complained that our solar panels are manufactured in China (80% are manufactured here); like when he blamed "millions of illegal immigrants" for the housing shortage (this shortage has plagued us since the Great Recession); like when he insisted that he has never supported a national abortion ban (two years ago, these were his exact words: "I certainly would like to see abortion illegal nationally").

And to think this guy could be one Big Mac away from the big chair.

All the aforementioned issues are vitally important. But none are as existential, as fundamental to our democracy, as the willingness to abide by the certified results of a presidential election.

Will Vance's lies about '20 and his refusal to answer the key question about '24 ("Would you again seek to challenge this year's election results?") propel swing voters toward Harris and Walz? I doubt they will, if the history of veep debates is any guide. But they should.

Dick Polman, a veteran national political columnist based in Philadelphia and a Writer in Residence at the University of Pennsylvania, writes at DickPolman.net and is distributed by Cagle Cartoons newspaper syndicate. Email him at dickpolman7@gmail.com.

MAGA's Nazi Infestation Just Got Worse

By JOE CONASON

How unsurprising is it that former President Donald Trump appeared recently at an event supposedly devoted to opposing antisemitism – and proceeded to deliver a speech dripping with antisemitic innuendo and contempt for American Jews?

Like so much of what Trump says and does, his remarks at the "Combating Antisemitism" affair in Washington, D.C., expressed a bitter grievance. He resents the fact that Jewish voters in the United States remain overwhelmingly liberal and Democratic, which means only a minority of them vote for him. He bluntly argued that his support for Israel's right-wing and bloodstained government somehow entitles him to Jewish votes, even though many Jews are critical of Israeli policy and political leadership.

Hours later, at an event for Israeli Americans, he expanded on the same themes but went much further, seeking to scapegoat the entire Jewish community for the electoral failure he now fears:

"If I don't win this election, and the Jewish people would really have a lot to do

with that if that happens, because at 40%, that means 60% of the people are voting for the enemy ..."

Aside from his noxious description of his political rivals as "the enemy," Trump's attempt to blame Jews in advance for a Republican defeat at the polls is both absurd and sinister. Absurd because Jews are a tiny fraction of the electorate, mostly concentrated in states where he has no chance to win anyway. Sinister because the MAGA movement that Trump has spawned is crawling with neo-Nazis, White nationalists and antisemites who are already primed to spread hatred of Jews and other forms of racism.

And he knows it.

Trump's rise over the past decade has seen the mainstreaming of every extremist ideology on the right – a category that encompasses antisemitism along with racism, homophobia, misogyny, Islamophobia and the violent antagonism toward immigrants that he and his vice presidential nominee J.D. Vance now encourage routinely. As the Republican Party moved sharply rightward under Trump's leadership, the most vicious hatemongers have sprung up to proclaim their bigotry loudly, while proudly identifying as MAGA.

The latest mortifying episode involves Mark Robinson, the GOP candidate for governor of North Carolina, a pious moralist whose raunchy online persona was suddenly exposed by a CNN investigative team.

Much of what Robinson wrote on the "Nude Africa" porn site is too scandalous to be recounted on television, including his sexual encounters with his sister-in-law. What could be reported in full were his viciously bigoted screeds. "I am a Black Nazi," he wrote, declaring his admiration for Hitler and the genocidal murderer's autobiography, "Mein Kampf."

But here's the problem for Republicans and especially Trump, who endorsed this weirdo fulsomely while comparing him favorably to Martin Luther King Jr.: Unlike Robinson's strange sexual preoccupations, his antisemitism was no secret. He openly posted anti-Jewish and conspiratorial material on social media for many years, and refused to disown or apologize for those offenses. And by now nobody should be shocked that Trump and the MAGA Republicans, including his media clique, have lionized a Black Nazi.

The proliferation of White nationalist and Nazi-adjacent personalities at the highest levels of the Republican Party, directly attributed to MAGA and Trump, is pervasive. Candace Owens, a commentator dismissed from a right-wing website for her antisemitic ravings, was recently invited to headline a campaign fundraiser with Donald Trump Jr. Jack Posobiec, a right-wing operative repeatedly promoted by Trump, has collaborated with neo-Nazis and distributed antisemitic posts on social media. Wendy Rogers, an Arizona GOP state senator, just

recently posted Nazi song lyrics on X, which was only her latest antisemitic emission.

The list goes on, including the nasty little pro-Hitler podcaster Nick Fuentes, who dined at Mar-a-Lago with Trump, as well as Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, the "Jewish space lasers" theorist.

And then there's Tucker Carlson, the former Fox News host and close Trump confidant, who not long ago aired a show with a pseudo-historian whose work aims at absolving the Third Reich of responsibility for the Holocaust and whitewashing Hitler. Carlson, long a fan favorite of neo-Nazis here and abroad, approvingly echoed the recitation of revisionist lies.

This is a sickening phenomenon from which most Republicans – and too many in the media – have long averted their eyes. Trump may be the most reliable ally of the far right in Israel, but he represents a growing danger to American Jews.

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.

Melotte...

Continued from previous page

northwest of the school, to gather food and clean water for those on campus. The most dangerous part of the journey is the winding road up to the school that switches back and forth across the mountain. Henderson said the earth under some sections of the road has been eroded.

On Saturday, Sept. 28, a group of white-water rafting professionals visited Penland with their equipment to get to some of the harder to reach spots in the mountains. Henderson said they shared a breakfast at Penland before they headed out on Sunday morning.

Mitchell County is not the only rural area in desperate need of aid. Some business owners in the town of Marshall, a community of 796 that sits on the banks of the

French Broad River in rural Madison County, to the west of Mitchell County, said water rose up to seven feet in their buildings. Entire homes floated down the river.

At a press conference in Asheville, Governor Roy Cooper of North Carolina said that the state's Department of Transportation has deployed more than 1,600 employees and contract crews to repair roads and bridges.

"But travel in Western North Carolina remains limited and dangerous," Cooper said.

Sarah Melotte is a Daily Yonder staff writer and data reporter. She lives in Bakersville, North Carolina, in Mitchell County. Tim Marema contributed reporting to this article. This story was originally published in the Daily Yonder. For more rural reporting and small-town stories visit dailyyonder.com.



Opportunity for All

By DAVID MCCALL

It broke Cynthia Overby's heart over the years to see her students struggle to afford menstrual products, try to get by without them or skip school some days for the privacy of home.

The longtime teacher later worked with an Illinois legislator to make these essentials available on college campuses and cheered when Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz signed legislation providing them in his own state's public schools.

Overby, long active in the United Steelworkers (USW), knows that America's greatness depends on lifting everyone up and providing opportunity to all. That's why she became an educator. It's the reason she's devoted decades to civic and union activism.

And it's why she's voting for Vice President Kamala Harris and her running mate, Walz, in the Nov. 5 presidential election.

Harris and Walz want to empower the disadvantaged, build the middle class and ensure retirement security, harnessing the enormous strides of the past four years to continue America's march forward.

The other candidates, Donald Trump and J.D. Vance, threaten all of that. As the two bumble through a campaign devoid of decency, not to mention good ideas, they and their supporters stoop so low as to mock Walz's kindness for others.

"That a man implemented a policy like that so warms my heart," said Overby, a member of the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR) in Granite City, Ill., who has a few choice words of her own for the out-of-touch, low-class Republicans who call Walz "Tampon Tim."

When she taught children with varying abilities, she told her students, "Help each other." Now, she devotes part of her retirement to a super-active SOAR chapter that fights childhood hunger, raises scholarships for college students, sends holiday gifts to U.S. troops overseas and supports a

local emergency shelter for women and children.

She insists that America's leaders not only demonstrate the same level of compassion but share her determination to level the playing field for others.

"To me, it's the most black-and-white situation," said Overby, comparing Trump's politics of hate with a forward-looking Harris-Walz platform that's "for the people, to better serve the people—not just an individual or a small group—but the people."

Among many other examples, Harris and Walz intend to expand the child tax credit and provide extra support to parents of newborns. They also pledged to work for national paid family leave, ensuring families have both the money and the time to raise children.

And they've shown that they mean what they say.

Harris cast a tie-breaking vote in the Senate to overcome Republican obstructionism and advance the American Rescue Plan, which provided a temporary increase in the child tax credit during the pandemic, while Walz signed legislation that provides Minnesotans with the nation's leading child tax credit along with widely praised paid sick and family leave programs.

Just as important, Harris and Walz want to crack down on corporate price-gouging, lower prescription drug costs and ensure Americans who rent homes have the opportunity to buy their own. Right now, private-equity firms and other predatory property owners rig the housing market, raising rents while also pushing the dream of home ownership further out of reach for many young families.

"My daughter lives in L.A., and there's no way" she can buy a house now, said Dawn Dooley, president of USW Local 8599, which represents workers in the Fontana (Calif.) Unified School District, noting the unfair housing market holds down her own family as well as those she serves in city schools.

While an expanded child tax credit and other Harris-Walz proposals offer a clear stepping stone for Fontana families, many of whom live in poverty, Trump and the Republicans want to step on working people.

Project 2025, a Republican game plan for shredding

democracy and lining the pockets of the wealthy on the backs of average Americans, calls for cutting Medicare and raising taxes on the middle class while giving more Trump-style tax cuts to the 1%. It even calls for cutting back the number of children eligible for school-meal programs, just to save rich people a few bucks.

Dooley, a former cafeteria worker, dreads the return of days when students either went hungry or experienced the embarrassment of qualifying for free- or reduced-price lunches.

It never failed that at the beginning of every month, she recalled, some students had to forgo lunches either because their parents forgot to re-register them for the subsidized meal program or a computer glitch temporarily knocked them off the rolls.

Today, the school district provides meals to all children, no questions asked. And Dooley said she expects the next president to embrace the same humane, common-sense philosophy.

"The kids eat, no matter what," she said.

Dan Jackson's family-sustaining union job at the Bobcat plant in Gwinner, N.D., enables him to support Toys for Tots and other community causes. But Jackson, a member of USW Local 560, knows that what disadvantaged families truly need are pathways to the middle class.

That means continuing the manufacturing renaissance, begun by the Biden-Harris administration, that's created millions of jobs so far. It means keeping the focus on fair trade and Buy American policies, Jackson said, citing "all the small companies" in Gwinner that employ workers supplying the Bobcat plant.

And it means giving more workers, across all industries, the freedom to exercise their labor rights and build better lives.

"I want to see the PRO Act," said Jackson, referring to the Protecting the Right to Organize Act, legislation that would make it easier for workers to form unions and hold employers accountable for violating labor rights. "And I know Harris and Walz are in favor of it."

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

Wake Up Democrats! Trump Is Eating Your Working-Class Lunch

Trump has promised to stick John Deere with a 200% tariff if it outsources U.S. jobs to Mexico; the Dems responded by getting a billionaire to call this 'insanity.'

By LES LEOPOLD

"The greed of the John Deere company is giving President Biden the perfect opportunity to win back working-class voters. All he needs to do is put up a major fight to stop Deere from shipping U.S. jobs to Mexico."

I wrote that on June 12, 2024, and the Democrats ignored me. Donald Trump did not. He just called for a 200% tariff on all John Deere imports if the company exports U.S. jobs to Mexico.

How have the Democrats responded to Trump? In the worst way possible. They got billionaire Mark Cuban to say that Trump's clumsy effort to save 1,000 jobs is "insanity...ridiculously bad and destructive." Cuban didn't even mention the plight of the workers.

Cuban's argument is nothing short of embarrassing. He says that since the proposed tariff on Deere is higher than the one proposed on Chinese imports, Deere will be unable to compete with Chinese tractors and farm equipment. This will potentially lead, he said, to the "destruction of one of the most historic companies in the United States of America."

What exactly is so insane? Trump's goal isn't to tariff John Deere out of business. His goal is to keep Deere from exporting 1,000 jobs. Why is it insane to preserve those 1,000 decent-paying unionized U.S. jobs?

Cuban ignores the question of why Deere feels the need to ship jobs to Mexico. Deere argues that it must do so in order to stay competitive. That leads to a Catch-22 proposition: If Deere moves jobs to Mexico and faces a stiff tariff, it will go under. And, if it doesn't move the jobs to Mexico, it will become uncompetitive and also go under.

Cuban is in line with how Deere justifies layoffs to workers: If we don't cut 1,000 jobs now and move to Mexico, more jobs will be cut later.

What's Wrong With This Picture?

The big, bigger, and biggest problem is that the Democrats and Cuban are unable to put workers and their livelihoods front and center. They are unable to mouth these words: The 1,000 Deere workers should keep their jobs precisely because Deere, one of the greediest companies on Earth, is loaded with profits and is pouring billions upon billions into stock buybacks. Which is flat-out true.

Last year, Deere recorded \$10 billion in profits and its CEO was paid \$26.7 million. The company also spent \$12.2 billion on stock buybacks that enriched its top officers as well as the big Wall Street funds that own loads of Deere stock. (What are stock buybacks? A way for a company to boost the price of its shares by buying them on the open market—a blatant form of stock manipulation that was illegal until deregulated by the Reagan administration.)

And here's the simple truth: The move to Mexico is designed to cut labor costs in order to finance those stock buybacks. It has nothing to do with competition, Chinese or otherwise. As any Deere worker would tell us, it's all about greed. The sad thing is that Cuban, a critic of stock buybacks, knows this as well, but refuses to call out Deere.

Mass Layoffs Are Destroying the Democratic Party

My book, "Wall Street's War on Workers," conclusively shows that from 1996 to 2020, as the mass layoff rate rose in any given county in Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin, the Democratic vote declined. In the rural counties, on average, one-third of the workforce suffered through mass layoffs. Losing your job in a county that has few decent employment alternatives does not lead to positive feelings about the party that is supposed to be the defender of the working class.

Trump's intervention in 2017 to stop Carrier from moving an Indiana plant to Mexico was "wildly popular." And yet the Democrats remain tone deaf to the plight of mass layoff victims.

The question is why?

The answer involves understanding what John Kenneth Galbraith called "the conventional wisdom." There's an entrenched sense within the Democratic Party of what kinds of interventions are acceptable in financialized capitalism and which are not. Here are a few of the internalized rules:

- It's OK to tax stock buybacks, but it's not OK to outlaw them.
- It's OK to raise taxes on corporations, but it's not OK to interfere with their power to lay off workers at will.
- It's OK to provide taxpayer funds to subsidize corporations to make investments, but it's not OK to tell corporations that they can't use taxpayer funds to lay off taxpayers or conduct stock buybacks.
- It's OK to regulate new technologies so consumers don't get ripped off, but it's not OK to protect worker livelihoods from such technologies.
- It's OK to bail out private big banks with taxpayer funds, but it's not OK to turn them into public banks.
- It's OK to go after monopoly price gouging, but it's no OK to stop monopoly mass layoffs.
- It's OK to ask for 60-day notice for mass layoffs, but it's not OK to stop compulsory layoffs when they are used to jack up CEO pay, service harmful leveraged buyout debts, or fund stock buybacks.

On a deeper level what ties all this together is a profound faith in corporate power and efficiency. It will be for the better for all of us if billionaire CEOs are free to run their corporations as they see fit. That faith includes protecting the right of corporations to hire and fire at will. After all, new technologies and globalization inevitably involve the churning of jobs, don't they? Trying to stop or slow down that process would only cripple the economy, wouldn't it? And we certainly don't want a country where government officials tell billionaires what to do, do we?

Therefore, a sober, realistic Democratic Party, trapped in its conventional wisdom, will refuse to intervene in corporate hiring and firing. Instead, they travel down the uninspiring and unconvincing path creating an "opportunity economy," growing new jobs for the future from taxpayer subsidies to chipmakers and the like.

Not so with Trump. He swings a wrecking ball at the conventional wisdom. He acts as if he actually believes that jobs should not be exported to lower-wage countries, and that puts him in tune with nearly every U.S. industrial worker. To be sure many Democ-

rats believe the same. The difference is that Trump has no built-in guard rails about intervening in corporate decision-making. You move jobs to Mexico, he bellows, and we'll slap a tariff on your butt that is so high that it will be much cheaper for you to keep the jobs here.

That has to be music to the ears of every Deere worker facing the axe, and it certainly will get the attention of millions of workers who have seen their jobs shipped abroad.

It's Not too Late for the Democrats to Act

Because Trump has difficulty focusing on a coherent message, the field is still open for the Democrats to put forth a new policy that directly affects the jobs of millions of workers. I'm a broken record on this because it's so very simple. Harris should give a primetime talk and focus on the \$700 billion in tax payer money that now goes to private corporations for goods, services, and subsidies: Here's the line she should stress:

No taxpayer money shall go to corporations that lay off taxpayers or conduct stock buybacks.

To clarify the point, she should add some pragmatic flexibility:

For those companies receiving taxpayer money, layoffs must be voluntary, not compulsory, as is already the case for many white-collar employees.

That would seem fair and just to millions of workers, even if Wall Street would find it "insane."

The Democrats must decide, and soon, whether they really are the party of the working class. If they are then they must fight hard to save worker jobs from unabated corporate greed.

Is that really too much to ask?

Les Leopold is the executive director of the Labor Institute and author of "Wall Street's War on Workers: How Mass Layoffs and Greed Are Destroying the Working Class and What to Do About It." Read more of his work at substack.com/@lesleopold1. Follow him on Twitter: @les_leopold

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MARY SANCHEZ



Combs stands accused of longstanding abuse of women and others. Drugs, firearms and tracking were used to keep the women obedient and compliant.

Sean ‘Diddy’ Combs’s Guilt Hinges on How the Women Will Be Judged: Survivors or Willing Participants?

For years, a barely worn blazer has hung in my closet. It features a graceful cut and fabric woven with the colors of the sea, offset by a white silken lining. The garment exemplifies a certain freshness, a vibrancy, a bit of luxury. The designer’s label: SEAN by Sean Combs.

Yes, that brand was the one that went up in flames recently with the unsealing of a federal indictment against Combs, better known by his rapper handles, “Diddy” or “Puff Daddy.”

Now one glance at any of his names and the illusion of elegance fades. Beauty on the outside remains intact, but there’s the creepy feeling that it was crafted by a man who faces eye-popping allegations of sex trafficking, racketeering, kidnapping, forced labor, arson, bribery and obstruction of justice.

All of his monikers are cited in the documents of the Southern District of New York: Sean Combs, “Diddy,” “Puff Daddy,” “PDiddy,” “PD” and “Love.”

He stands accused of longstanding abuse of women and other individuals. More specifically, the allegations include manipulating women “to participate in highly orchestrated performances of sexual activity with male commercial sex workers.”

Drugs were used to keep the women obedient and compliant. The orgies, which he called “freak offs,” could last for days and were videotaped.

He’s accused of luring women into the acts by romantic overtures. But eventually, he and others in his circle would flash firearms at the women, track their whereabouts and even their medical records to control them.

Combs, the rapper/producer/music mogul and businessman, pleaded not guilty to the charges. The judge denied him a \$50 million proposed bail.

Combs outside of jail, even on house arrest and under strict surveillance, is dan-

gerous. He can’t be trusted not to intimidate and coerce witnesses, the judge said in denying Combs’s release.

It’s crucial to understand that Combs’s businesses, including the clothing line that produced my jacket, are linked to the racketeering allegations.

Federal prosecutors believe that Combs leveraged his many lucrative empires – including the clothing line, a television network, a marketing firm, his recording studio, and a liquor brand – in a criminal enterprise that helped facilitate the alleged crimes.

It’s the kingpin argument – everything is intertwined.

As complicated as federal racketeering charges can be to prosecute, Combs’s defense will be quite simple. His attorneys have already leaned into it in public comments.

It goes like this: The women wanted it. The sex, the drugs, performing with male prostitutes for the pleasure of Combs and others, all of it was consensual. Think of it as the groupie’s defense.

Women desiring a romantic or simply a sexual link to music superstars are hardly a new storyline. But being enthralled with a musician, getting introduced into his circle, doesn’t equal consent to the kind of treatment alleged in the indictment of Combs, treatment that includes threats, intimidation and violence.

The women involved will need to be seen as victims, and not as sex objects who willingly offered themselves up for their own and Combs’s pleasure.

It’s a high hurdle, given society. Forget

#MeToo. American mindsets repeatedly, consistently, and appallingly still lean towards blaming and criticizing women. People still need to step back from how they’ve been conditioned to think about women and sex.

What was she doing when she was attacked? What was she wearing? Why was she running alone at night? Why didn’t she fight back?

The questions go beyond curiosity, driving home an expectation for women to somehow prevent their own sexual assaults. Instead, we should focus foremost on expecting men not to attack them.

Take away the enormous fame and wealth of the accused in this case, and the indictment will likely look incredibly familiar to sex trafficking and relationships that turn abusive.

The methods deployed to court, control and then abuse the women aren’t novel. In fact, they’re recounted in domestic violence cases daily, in other courtrooms that don’t draw media attention.

The allure of fine items is dangled first, the hope of romance ignited. Then, the switch up and a descent into manipulation, control and violence.

If the Combs’s case goes to trial, one good outcome would be society’s increased ability to see women in similar situations as survivors.

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The Justice Dept. Challenges Visa’s Predatory Power

The giant credit card company offers a textbook case in abuse of market power to buy off or crush potential competitors and reap excess profits at consumer expense.

By ROBERT KUTTNER

The Biden Justice Department and Federal Trade Commission keep breaking new ground in their efforts to revive antitrust enforcement against a capitalist system that grows ever more concentrated and abusive. The latest major action is a Justice Department suit filed Sept. 24 against Visa, which along with Mastercard has an effective duopoly in credit card networks.

Visa’s market share in merchant debit payments is about 60%. It takes in around \$7 billion a year in swipe fees, in a credit card market that totals about \$4 trillion in annual transactions. The suit documents how Visa uses a combination of illegal carrots and sticks to suppress competition and maintain the market dominance that allows it to charge the excess fees.

Whenever you use your credit card, the merchant gets only about 97 to 98 cents on the dollar. The rest is kicked back to Visa and the bank that issued the card. This amount would be a lot lower if there were more competition among credit card companies. You might not notice the extra two or three cents, but Visa sure does.

“Visa maintains its dominant position,” according to the suit, “not by competing on a level playing field but by insulating itself from competition through exclusionary and anticompetitive means. Visa uses its size, scale, and centrality to the debit transaction ecosystem to penalize those who would switch to a different debit network or to companies that could develop alternative debit products.”

Visa has treated such fintech innovations as Apple Pay and PayPal as an existential threat to its monopoly pricing power.

The Justice Department quotes Visa board of directors’ materials, which admit that Visa’s strategy has been to “partner with emerging players before they become disruptors.” So Visa offers lucrative incentives, sometimes worth hundreds of millions of dollars annually, “to these potential competitors under the express condition that they do not develop a competing product or compete in ways that could threaten Visa’s dominance.” It also charges or threatens exorbitant fees to companies that won’t play its game.

This sounds a lot like Google paying browsers and mobile devices to become the exclusive default search engine, before those companies create their own. In fact, in one instance Visa is paying off the same company—Apple—that Google did. In August, a federal judge ruled that Google’s practices violated the Sherman Act.

Just to head off possible reform in Congress to break its dominance, Visa and its allies have spent at least \$80 million lobbying against a single bill, according to researchers at Accountable.US. It’s money well spent: The Credit Card Competition Act, by mandating more competition, would save consumers and businesses an estimated \$15 billion a year. Interestingly, the

lobbying coalition includes major banker organizations, reflecting Visa’s strategy of giving the banking industry a share of its monopoly profits. Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.), long the champion of credit card reform, is considering another round of hearings.

The Justice Department complaint, running 70 pages, relies heavily on Visa’s own statements of corporate strategy. It reads like a business school case study of how a giant company takes advantage of its market power.

The antitrust laws exist because much of this brand of strategy comes at the expense of consumers, businesses, potential competitors, and innovation. When the history is written of the Biden administration (one hopes continued by a Harris administration), one of its landmark achievements will be the resurrection and innovative use of antitrust enforcement and its creative application to a new era of predatory capitalism.

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

Lawmakers Target Corporations Paying Executives More than Uncle Sam

In the lead-up to the 2025 tax debate, corporations with fat EO paychecks and thin IRS payments are in the spotlight.

By SARAH ANDERSON

Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass), Rep. Greg Casar (D-Texas), and 14 other members of Congress recently sent letters to 35 companies that have been paying their top five executives more than they’re paying in federal taxes. The lawmakers are demanding information about these corporations’ tax avoidance practices and lobbying expenditures.

The list of 35 corporations with fat CEO paychecks and meager IRS payments comes from a joint Institute for Policy Studies-Americans for Tax Fairness report. This study reveals detailed data on each company’s profits, tax payments, and executive pay for the years 2018 through 2022. Our findings reveal just how out of control tax dodging and CEO pay have become in Corporate America.

As a whole, the 35 corporations we analyzed forked out \$9.5 billion over the study period to their top five executives while their combined federal income tax bills came to a negative \$1.8 billion. In other words, rather than paying taxes, these firms – all of them highly profitable – actually received refunds.

Tesla ranks as the most staggering example of excessively paying executives while fleecing taxpayers. Over the period 2018-2022, the electric car maker raked in \$4.4 billion in profits but paid no federal income taxes. Meanwhile, CEO Elon Musk became one of the world’s richest men.

T-Mobile has the second-largest executive compensation payout on the tax-dodging list, having doled out \$675 million to top leaders over the five-year period. Meanwhile, the telecom company paid zilch in taxes despite raking in nearly \$18 billion in profits.

Netflix comes in a close third, with \$652 million in executive compensation, nearly three times what the firm paid in federal income tax from 2018 to 2022. Despite more than \$15 billion in profits over this five-year period, the streaming giant paid just a 1.6 percent effective income tax rate, a rate likely lower than the vast majority of its subscribers.

As our report points out, lavish executive compensation packages and inadequate corporate tax payments are not unrelated. Business leaders have huge personal incentives for pursuing schemes to lower their company’s IRS bills since this leaves more money to pump up their own paychecks.

Lawmakers are putting the spotlight on corporate tax dodging in the lead-up to the debate that will occur in 2025 as a result of the expiration of key provisions in the 2017 Republican tax law. The slashing of the corporate tax rate from 35% to 21% was a central pillar of that law. And while that cut is not expiring next year, many lawmakers and fair tax advocates are calling for corporate tax rate increases and loophole closures to be on the table so that we can raise the revenue needed for urgent social needs.

In their letters to the tax-dodging companies, the members of Congress requested responses by Oct. 8 to a list of questions regarding federal tax payments each firm would’ve owed if the 2017 Republican tax cuts had not been in effect over the past six years versus their actual payments. The lawmakers also ask about each company’s tax-related lobby expenditures and whether they’ve reported these payouts to shareholders.

While many companies promised to funnel windfalls from the 2017 tax cuts into worker pay and bonuses, average middle class earners did not get any wage increases from the law. Instead, corporations blew much of these gains on stock buybacks, which inflate the value of CEOs’ stock-based pay while siphoning money from worker wages and long-term investment.

Next year’s tax debate creates an important opportunity to reverse the corporate tax cuts in the 2017 law while also discouraging the excessive executive compensation that is stoking our nation’s soaring inequality.

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Radio Silence: How Progressives Lost the Airwaves

Inside the GOP's 30-year plan to dominate America's talk radio system...

By THOM HARTMANN

"Whoever controls the media controls the mind." — Jim Morrison

After Ronald Reagan struck down the Fairness Doctrine and the Equal Time Rule, Republican money men got the memo. Whichever party controlled the most states would have a big edge in both the Senate (and thus control of the Supreme Court nominations) and the Electoral College, and most of the low- and medium-population states had relatively inexpensive media markets.

You could buy or lease radio stations for less than a party might spend over a four-year electoral cycle on advertising, so why not simply acquire a few hundred stations across a dozen or more states and program them with rightwing talk radio 24/7?

This became particularly easy after Bill Clinton signed the neoliberal Telecommunications Act of 1996 that ended limits on

how many radio or TV stations a single corporation or billionaire could own. Within months of that bill passing into law, Clear Channel and other networks had gone from small regional groups to massive nationwide radio empires.

The strategy worked, and today there are over 1,500 rightwing radio stations in America, along with another 700 or so religious stations that regularly endorse Republican memes and candidates for office.

Right-wing talk radio has been integral to Republican strategy for decades. In 1994, when Newt Gingrich took control of the House of Representatives, he understood the power of talk radio.

"For the first 100 days of the congressional session," writes Randy Bobbit in his book "Us Against Them," "talk radio hosts broadcast live from the capitol building... When the talk radio throng outgrew the working spaces available, Gingrich allowed some hosts to work in the extra space in his office."

George W. Bush repeatedly invited talk-radio hosts to broadcast from the White House lawn, although Barack Obama cancelled the tradition; Donald Trump then continued the Republican seduction of the media that dated back to the 1990s.

And the GOP hold on most of American radio seems pretty unshakable.

A few years ago, a billionaire acquired one of the largest networks of these stations (800+ stations) and a senator I've known for years invited him and me to meet in his office near the US Capitol. The Senator asked the billionaire — who then owned several hundred stations programming exclu-

sively rightwing content — if he'd ever considered putting some progressive content on the air.

The billionaire leaned back in his chair, took a deep breath, tented his fingers in front of his mouth, and then said, carefully but emphatically:

"I'll never put anybody on my air who wants to raise my taxes."

A few years earlier, I'd sat at lunch at a *Talkers Magazine* conference with a vice president of what is arguably the most influential of the rightwing radio station networks; the company had started out as a bible publishing business and moved from there into radio and then into political radio.

I asked him if he'd consider putting a progressive show on any of his stations (they were all 100% conservative talk) and he bluntly told me it was "never going to happen" because, he said, "It's impossible for a liberal to be a true Christian."

Along with Fox "News," rightwing talk radio is the main way Republicans have seized and held control over multiple red states. History shows that putting progressive programming on the air in those states could reverse that trend.

Back in 2008, Air America was broadcasting on 62 radio stations that covered a large part of America, including rural areas that had never before experienced progressive talk radio. Most of the stations were leased from Clear Channel, which also owned and programmed rightwing radio on several hundred of its stations.

I'm not aware of any studies proving or disproving the hypothesis, but I believe a large factor in President Obama's election

in 2008 was Air America promoting his candidacy relentlessly. It certainly didn't hurt: we reached millions of people every single day during that election.

Liberal talk radio carried important messages that were vital to the rural parts of America. That we are all interdependent; that none of us can entirely stand alone unless we are fabulously rich, which is the sales pitch the billionaires try to sell us with their libertarianism; that without government supports and a social safety net, farming would be so vulnerable and financially dangerous (particularly with our weather emergency) that it wouldn't be viable.

Think about it — political campaigns will pay thousands for a minute of advertising, and find that to be so effective that they continue to buy ads year after year. If that minute can be so influential, how about a host — who's built a relationship with his or her listeners — telling them dozens of times a day who they should vote for and why? You literally can't buy promotion like that; you have to buy the station instead.

I wrote the original business plan for Air America Radio back in December of 2002 with an article I published that month on Common Dreams.

Sheldon and Anita Drobney, two venture capitalists from Chicago, read the article and called me up; the next thing I knew I was in the Midwest helping them and Jon Sinton game out how to bring a progressive network into being. Sheldon wrote about it in his book, "The Road to Air America," including reprinting my original article.

Impatient to prove the concept of pro-

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The Intelligent Conversation We Aren't Having on Immigration

Heading into November, Donald Trump's rhetorical strategy on the economy is simple: Insist it is doomed, blame it on Kamala Harris, and tie everything back to immigration.

By SABRINA HAAKE

The Trump campaign's thematic simplicity—fact-free, lowest-common-denominator forward — appeals to uneducated voters. Insulated from the truth by complicit right wing echo chambers, his base enjoys the koolaid as Trump insists the sky is falling.

Trump/Vance harp about a doomed economy because they need the economy to be doomed, but economic indicators aren't cooperating with their spin. Personalized income is up, post-covid inflation is down, the GDP is stellar, and US stocks keep reaching all-time highs: the S&P 500 has surpassed its own record a staggering 31 times since January 2024.

Mass Deportation Now! Immigration grandstanding is blocking real progress

If Trump's perfidy on the economy is galling, his lies about immigration are criminal.

In February, voters outside the Fox News bubble watched as Trump wrecked a bipartisan border bill, just to preserve immigration for his presidential campaign. After falsely claiming that immigrants were raping, murdering, and killing Americans with fentanyl, he threatened any member of his own party who tried to fix the problem. Overnight, Trump became chief enabler to the chief "criminals" he claimed were killing Americans, and his base didn't even hear about it as Fox News called President Joe Biden an "accessory to murder."

After Trump destroyed the border bill,

over the following seven months, he failed to craft a thoughtful alternative. Trump now says he will round up millions of immigrants, assign each of them an individual serial number, encamp them in detention centers, and simply deport them.

Setting aside the holocaust-adjacent visuals, the worst byproduct of Trump's ignorant and sloppy "solution" is that it makes intelligent, targeted immigration proposals ever more elusive.

Americans have wanted immigration reform for decades

Surveys show that an overwhelming majority of Americans want Congress to fix immigration, and yet, immigration reform has failed for decades.

Significant immigration and border proposals introduced in 2001, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2012, 2013, 2021, and 2022 all failed, largely due to Republican opposition. Who can forget the "Gang of Eight" U.S. Senators (4 Republicans, 4 Democrats) who crafted a comprehensive proposal to fix immigration 10 years ago, only to watch it die under the Republican leadership of House Speaker John Boehner?

The proposal would have provided the kind of industry-specific, thoughtful approach we needed then, and still need now. It would have given tech and science employers greater access to urgently-needed engineers and foreign graduates with advanced degrees. It included a merit-based review system to award more green cards based on the nation's needed skills and education. It created a legalization plan for undocumented immigrants already living and working in the country.

The immigration bill Trump killed this year would have done even more. As GOP Sen. Mitt Romney of Utah put it to CNN, "(T)he fact that (Trump) would communicate to Republican senators and congress-people that he doesn't want us to solve the border problem because he wants to blame Biden for it is ... really appalling."

Effective immigration policy is key to growth

Last year, Republican governors correctly cited the country's economic dependence on immigrant labor, describing job vacancies that were hurting the U.S. economy. "In meaningful ways, every U.S. state shares a border with the rest of

the world, and all of them need investment, markets and workers from abroad."

Trump's one size fits all immigration policy ignores this economic reality. Many employers, in many regions, are desperate for workers. Labor-intensive industries in construction, landscaping, healthcare, and farming rely on immigrant labor to stay in business. Farmers in particular rely on migrant laborers to work with livestock and harvest field and orchard produce in sweltering heat. Two years ago, the Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association begged Congress to expand their accessible labor pool with immigration, complaining that the American dairy industry needs immigrants to address "an acute national labor crisis," that "would soon worsen."

It was no different this year in Springfield, Ohio, where CEOs were desperate to attract migrant workers. After a successful effort by the city's leadership and Chamber of Commerce to attract new industries and businesses to Springfield, there was an acute labor shortage. Haitian immigrants, whom employers have described as having an outstanding work ethic, began arriving to take

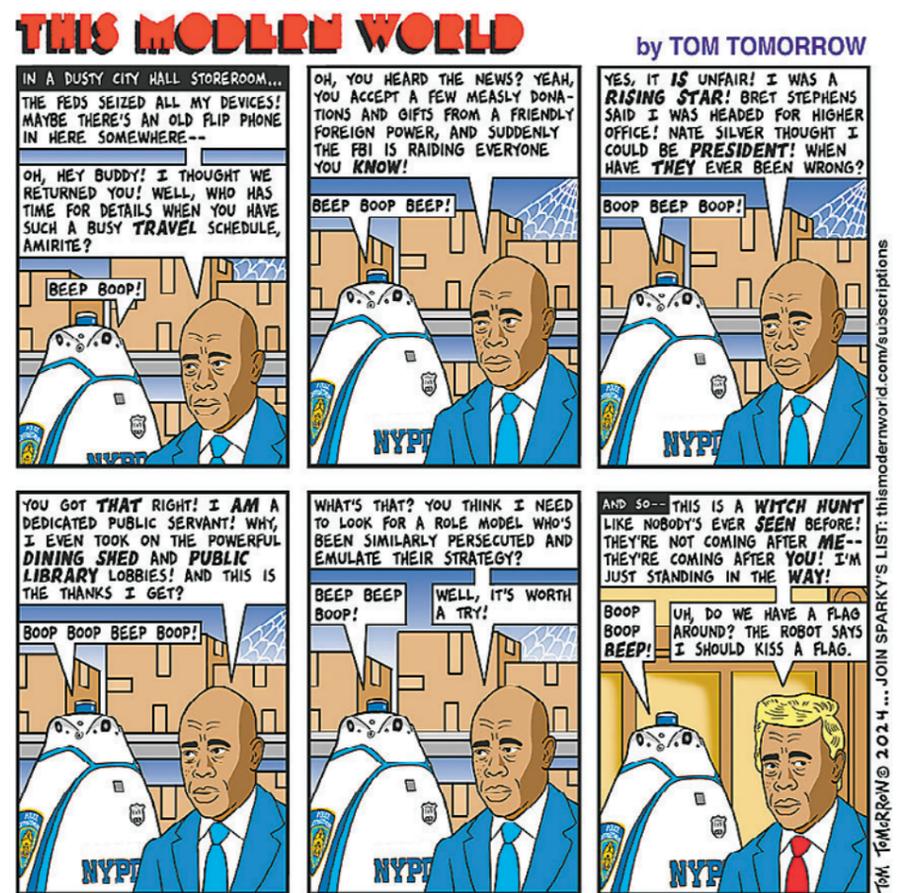
jobs in Springfield's warehouses, manufacturing and the service sector. Springfield's CEOs, pleased with their hardworking habits, urged their Haitian employees to encourage other Haitians to join them.

Trading economic reality for political gain, Trump and Vance falsely accused those excellent workers of eating America's pets. The migrant workers, their employers, and the entire Springfield community are now in danger.

On Sept. 25, in front of supporters in Traverse City, Michigan, Vance stuck to the 'Harris caused it, immigrants did it, and Trump will fix it' rhetorical formula anyway: "(I)f we want to allow American citizens to afford a home again, we've got to start by deporting the millions of illegal aliens that Kamala Harris let come into this country."

At least they're thematically consistent. Here's a counter-formula for the Harris camp: Trump lies, Vance amplifies, their blind thirst for power is dangerous.

Sabrina Haake is a Chicago trial lawyer and left-of-center policy wonk. See sabrinhahaake.substack.com.



What We Can Learn from Gen Z Workers

By SONALI KOLHATKAR

My oldest born is a high school junior, taking his first steps into the hypercompetitive and bewildering world of undergraduate college applications and future careers. So, I was drawn to a recent headline in *Fortune* proclaiming, “Bosses Are Firing Gen Z Grads Just Months After Hiring Them—Here’s What They Say Needs to Change.” The story covers a new study about hiring trends among employers and rather than examine what employers need to do to attract and retain new graduates—generous salaries, good benefits, work-life balance, creativity, and job security—it was a diatribe against new graduates.

Not only do employers accuse young people of a “lack of motivation or initiative,” they complain that they are “late to work and meetings often, not wearing office-appropriate clothing, and using language appropriate for the workspace.”

Nowhere in the story is it mentioned that the class of 2024 entered as freshmen the year the world shut down. The COVID-19 pandemic and its resultant lockdowns impacted young people disproportionately. At a time in their lives when social interaction was just as important as academic work, if not more, they were forced to isolate, albeit for good reason. But their mental health suffered and we as a society made no systemic effort to address it. Instead, they were left to their own devices, to care for their mental health, and to sort out their attitudes toward work and careers.

Also, nowhere in the story is there an acknowledgment of the fact that young people’s futures have been sacrificed on the

altar of corporate oil profits. As the world burns and floods and faces storms and as catastrophic climate forecasts erase Gen Z’s future, society demands they sport good attitudes and behave as though nothing is wrong and no mass intervention is needed to rectify the situation. Instead, Gen Z has to face climate devastation as individuals.

What the *Fortune* story covering the study of newly graduated employees does mention is how schools are trying to prepare kids for the corporate grind, citing one high school in London that “is trialing a 12-hour school day to prepare pupils for adult life.” This is shared with no sense of irony about the fact that workdays in a civilized society ought to be no more than 8 hours long.

Employers are apparently looking for workers who have “a positive attitude and more initiative.” If that sounds out of touch, there’s more. A career adviser told *Fortune* that young hires would do well to “[b]uild a reputation for dependability by maintaining a positive attitude, meeting deadlines, and volunteering for projects, even those outside your immediate responsibilities.” In other words, if you want to keep your job, take on more work than you were hired to do.

Long hours and extra work are part of the ethos of a dying corporate culture where workers sacrificed their lives and well-being for their bosses, and—a few decades ago—might have been rewarded with enough to live on. That capitalist contract is defunct. A separate September 2024 study of Gen Z salary satisfaction showed that 87% of those surveyed felt they were underpaid. A Pew study from May 2020 concluded that today’s youth “are on track to be the most well-educated generation yet.” This naturally leads to high expectations of employers. But nearly half of those surveyed in September earn only between \$30,000 and \$60,000 a year, which in today’s economy is not enough to

live on. If young workers lack a positive attitude, they have good reason.

Pew also found that “Members of Gen Z are more racially and ethnically diverse than any previous generation.” In the past year especially, young Americans have watched an unfolding genocide in Gaza aimed at people who look a lot like them. That genocide, funded by their parents’ tax dollars and their college endowments, has played out in horrifying detail on their Instagram and TikTok accounts, inuring them from the political punditry downplaying Israel’s culpability. Their college campus protests and encampments haven’t worked to stop U.S. funding to Israel.

It’s no wonder that Gen Z is breaking from older generations by being disproportionately and unapologetically pro-Palestinian. It’s also no wonder that they are jaded about their own future in a nation whose government actively cheers on the extermination of their Palestinian peers.

Gen Z is left to deal with massive systemic failures—climate change, pandemics, and genocide—as individuals. Why are we shocked then that they are prioritizing their own physical and mental health? No one else is doing so.

A February 2024 Stanford Report article on Gen Z workers interrogated the employment values and expectations of young people and concluded that they “question everything and everyone—from their peers, parents, or people at work,” and “[t]hey are also not afraid to challenge why things are done the way they are.” They prefer collaboration and consensus over hierarchy and, most importantly, they value mental health and work-life balance.

Gen Z workers grew up seeing their parents bring work home, work after hours, work overtime without compensation, and make themselves available to answer phone calls and emails at all hours. In return, they watched older generations suffer mass lay-

offs, failed union drives, and stagnating salaries. If they reject the idea of one’s work life ruling one’s home life, it seems that young workers have a lot to teach their older peers and employers rather than the other way around.

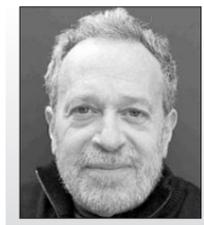
In spite of myself, I often urge my 17-year-old to focus on getting good grades so that he can get into a good college and land a good job that pays well enough to live on. But such logic assumes we live in a merit-based economy where hard work pays off. Those of us who are 40 and older know firsthand how much of a lie this is. I can tell my snarky teen barely humors me when I urge him to prioritize his grades. And I can imagine him doing the same to a future boss who might urge him to have a “positive attitude” at work.

Rutgers University public relations professor Mark Beal, author of “Decoding Gen Z,” told *Fortune*, “Gen Xers, boomers, even older millennials, they live to work. Work is driving them. It’s energizing them.” Meanwhile, “Gen Z works to live.” They prioritize their mental health over Wall Street’s financial health.

Are they on to something? Instead of excoriating young people for prioritizing their well-being over work, we would do well to learn from them. Gen Z is shifting our collective ethos to normalize asking what bosses owe workers instead of the other way around.

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ROBERT REICH



Since his horrid debate performance against Harris, Trump doubled down on false claims that Haitian immigrants are eating pets in Ohio.

How the Hell Can Trump Be Running Neck-and-Neck with Harris? Let Me Tell You

With less than 30 days until Election Day, how can it be that Trump has taken a small lead in Arizona and Georgia — two swing states he lost to Biden in 2020? How can he be narrowly leading Harris in the swing state of North Carolina? How can he now be essentially tied with her in the other key swing states of Michigan and Wisconsin?

More generally, how can Trump have chiseled away Harris’ advantage from early August? How is it possible that more voters appear to view Trump favorably now than they did several months ago when he was in the race against Biden?

How can Trump — the sleaziest person ever to run for president, who has already been convicted on 34 felony charges and impeached twice, whose failures of character and leadership were experienced directly by the American public during his four years at the helm — be running neck-and-neck with a young, talented, intelligent person with a commendable record of public service?

Since his horrid performance debating Harris, he’s doubled down on false claims that Haitian migrants are eating pets in Ohio. He’s been accompanied almost everywhere

by right-wing conspiracy nutcase Laura Loomer. He said he “hates” Taylor Swift after she endorsed Harris; that Jewish people will be responsible if he loses the election; that the second attempt on his life was incited by the “Communist Left Rhetoric” of Biden and Harris. And so on.

He’s become so incoherent in public that Republican advisers are begging him to get back “on message.”

So why is he neck-and-neck with Harris?

Before we get to what I think is the reason, let’s dismiss other explanations being offered.

One is that the polls are understating voters’ support for Harris and overstating their support for Trump. But if the polls are systematically biased, you’d think it would be the other way around, since some non-college voters are probably reluctant to admit to pollsters their preference for Trump.

Another is that the media is intentionally creating a nail-bitingly close race in order to sell more ads. But this can’t be right because, if anything, more Americans appear to be tuning out politics altogether.

A final theory holds that Harris has not yet put to rest voters’ fears about inflation and the economy. But given that the American economy has rebounded, inflation is way down, interest rates are falling, wages are up, and the job engine continues, you’d think voters at the margin would be moving toward her rather than toward Trump.

The easiest explanation has to do with asymmetric information.

By now almost everyone in America knows Trump and has made up their minds about him. Recent polls have found that nearly 90% of voters say they do not need to learn more about Trump to decide their vote.

But they don’t yet know Harris or remain undecided about her (more on this in a moment).

Trump is exploiting this asymmetry so that when it comes to choosing between Trump and Harris, voters will choose the devil they know.

This requires, first, that Trump suck all the media oxygen out of the air so Harris has fewer opportunities to define herself positively.

Americans who have become over-

whelmed by the chaos are tuning out politics altogether, especially in swing states where political advertising is nonstop. And as they tune out both Trump and Harris, Trump is the beneficiary, because, again, he’s the devil they know.

In other words, Trump is running neck-and-neck with Harris not despite the mess he’s created over the last few weeks but because of it.

Trump’s strategy also requires that he and his allies simultaneously flood the airwaves and social media with negative ads about Harris, which are then amplified by the right-wing ecosystem of Fox News, Newsmax, and Sinclair radio.

Trump’s campaign has given up trying to promote him positively. The Wesleyan Media Project estimates that the Trump team is now spending almost zero on ads that show him in a positive light. There’s no point, because everyone has already made up their minds about him.

Instead, the ads aired by Trump and his allies in swing states are overwhelmingly negative about Harris — emphasizing, for example, her past support for gender transition surgery for incarcerated people.

Researchers on cognition have long known that negative messages have a bigger impact than positive ones, probably because in evolutionary terms, our brains are hardwired to respond more to frightening than to positive stimuli (which might explain why social media and even mainstream media are filled with negative stories).

Finally, Trump’s strategy necessitates

that he refuse to debate her again, lest she get additional positive exposure (hence he has turned down CNN’s invitation for an Oct. 23 debate, which she has accepted).

Behind the information asymmetry lie racism and misogyny. I can’t help wondering how many Americans who continue saying they “don’t know” or are “undecided” about Harris are concealing something from pollsters and possibly from themselves: They feel uncomfortable voting for a Black woman.

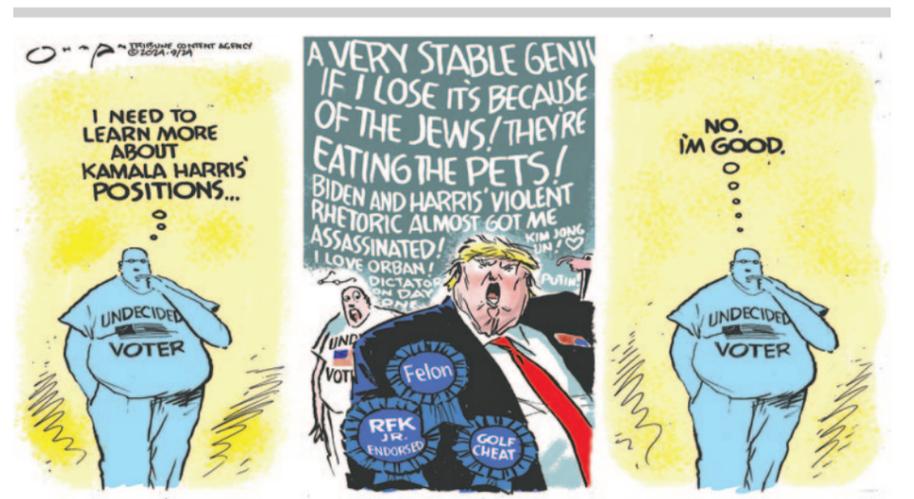
Having said all this, I’m cautiously optimistic about the outcome of the election. Why? Because Trump is deteriorating rapidly; lately he’s barely been able to string sentences together coherently.

Harris, by contrast, is gaining strength and confidence by the day, and despite Trump’s attempts to shut her out, more Americans are learning about her. As she gets more exposure, Trump’s “devil-you-know” advantage disappears.

Perhaps it’s more accurate to say I’m nauseously optimistic, because, to be candid, I go into the next five weeks feeling a bit sick to my stomach. Even if Harris wins, the fact that so many Americans seem prepared to vote for Trump makes me worry for the future of my country.

What do you think?

Robert Reich, former U.S. Secretary of Labor, is professor of public policy at the University of California at Berkeley and the author of “The System: Who Rigged It, How We Fix It.” Read more from Robert Reich at robertreich.substack.com



Looking for Truth When Lies Become Too Easy to Embrace

By CLARENCE PAGE

Sometimes amid the hoopla and hogwash of political events, I find myself jerked alert by an accidental truth that manages to break through.

Such appeared to be the case when Sen. JD Vance, the Republican nominee for vice president, urged Democrats to “tone down their rhetoric,” while not doing much to tone down his own.

In a live interview with CNN’s Dana Bash, Vance was trying to justify spreading what, even in polite terms, can only be called lies about Haitians eating pets in Springfield, Ohio.

“If I have to create stories so that the American media actually pays attention to the suffering of the American people, then that’s what I’m going to do.”

Vance offered no names or other de-

tails about these unnamed witnesses or their accounts.

Instead, state and local officials denied the “first-hand accounts,” which are better described as debunked rumors.

What else do you call an alarming statement without witnesses or other tangible facts to back it up?

Defending the statement, Vance offered that, “It comes from first-hand accounts of my constituents.”

The lies really began to fly after former President Donald Trump stoked debunked rumors during his debate with Vice President Kamala Harris, his Democratic opponent. Trump declared that migrants were hunting and eating their neighbors’ dogs and cats in Springfield, an industrial town of about 60,000 an hour drive west of the state capital, Columbus.

Soon right-wing social media personalities were descending on the town to question wary local residents about the veracity of the claims. Bomb threats were made against local schools and other public buildings, causing many parents to keep their children at home.

Investigations led to a local resident Erika Lee, who had posted a fateful note on Facebook for which she has since apologized, according to *The New York Times*.

She had heard that a neighbor’s cat had gone missing, she told the *Times*, and she posted on Facebook a rumor that a Haitian neighbor may have kidnapped it. Yet when she later went back to check the story with her neighbor, she learned that the cat in question hadn’t been missing after all.

“And at that point, we are playing the game of telephone,” Lee told the *Times*.

Rumors of pet killing and eating turns out to have a long history as a slander against immigrants and other minority populations, especially in places where they can be singled out as posing a threat to local jobs and ethnic communities.

Republican Gov. Mike DeWine, who still supports Trump and Vance, said in an open letter to *The New York Times*: “I am saddened by how they and others continue to repeat claims that lack evidence and disparage the legal migrants living in Springfield....”

“The Springfield I know is not the one you hear about in social media rumors. It is a city made up of good, decent, welcoming people. They are hard workers — both those who were born in this country and those who settled here because, back in their birthplace, Haiti, innocent people can be killed just for cheering on the wrong

team in a soccer match.”

As a former Ohioan, born in Dayton and raised in Middletown, which later became Vance’s hometown, I sympathize with DeWine and others who have been working diligently against some negative economic and social changes since the heyday of the state’s industrial growth a half-century ago.

Ironically, the latest round of migrants are legally present in the country and came, mostly from Haiti, in response to active outreach efforts to relieve a local worker shortage in an industrial area that was a lot more robust when I was growing up there.

Vance surely knows that as well as I do. So does Trump, if he’s paying attention. But the drive to win votes in a tight election drives people to, let us say, exaggerate a bit.

“If I have to create stories so that the American media actually pays attention to the suffering of the American people then that’s what I’m going to do.”

My fellow former Middletonian urged Democrats to tone down their rhetoric. He should do something similar with his own. So should the former president.

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THE BIG PICTURE/*Glynn Wilson*

Vice Presidential Debate – J.D. Vance is a Smooth Liar, But Tim Walz Nailed Him on Who Won the 2020 Election and Jan. 6

JONESBORO, Ark. — Minnesota Governor and Vice Presidential contender Tim Walz shamed Senator and Donald Trump’s running mate J.D. Vance of Ohio Oct. 1 in the only vice presidential debate of 2024 on CBS, when Vance had no answer for the most basic of questions: Did Trump lose the 2020 election?

In one of the debate’s final exchanges, Vance found himself without an explanation for Trump’s behavior after the 2020 election and on Jan. 6, 2021 during the violent attack on the Capital, twisting the truth into a pretzel of an argument by saying Trump did eventually leave Washington after Congress certified the results, and Joe Biden was sworn in on Jan. 20, 2021.

“Did he lose the 2020 election?” Walz questioned Vance directly, as the CBS moderators Norah O’Donnell and Margaret Brennan tried to fact check Vance, only to be interrupted and eventually cut off Vance’s microphone.

Vance dodged and pivoted, and tried to make the case that it was the Democrats who were a threat to democracy - for cen-

sorship on Facebook? The exchange showed both the limits and requirements of serving as Trump’s running mate, having to kiss the rat king’s ring to remain in his good graces like a peasant bowing to a monarch in a Shakespeare play.

“That’s why Mike Pence isn’t on this stage,” Walz said.

By the end of the 90 minutes, the Harris campaign announced it was making an ad off the Jan. 6 moment.

It was not exactly a “peaceful transfer of power,” but Vance tried to advance that falsehood, as he also lied about just about everything as smoothly as a corrupt used car salesman throughout the night. At every turn, he tried to blame Kamala Harris for all the world’s problems, including illegal immigration, inflation, problems with health care, child care and the damn housing shortage.

He lied about Trump’s record on health care, claiming he fixed Obamacare, when in fact he tried to kill it. Walz correctly pointed out that the Affordable Care Act was saved by the courage of John McCain

in casting the deciding vote in the Senate. I was there that day in the Senate gallery when McCain gave that now famous thumbs down.

Many of the problems Vance talked about are not in the purview of the Vice President to fix, and in fact much of what Vance talked about could be blamed on this do nothing Congress held back by the MAGA Caucus. Walz pointed out time and again that Congress is responsible, and even had a bipartisan bill ready to pass on immigration reform until Trump made phone calls and had it killed so he could run on immigration as a campaign issue.

By all outward appearances, it seemed to be a substantive and mostly civil debate between two Midwestern men revealing policy differences between the two parties on immigration, abortion and foreign policy. But no issue showed the clear difference between reality and fake news apparent in the nation’s political divide than the final hot topic of the debate, when Vance refused to concede that former President Donald Trump lost the 2020 election.

“Tim, I’m focused on the future,” Vance said, trying to move on from the topic.

“That is a damning nonanswer,” Walz came back.

Vice-presidential debates rarely influence the outcome of presidential elections, and neither candidate appeared to suffer a debilitating stumble, so it will likely change few minds or many votes. But hey, at least some people were watching CBS for a change. The network has been running last in the ratings for months, and going through internal strife trying to compete with more partisan Fox News and MSNBC.

I watched the debate with a group of Democrats from Craighead County, Arkansas in a place called Bono with Democrat Rodney Govens, who is running for Congress in Eastern Arkansas in the First District against a MAGA Republican named Rick Crawford, and Chris Jones, the party’s most recent nominee for Governor who lost to Sarah Huckabee Sanders, one of Trump’s first press secretaries and the daughter of former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee.

In exchanges with the public here in our new temporary home, the confusion caused by the splintering of news media sources and the divisive nature of social media shows up in the attitudes of rural residents of Eastern Arkansas, part of the great Mississippi River Delta, where cotton fields still line the roadways in all directions. The in-tune Democrats still rely on what’s left of the newspapers, Public Television and NPR on the radio out of Arkansas State University, while conservatives seem to know the Republican talking points from Fox News, conservative talk radio and YouTube.

It reminds one of something Rudyard Kipling once wrote.

“Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet, Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God’s great Judgment Seat; But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth, When two strong men stand face to face, though they come from the ends of the earth!”

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

Hartmann...

Continued from page 12

gressive talk radio could work, I started my own program on a local Vermont station in March, 2003, and then moved it to a radio network in 2004. When Air America came online in 2005, we moved it to that network and picked up SiriusXM.

Then Mitt Romney decided he was going to run for president. No slouch, Mr. Romney: he understood the power of media and so apparently directed his private equity firm, Bain Capital, to purchase the entire portfolio of Clear Channel radio stations in the summer of 2008.

Within two years, heading toward the 2012 election when Romney challenged Obama, most all of their stations had flipped their programming from Air America to sports. It killed Air America, although my show was the lone survivor and is still on SiriusXM, Free Speech TV, and stations across the country.

Around the time Romney was buying Clear Channel, a group of Air America talent and I met in DC with a group of Democratic members of the House and Senate.

We suggested they should reach out to big Democratic donors and encourage them to buy stations, so if Clear Channel ever pulled the plug on our leases we’d still be on the air.

We argued that, just as Republicans have discovered, it would be a lot cheaper than spending billions on advertising every two or four years.

Initially, the response was positive until one of the senators, who later ran for president, threw cold water on the idea, arguing that the “free market” should determine things like who owns radio stations, rather than a political party or people aligned with it.

Time has passed and word has spread. Entrepreneurs across America have bought or started radio stations — some normal, some “low-power FM” that works just fine in urban areas — to carry progressive programming. It’s a growing trend, and there are even rumors that George Soros is investing in the business.

I was the opening keynote speaker for the Grassroots Radio Conference in late September in New Orleans; progressive radio station owners, operators, programmers, and talent from more than half the American

states were there. This is a big step.

A Pew study found that 16% of Americans get their election-year information from talk radio. In rural states, where radio stations are cheap, people are far more likely to drive long distances and listen to local radio than in cities; flipping smaller red states shouldn’t be impossible if progressives could put up a few good stations in each state.

While Democrats spend over a billion dollars on paid advertising every two years, and several billion every four years, Republicans use this model of long-term trusting relationships with radio hosts to get out the vote for the GOP.

They know the truth of the old advertising saying, “Nothing beats word-of-mouth.” And a recent Neilson survey supports that adage when it found that 92% of consumers “believe recommendations from friends and family over all forms of advertising.”

In 2016, right-wing talk radio gave Donald Trump the boost he needed to put him in the White House. The hosts loved him and promoted him relentlessly. The same went for George W. Bush in 2000

and 2004, as talk radio became the primary locus for swift-boating John Kerry.

It works. Every weekday, all across America, people get into their cars and drive to or from work listening to the radio; as the nation’s largest statistics organization, Statista, notes, “During an average week in September 2020, radio reached 90.9% of all American men aged between 35 and 64 years of age.”

Radio engages, persuades, and informs — and, when done right, builds trust. And the first rule of politics is that trust wins elections.

In politics, just a few points usually decides winners and losers — and talk radio has reliably delivered that incremental edge to the GOP for three decades.

Democrats must get into the talk-radio game. As the old saying goes, “You can’t win if you don’t play.”

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.

Health Insurance: On the Electoral Brink

You think the Affordable Care Act, for all the flaws attributed to it, is basically secure - much as you assumed *Roe v. Wade* was basically sure?

It is just as vulnerable to changes that would decimate it.

Candidate Donald Trump has promised something better, without articulating what that better might entail.

We can see, though, the damage he inflicted on the Affordable Care Act while in office - damages that have been hard to undo. In his four years, he didn't kill it, but wounded it. In this election, "health insurance" pops up below-the-fold in newspapers, barely rating a few lines compared to abortion, the economy, the wars in Gaza and the Ukraine. Health insurance rarely makes it to press conferences, and inspires few op-eds. So it is so easy to overlook the harm Candidate Trump wreaked, as well as the harm he might inflict.

The Brookings Institution, reviewing the Trump era

"changes" to the Affordable Care Act ("Trump, the Administrative Presidency, and Federalism") called the changes "sabotage" - an apt descriptor. The key wounds:

1) Decreasing the outreach necessary for enrollment. To enroll, people must know about the Act, and understand that at last this Act will give them affordable comprehensive insurance. Poor people are accustomed to, and leery of, scams. This Act was genuine. But the Trump Administration cut back funds for outreach.

2) Cutting the subsidies to private insurers to participate. The Act was predicated on the participation of private insurers. "Obamacare" was not government insurance, but government-subsidized, regulated insurance, open to people who could not get coverage from their employers.

3) Allowing cheaper, poorer alternatives to the ACA plans. Those Obamacare plans require 10 essential benefits, set caps on payments, and nixed the pre-existing condition clauses that were devastating to millions of Americans, pre-Obamacare. But President Trump allowed short-term and employer-sponsored, cheaper plans that left people who got sick - who became patients - "underinsured."

4) The "work-waivers" that states could impose on Medicaid enrollees. Common sense argued that requiring people who were ill to work to have insurance to pay for treatment was irrational, as well as cruel; but the Trump enthusiasts blessed "work requirements" anyway.

The ultimate danger to the ACA lay in the Supreme

Court, which might have cancelled it. Fortunately, the Court let the ACA stand.

Now, as part of the proposed great new plan the Trump campaign promises: insurance that lets people buy the coverage they think they need. A healthy non-smoking 25-year-old man (who does not risk getting pregnant) may decide he needs a barebones policy - no frills, no exhaustive coverage for hospitalization, no significant time for rehabilitation, minimal pharmaceutical coverage. That man willingly, happily, pays less for less coverage. In contrast, that man's 55-year-old smoker father might opt for a more comprehensive, and more expensive, policy, to cover his possible stroke, his lung cancer, his arthritic knee. If this sounds simplistically stupid, it is. The 25-year-old non-smoker will age, needing more coverage for the illnesses and mishaps that may well beset him. The point of an insurance pool is to cover the population, to spread the expense. To work, a pool needs those healthy people - the non-users - to pay premiums. Pre-Obamacare, states tried "high risk pools" to cover the people that insurers didn't want. Not surprisingly, those pools proved too costly for states.

Before the Affordable Care Act, the nation had millions of people without insurance, and millions more with poor insurance. Those are the bad old days that the Trump Administration would bring back.

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Meet the Newest Abortion Rights Supporters: Men in Red States

When pregnancies go wrong, more men are seeing their partners suffer the horrors of delaying or forgoing care. And they're speaking out.

By MARTHA BURK

Like it or not, abortion access has always been viewed as a "women's problem." Men rarely talked about it, at least not publicly, and it didn't seem to rank very high on their list of political priorities.

Not anymore.

Since Donald Trump proudly took credit for overturning *Roe v. Wade* with his anti-choice Supreme Court appointments, men have been forced to pay more attention

- particularly in red states with the most restrictive abortion policies.

As the costs of extreme abortion bans have mounted, men have seen their partners forced to delay or forgo essential medical care - whether bleeding out in emergency room parking lots while suffering a miscarriage or taking on the huge expense of traveling between states. In extreme cases, they've seen their partners die.

Husbands with wives who've been denied care when a pregnancy goes wrong are now waking up and speaking out.

As a recent *Washington Post* article highlighted, one such couple had to drive 400 miles from their home in Arkansas to reach an Illinois clinic willing to end a pregnancy with a malformed fetus that would be stillborn if carried to term. The ordeal was enough to convert the husband from abortion opponent to pro-choice advocate working to get an abortion measure on the state ballot.

In states that ban abortion, virtually all clinics have closed since the Dobbs decision obliterated a woman's right to control her own body. Facilities in bordering states have meanwhile been inundated with pleas from desperate couples seeking help.

More and more men are stepping up and joining Men4Choice, a national organization dedicated to recruiting men in the fight for safe and legal abortion. The group hosts community education events with young pro-choice men and organizes Get Out the Vote events mobilizing hundreds of male allies for contacting voters.

"It's not just about abortion. It's about freedom. It's about power," founder Oren Jacobson told the *Post*. A prominent ally is second gentleman Doug Emhoff, who helps the group with outreach to broaden their membership.

According to data reported in *The New York Times*, more than 171,000 patients traveled for an abortion in 2023. That's double the number who crossed state lines for an abortion in 2019, accounting for nearly a fifth of recorded abortions. It's a grim reminder of the upheaval in access since the overturn of *Roe v. Wade*. 2024 data is of course not complete, but there's no evidence that cross border trips for the procedure have slowed.

Then there are the uncounted casualties of these draconian bans: women unable to travel out of state for an abortion even though they desperately want or need the

procedure. That includes women working at low wage jobs who can't afford to take time off, cover child care costs while they're away, and pay for gasoline, food, and lodging for the trip.

Who knows how far this could go? Senator J.D. Vance (R-Ohio) has already signaled his support for prosecuting women who cross state lines for abortions. And in some states, zealots are trying to revive the 1873 Comstock Act to make birth control pills illegal.

There's no reason to think they'll stop there. Why not limit men's choices too? Outlaw vasectomies and take condoms off the drug store shelves. Don't laugh - it could happen.

Bottom line: men, particularly in restrictive red states, are waking up and speaking out. It's a good bet their numbers will grow, and access to abortion will at last no longer be seen as just a woman's problem. Because it isn't.

Martha Burk (@MarthaBurk) is the director of the Corporate Accountability Project for the National Council of Women's Organizations (NCWO). This op-ed was distributed by OtherWords.org.

It Is So Much Nicer Being a Woman in Trump's World

Trump is protecting you.

By ALEXANDRA PETRI

"You will no longer be abandoned, lonely or scared. You will no longer be in danger. You're not gonna be in danger any longer. You will no longer have anxiety from all of the problems our country has today. You will be protected, and I will be your protector. Women will be happy, healthy, confident and free. You will no longer be thinking about abortion."

- Donald Trump, at a campaign rally in Pennsylvania on Sept. 23.

It is so much nicer being a woman, now that Donald Trump is in charge!

You barely remember the Biden times at all, except in nightmares. In the dreams, regular eggs cost as much as Fabergé eggs. All the food at the grocery store is too expensive - if you made it to the store at all without being killed, sometimes twice. Also you were always thinking about abortion.

But then you wake up all the way and Donald Trump is protecting you and you are not thinking about abortion.

Mostly you feel wonderful all the time, happy and confident and not depressed because all that has been fixed. Every single problem the country had! Poof! And all you had to do was stop thinking about abortion.

Now, Donald Trump is back and you are not thinking about anything. All your anxieties are gone, now that men are han-

dling all the country's problems. It would have been a mistake to put a woman in charge! Fortunately, that did not happen. Fortunately, Donald Trump is guarding you. You are guarded! You are not worrying your pretty little head. Donald Trump is protecting you, just like the Bible said should happen. It did not mention him by name, but that was implied.

It was so tough in the before times, when you had to act as though you were a person. It was exhausting, like a dog standing on its hind legs all day. Of course, you weren't a person, not really, and it is so much nicer to get to stop pretending. Much more restful this way. You are not thinking about abortion. Abortion is back in the hands of those who know best. The choice was the exhausting part; now, you get to be a blessed vessel and raise up as many children as they have decided is best. It is much nicer now.

Before, you thought abortion might even be a reason to vote. You voted! You could laugh, or cry, when you think about it. You aren't sure which. Donald Trump will know.

Thank God the national nightmare of forcing you to make choices - as though your thoughts and desires mattered - is at an end. You wake up and smile at the picture of your patron saint, Donald Trump. You go to the market (JD Vance is in charge of eggs now; he has been lecturing the hens about the need to fertilize more of them) and buy one dozen. They cost exactly the right amount. You are not thinking about abortion.

Nothing is the matter here. You are so much more relaxed now that the country has no more problems. Sometimes, you don't think that all of them were problems, but the thought is quick to vanish. You don't think

about abortion. How could you think about abortion? There is no abortion here. It is with the states where it belongs. It isn't where you are. It's not important. You're not important. Donald Trump is protecting you.

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)."



Anderson...

Continued from page 11

The Democratic Party Platform proposes quadrupling the existing 1% excise tax on stock buybacks. This would help curb a once-illegal maneuver that benefits top executives and shareholders.

Members of Congress have also introduced bills that directly tackle our country's extreme gaps between CEO and worker pay. The Curtailing Executive Overcompensation (CEO) Act would apply an excise tax designed so that companies with a large CEO-worker pay gap would owe extra taxes - and if they also have extremely high CEO pay, they would owe even more.

A similar bill, the Tax Excessive CEO Pay Act, ties a company's federal corporate

tax rate to the size of the gap between its CEO and median worker pay. Tax penalties would begin at 0.5 percentage points for companies with pay ratios between 50 to 1 and 100 to 1. The highest penalty would apply to companies that pay top executives over 500 times worker pay. A May 2024 poll indicates that tying the CEO-worker pay ratio to corporate tax increases would garner strong support among Americans of every political stripe.

Americans are fed up with corporate executives who are fixated on enriching themselves while shortchanging taxpayers and workers.

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

WAYNE O'LEARY

The Great Debate

Kamala Harris wants to “turn the page.” It’s a slogan with multiple meanings. Does she want to turn the page after a decade of Donald Trump dominating the political headlines, or transition from four years of Joe Biden’s administration, of which she was an integral part? Or does page turning imply that with Kamala the sordid past will disappear from memory, ending the strife between red and blue, and allowing America to start afresh, a united people at last? Or does it simply mean a reshuffling of personalities at the top of the government?

However defined, the process of starting anew with no baggage will be a tricky maneuver. But, then, Harris is a tricky politician. And make no mistake, the Democratic nominee for president is, first and foremost, a politician. The Harris campaign is not a movement; this is not the fulfillment of the Bernie Sanders revolution. It’s even questionable whether the candidate is really a true progressive at all, despite Donald Trump’s silly labelling of her as a Marxist.

Democratic progressives Elizabeth Warren and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez are currently supporting Harris, as is the unaffiliated progressive Sanders, however reluctantly, but they have no choice if they want to remain relevant within Democratic Party circles. The only other options this year are to opt out, or start an independent third-party effort, and we saw how far Bobby Kennedy Jr. got against our rigged electoral system.

Harris made her reputation in California as a prosecuting district attorney and crime-focused attorney general (shades of Thomas E. Dewey!), operating securely within her party’s establishment; she’s never been a crusader. She subsequently stopped off at the U.S. Senate for a cup of coffee (2017-20) en route to becoming Joe Biden’s identity-politics pick for veep in 2020, leaving no particular legislative accomplishments of note behind her.

Harris dallied with progressivism in 2019 when it seemed the popular route to the presidency. She endorsed a wide range of left-leaning proposals (since disavowed) that

included, momentarily, Medicare for All. Calculating Kamala then dropped the progressive agenda like a hot potato when her campaign failed to catch on and the Zeitgeist changed. Like other “moderate” Democrats without ideological moorings (Bill Clinton comes to mind), she can be a liberal if you want a liberal, or a conservative if you want a conservative.

Harris’ lack of core progressivism has become obvious in recent days with her disgracefully opportunistic announcement that she was “honored” to have the support of former Vice President Dick Cheney, estranged from the GOP because of MAGA attacks on his daughter Liz. Democrats with memories that extend back further than last weekend will recall when Cheney was the Donald Trump of his day — the scourge of liberals and the architect of the Bush Middle East war policy. No matter; we’re turning the page with Kamala and forging “a new way forward.”

The page turning began in earnest with the over-hyped Sept. 10 Harris-Trump debate, which sponsor ABC called “historic.” The corporate media, which skews pro-Harris, is all agog over the novelty of a possible mixed-race female president; it considers everything about the Harris candidacy — her nomination, her convention, her so-called interview on CNN — historic. (Now, if the U.S. enacted, say, national health insurance, that would truly be historic.)

As for the debate itself, it was, like most modern debates, rather humdrum, predictable and uninformative. Harris, a polished debater, beat Trump to the punch a few times, insulting him before he could insult her. She also had a more extensive list of empty spending promises under the rubric of “the opportunity economy” — a \$50,000 tax deduction to start a small business, a \$25,000 down-payment grant for first-time homebuyers, a \$6,000 child tax credit — offered up with little explanation of how the cost (\$1.7 trillion over 10 years) would be financed. Trump, as usual, called for tax cuts and increased tariffs.

Trump dominated the opening segment on the economy, his rhetorical strong suit and the Achilles’ heel of the Democrats, which the clearly biased ABC moderators kept unusually short, perhaps to benefit his opponent. Harris had the edge in the closing minutes, when Trump appeared to tire or lose focus.

Beyond that, things were pretty much a wash. Trump seemed overconfident (he was born overconfident), ill-prepared and bored; Harris seemed robotic and excessively programmed. The Donald, still adjusting to the changed

circumstances, saved most of his fire for Joe Biden, who, unfortunately, was not there.

Several debate moments stood out. Trump’s bizarre riff about pet-eating illegal immigrants was a new high (or low) or him, rivaled only by his insistence that Israel would cease to exist under another Democratic president. Harris falsely took credit for Biden’s international coalition in support of Ukraine and shamelessly appealed to red-state America by stressing she’s a gun owner. Both candidates avoided responding to queries on immigration policy. In Kamala’s case, in particular, refusing to answer difficult questions has become a campaign trademark.

Many of Trump’s statements were predictably outlandish (e.g. Nancy Pelosi caused Jan. 6th), and ABC staffers dutifully fact-checked them, but the network showed its bias by not fact-checking Harris. It was obvious throughout that the ABC moderators were either personally motivated or under instruction to hold Trump’s feet to the fire; questioner David Muir did just that, pressing him with follow-ups and seeming at times to be part of a Harris-Muir tag team opposing Trump. Fox News pointed this out, and, for once, they were right.

In the end, Trump maintained his well-earned reputation for being willing to say virtually anything, while Harris cemented her growing reputation as an inveterate flip-flopper. Among America’s corporate media mavens, however, there was no doubt who won; it was Harris by a mile, according to CNN and MSNBC, whose exercise in group wish fulfillment was almost embarrassing.

Was all this much ado about nothing? Maybe so. A week after the debate, polls indicated the race remained essentially tied. History shows that, on balance, debates are politically overrated. In 1984, Mondale outdebated Reagan, then lost; in 2000, Gore outpointed Bush, then lost; in 2004, Kerry bested Bush, then lost; in 2012, Romney trounced Obama, then lost; in 2016, Hillary outperformed Trump (three times), then lost. Even in the granddaddy of them all, Lincoln versus Douglas (for Illinois senator) in 1858, Lincoln is usually judged the winner, but lost the election.

Curb your expectations, Democrats.

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

Postal Service Plan Writes off Rural America to Save a Buck

The Post Office is a public service that should treat every American fairly. Slowing delivery will hurt rural areas that rely on mail carriers to deliver goods, information, medications, and more.

By ANNIE NORMAN and SHAWN SEBASTIAN, Daily Yonder

Last spring, at a Rural Democracy Initiative convening in Omaha, a room of over 100 rural policy experts and elected officials from the hollers of Appalachia to the expansive mountains of Big Sky Country were all big beaming smiles and enthusiastically raised hands when asked “who here knows their postal worker by name?” The relationships that people have with their postal workers are the most universal, direct, consistent, person-to-person contact that most people will ever have with government service providers. So it’s no surprise that the post office is our most treasured public institution, second only to the National Park Service.

Families across the country count on USPS, and for people like us who are from rural areas, the Postal Service is a lifeline. I grew up on a farm in rural Oklahoma. At home, the color of the mail Jeep may change across time, but the red dirt that covers them is the same, and the familiarity and reliability of the service. My co-author, Shawn, grew up in Iowa where the postal service was a lifeline to information, magazines, and contact with friends and family.

USPS offers more than just nostalgia. Seniors, veterans, and others with limited mobility and disabilities rely on the post of-

fice for medications and benefits; small family farmers rely on the post office to deliver live chickens and bees for their hives, and hundreds of Indigenous communities across this country are primarily in rural areas. Small business owners rely on the postal service to ship goods to their customers because in addition to affordability, there is a physical location in most ZIP codes they can ship from. Increasingly, rural places are losing their hospitals and pharmacies, making prescriptions through the mail more essential. But private carriers like UPS and FedEx charge extra to deliver to some rural areas, if they deliver there at all.

The Postal Service’s universal service obligation is the nation’s promise to provide service to every family, in every ZIP code, in an affordable and timely manner. These are the kinds of vital connections our founding fathers intended to support when they created the Postal Service nearly 250 years ago. To help bind this vast nation, USPS today provides service at uniform, reasonable rates to all 157 million U.S. addresses, no matter how remote. Because of their vast network, the Postal Service usually handles the “last mile” of rural deliveries for private companies like UPS, FedEx, and Amazon.

Postmaster General Louis DeJoy cannot be allowed to slow delivery service standards a second time for anyone, much less throw rural families under the bus to save a buck. On Sept. 5, USPS senior management officials held a virtual conference for stakeholder feedback (notably, on Zoom, at 1 p.m. in the middle of the workday). USPS officials showed a graphic that illustrates the extreme urban bias and actual impact of these proposed changes on the nation’s postal delivery network.

Everything in blue will move slower so everything in yellow can move faster—and yet officials said this plan is not targeted at rural America. That dog just don’t hunt, as the saying goes. The insulting nature of this proposal being pitched to the public as an acceptable trade off aside, are we to trust DeJoy when he says “At the end of the day, I think some portion of the mail showing up 12 hours later, I think it’s a price that had to be paid for letting this place be neglected”? So far, the roll out of his 10-year plan’s network consolidation has run into “major obstacles,” and DeJoy has faced

wide and bipartisan criticism for his management of the transformation. It hasn’t been a matter of 12 hours; mail has been days and even weeks delayed. Atlanta, one of the first regions in the plan for a new processing center, saw a 64%-drop in on-time mail delivery. Performance has been so bad that Congress successfully pressured DeJoy to a pause of further major consolidations until after the 2024 election because local election officials started sounding the alarm about mail in ballots arriving in time.

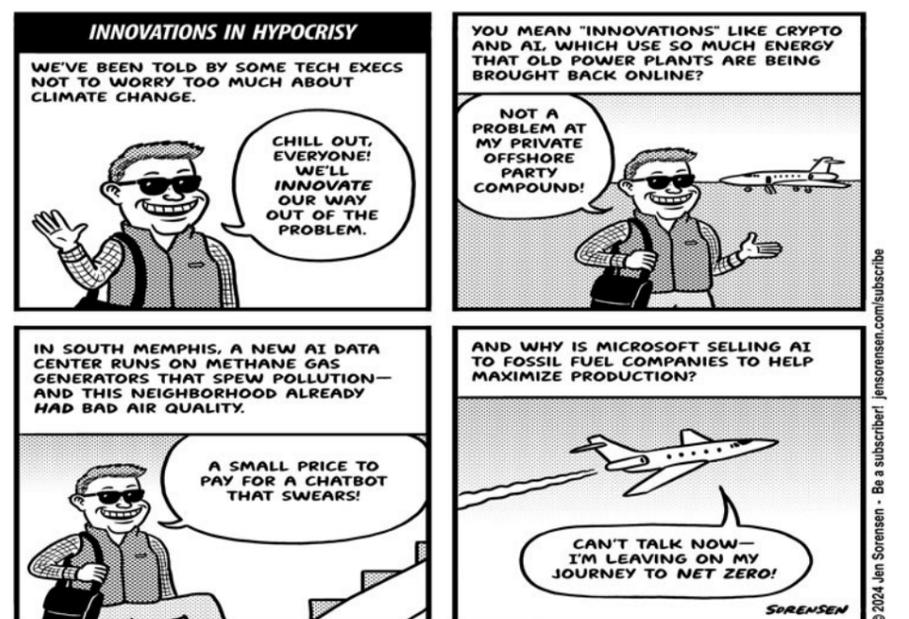
The majority of people across the country, including the members of The Save the Post Office Coalition, do not want to see any further mail slow downs. APWU President Mark Dimondstein said, “Management is already failing to meet the current first-class mail service standards even after lowering delivery targets in 2021. Rather than fix the service delays and problems, these new management proposals are to simply ‘move the goalposts.’”

The bottom line is that DeJoy can’t cut service and raise prices to get USPS out of debt. It will only cause people who can choose to stop using USPS, put rural people who have no other option in an impossible situation, and put USPS in a death spiral of bad service and market exodus. Instead of

more mail slowdowns and higher prices, DeJoy and the postal board should focus on forward-thinking strategies to expand services and generate new sources of revenue. Among ordinary folks, saving the Postal Service is not a partisan issue. One poll showed that 90% of Republicans and 96% of Democrats support investments in the postal service.

Congress should pressure Postmaster General DeJoy and the USPS Board of Governors to reverse course, and instead of another mail slow down, reinstate the 2012 mail delivery service standards. They must not stray even one step away from USPS’s universal service obligation: to deliver the mail to everyone, in every ZIP code. USPS is a public service for all, and a lifeline for many, especially rural America.

Annie Norman is a first generation Oklahoman from rural Creek County, (Muskogee-Creek Nation land), and she comes from a long line of Appalachian farmers. She works as the campaign manager for The Save the Post Office Coalition. Shawn Sebastian is from Iowa and went to the University of Iowa. He is the director of organizing for RuralOrganizing.org. This commentary was originally published in the Daily Yonder. For more rural reporting and small-town stories visit dailyyonder.com.



The Path to Nasrallah's Assassination

By JUAN COLE

ANN ARBOR – The Israeli assassination of Hassan Nasrallah has implications for the struggle of Iran and its alliance of resistance against Israel and the United States. But I would like to step back and look at how we reached this juncture.

I lived in Lebanon on and off in the 1970s, when the Civil War (1975-1989) began. Lebanon is a country full of minorities, with no majority. Christians, Sunni Muslims and Shiite Muslims are the major groups, but there are some smaller communities of great importance, including the Druze (an offshoot of Twelver Shiism) and the Eastern Orthodox Christians. Religious ethnicity, what the French call “confessionalism,” plays a role in Lebanon similar to that played in American society by racial ethnicity.

During the Civil War, each community threw up militias, usually more than one, and these militias often targeted one another as much as their enemies. In the south, East Beirut, and the Biqaa Valley, Shiites predominated. They were the poorest of the Lebanese religious communities, often consisting of tobacco sharecroppers and other impoverished agriculturists in the countryside. In East Beirut they did day labor. Shiites back in the 1950s and 1960s had not been very involved in Lebanese politics, concentrating on the affairs of their villages. A few great landlords were in parliament, but they had almost feudal relationships to the farmers.

In the 1970s, an Iranian cleric named Musa Sadr, transplanted to Lebanon, helped organize AMAL (an acronym for Troops of the Lebanese Resistance, but with the literal meaning of “hope”). It was a charity, a political party, and a militia. AMAL appealed to the new Shiite middle class, people who had relatives that had emigrated to West Africa or the Oil Gulf and sent back remittances. The incoming wealth allowed them to found banks and other businesses and to fund the activities of AMAL. Even after the later rise of Hezbollah, AMAL retained the loyalty of about half of the Lebanese Shiites.

The idea of a party-militia was not new. Among the Maronite Christians, the Phalangist Party had modeled itself on Franco's brown shirts and Mussolini's black shirts. I used to see them doing drills in the street when I lived in Chiyah, Beirut.

Sadr was kidnapped by Moammar Gaddafi when he visited Libya in search of

funding for AMAL. Maybe Gaddafi felt he hadn't delivered on some promise. Maybe Gaddafi was increasingly deranged.

The 1979 Islamic Revolution radicalized some young Lebanese Shiites. Abbas Musawi hived off from AMAL and formed Islamic AMAL. They were in touch with the Iraqi Da'wa Party and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards.

In 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon in a quest to extirpate the Palestine Liberation Organization, subjecting Beirut to indiscriminate shelling. Among those who were appalled was Osamah Bin Laden, who later said that he began aspiring to bring down US skyscrapers on seeing what the Israelis did to those in Beirut.

The Islamic AMAL saw the Israeli invasion and occupation as a US project, blew up the US embassy in Beirut in 1983 and then targeted the US Marines (on a peace-keeping mission) with a truck bomb, killing 241 US service personnel.

In 1984 Musawi and others formed Hezbollah. The organization mobilized the poorer and more radical Shiites in East Beirut, Tyre and the Biqaa for guerrilla warfare to get the Israelis back out of their country. Israel occupied 10% of Lebanon 1982-2000, but suffered increasing casualties from Hezbollah sniping and suicide bombing, a technique they picked up from the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka.

In 1989, the Saudis sent Rafiq Hariri, a Lebanese Sunni who had made billions as a contractor in the kingdom, to try to end the war. That year at Ta'if most of the armed factions pledged to lay down their arms, which they did, and Hariri became prime minister. He began the process of rebuilding Beirut, a process that made his companies rich.

The only group that did not disarm was Hezbollah, on the grounds that it was fighting the occupation of the Lebanese south by the Israelis.

By 2000, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak withdrew from Lebanon.

Hezbollah at that point should have followed the rest of the militias into the Ta'if accords, laying down their arms and becoming solely a parliamentary political party. Hassan Nasrallah, by then the leader, however, refused that path. He began pressing claims on the Shebaa Farms villages of Syria, which Israel had illegally occupied. These lands had been owned by Shiite Lebanese, and Syria said they could have them back if the Israelis would leave. Nasrallah had the Israeli settlements there shelled indiscriminately, which is a war crime since it puts civilians in harm's way.

Moreover, Hezbollah planned terrorist operations, even in Europe. Had it stuck with a purely military struggle with the Israeli army, it might have avoided being listed as a terrorist group, which cost it all legitimacy in the industrialized democracies.

In 2004-5 a crisis unfolded in Lebanon over Syrian political meddling in the country. Hariri and most Maronite Christians demonstrated against the Syrians, and Hariri was killed in a truck bomb in February 2005 – probably by Hezbollah, or by Hezbollah field officers working for Syrian intelligence. The March 14 coalition managed to convince the Syrians to pull their troops out of the country. Nasrallah's March 8 coalition, joined by Michel Aoun's Christians, held huge counter-demonstrations in favor of Syria but lost.

In 2006, Hezbollah attacks on Israel for the sake of getting the Shebaa Farms back were taken as a pretext by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, who launched a wide-ranging war on Lebanon. Israel of course won, but it did suffer setbacks owing to Hezbollah guerrilla tactics. In the aftermath Nasrallah apologized for dragging the country into a destructive war that set back its economy.

In 2008, Hezbollah fought Lebanese Sunnis over a number of issues, including control of telecommunications at Beirut Airport. Nasrallah had earlier pledged never to use his arms on fellow Lebanese, but he renegeed on that promise.

From 2012 on, Nasrallah sent Hezbollah fighters into Syria to help keep Bashar al-Assad in power, allying with the Iranian Revolutionary Guards and Russia against the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood and more radical, al-Qaeda-adjacent groups. Hezbollah's name became mud among many Sunni Arabs, as it lost the popularity gained in 2006.

Hezbollah as a party did well in Lebanese elections and played an increasing role in the national cabinet.

Hezbollah built up a rocket arsenal with Iran's help. It was only useful for defensive purposes, as a deterrent against Israeli aggression. Few rockets have guidance systems and so can't be used in a targeted way. The US Iron Dome anti-missile batteries made these rockets relatively useless and so removed their deterrent effect.

The outbreak of war after the Oct. 7, 2023 Hamas attack on Israel put Nasrallah in a difficult situation. His only source of popularity and legitimacy was resistance to Israel. Iran pressured him to keep a low profile and avoid provoking another war. Although 80% of the attacks at the Israeli-Lebanese border were launched by Israel, Hezbollah was baited into a tit for tat. Tens of thousands of Israelis were displaced from the north, just as tens of thousands of Shiites were displaced from the Lebanese south by Israeli airstrikes.

The fascist Israeli government of Netanyahu-Ben-Givir-Smotrich, receiving unstinting backing from the Biden administration, has adopted a policy of Miloševićism. Slobodan Milošević aimed for a Greater Serbia after the break-up of Com-

munist Yugoslavia, coveting much of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo and being willing to deploy the tools of ethnic cleansing and genocide. The Jewish Power government of contemporary Israel aims at a Greater Israel, ethnically cleansing Gaza and the West Bank and southern Lebanon in preparation for Israeli hegemony.

Despite Joe Biden's feeble and risible cautions against a wider war, the Miloševićist Israeli government had long been determined to go into Lebanon and to wipe out Hezbollah – and perhaps to reoccupy the Lebanese south. Unbeknownst to Nasrallah, his high council had been penetrated by agents working for Israel, so that the latter could booby trap their pagers and could determine Nasrallah's whereabouts in real time.

Nasrallah left behind a Lebanon in shambles, its government so corrupt that it let the port explode and allowed the chairman of the National Bank to embezzle all the country's money. Poverty skyrocketed to 40% of the population in what had been a prosperous country.

In the end, Nasrallah led a small organization of some 45,000 fighters that was attempting to punch above its weight. Lebanon is a small country; its citizen population is probably about 4.5 million, a third of those Shiites. A base of the non-AMAL portion of million and a half people or so is inherently limited. The Syrian intervention overstretched its resources and made it vulnerable in the Lebanese south. Its closer links with Iran and Syria, both of which were highly penetrated by Israeli intelligence, exposed it. Its rockets were rendered ineffectual by the Iron Dome. Its expanding cadres grew corrupt and open to Israeli shekels. It transitioned from a light, mobile guerrilla group with no return address to a quasi-governmental body with an HQ that could be struck by bunker-busting bombs.

Possibly Hezbollah will be forced now to go back to its guerrilla roots and a more secure cell structure. The Jewish Power and Religious Zionism fanatics who dream of re-occupying southern Lebanon and siphoning off the waters of the Litani River will likely discover, if they do so, that the potential for guerrilla resistance has not been and cannot be eradicated.

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The Case for an Israeli-Palestinian Confederation

By JASON SIBERT

One of the challenges to the establishment of the conditions of peace in the Middle East is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

This year, the conflict erupted into a horrific war and an overreaction on the part of Israel. Let's dare talk about what might come out of this war – peace. It must be said that peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians will be challenging, given the history of the two peoples. However, writers Omar M. Dajani and Limor Yehuda provide us with a path in their story in Foreign Affairs Sept. 19, “A Two-State Solution That Can Work: the Case for an Israeli-Palestinian Confederation.”

Presidential candidate Kamala Harris stressed her commitment to a two-state solution in saying: “The only path that ensures Israel remains a secure Jewish and democratic state, and one that ensures Palestinians can finally realize the freedom, security, and prosperity that they rightly deserve.” Across the world, leaders continue to pledge support for a two-state solution, arguing that it pro-

vides a way to end the war and eventually rebuild Gaza. In a long-awaited cease-fire resolution passed in June, the UN Security Council again committed itself to “the vision of the two-state solution where two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side in peace within secure and recognized borders.”

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pledged opposition to a two-state solution. Even his opponents are weary of the idea, knowing it isn't popular with the Israeli public. Israel does not want to give up control over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and it is not willing to relocate hundreds of thousands of settlers or erect a physical border dividing Jerusalem.

The infeasibility of the familiar two-state plan has led some to push for a one-state solution. Under these proposals, Palestinians and Israeli Jews would be equal citizens in a state governed by a single, democratically elected government. This is unlikely to happen, as stated by Dajani and Yehuda. Such a solution may be a long-term goal, and it remains a pie-in-the-sky dream because neither Israeli Jews nor Palestinians are willing to sacrifice their right to national self-determination.

Dajani and Yehuda said of the Israeli-Palestinian issue: “But there is an alternative: an Israeli-Palestinian confederation, built on the principles of equality and partnership. In

it, Israelis and Palestinians would each get their own distinct states. They would have clear borders and the right to pass their own laws. But following a transitional period, the border would be open, and both peoples would ultimately have the right to live across all the land between Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea, which both see as their historic homeland. Joint Israeli-Palestinian bodies would govern issues that transcend each state's boundaries, such as energy and external security. There would be joint judicial institutions to safeguard everyone's freedoms.”

The confederation would resolve issues on citizenship, nationhood, demography, nationality, and sovereignty and guarantee equality for Israelis and Palestinians, individually and collectively. In addition, it would help both groups cooperate equitably after decades of occupation and conflict. Dajani and Yehuda feel that a two-state confederation would help Israelis and Palestinians achieve national self-determination while providing a just framework for managing their attachments to their shared homeland.

The writers gave a definition of confederalism: “Confederations have existed for centuries: the term refers to an association or union in which two or more sovereign states agree to cede some of their sovereign powers to joint institutions for the purpose of achieving shared goals, such as mutual security or economic integration. The member

states in a confederation usually possess independent international personalities. But confederations also often facilitate the free movement of persons and goods within them.”

Confederations have long been used to ease ethnic tensions like the ones that exist in Israel today. For example, the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro facilitated a peaceful transition to Montenegro's independence in a region otherwise plagued by ethnic war. Switzerland was once a confederation between German-, French- and Italian-speaking cantons. But in its 1848 constitution, it transformed into a more tightly-knit federation. The European Union would also be considered a confederation.

Like the European Union, an Israeli-Palestinian confederation would be composed of distinct states. Palestine would be established alongside Israel, with a recognized international border between them. Each could, under its constitution, have the right to join or not join international organizations and be able to establish its policy on education, foreign affairs, law enforcement, social welfare, and taxation. In Dajani and Yehuda's model, there would be a regulated but open border between the two states. Eventually, citizens of both would acquire the right to move throughout the entire country, subject to reciprocal and coordinated secu-

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Election Roundup: Painting the House Blue, Harris in White

By JAMIE STIEHM

On Election Day on Nov. 5, I can say with some certainty: The House of Representatives will go from a Republican to a Democratic majority.

A blue House matters, because the speaker's gavel will belong to Rep. Hakeem Jeffries of New York on the early January day the electoral count is certified by the House and Senate.

Last time, as you remember, there was a riot, a siege, a mob attack on the Capitol. Call it what you will.

American democracy faces its first major stress test since Jan. 6. The peaceful transfer of power is in peril — again. If former President Donald Trump loses, he predicts a “bloodbath.”

We know Trump means every word. Lately, it's gobsmacking to hear him insult Vice President Kamala Harris' intelligence, given she defeated him handily in a debate.

Who does Trump think he's talking to

in red-faced rants and raves at rallies? His side of the political divide: us vs. them. Tragically, it's a tribal election this time. Democracy and personal freedom for women depends upon a Harris victory.

I'll get to my presidential and Senate predictions in a moment. There is so much on the line here, in the most consequential election since Abraham Lincoln took office in 1861. Then the Civil War broke out.

History is everything they never told you in class. Such as: In the history of this nation, never has one candidate thrown so much mud (“mentally disabled”) in ugly insults during a presidential contest. *Never.*

Trump's virulence spreads everywhere he goes. He makes me less than “proud to be an American,” as his theme song goes. Traveling, I found myself apologizing for the un-American president when he was in office.

Harris is holding her fire with dignity, but I think we know Trump is treating a woman of color with special contempt. Unfortunately, his loaded remarks, goading crowds, are often aired on cable, online and network screens, with little to no comment as he sinks lower into the pit.

The map to the White House goes through Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania again, as it did in 2016 and 2020. Harris should win Pennsylvania with a little

help from Gov. Josh Shapiro.

But Michigan will be harder because of its large Arab American communities. They are up in arms about Israel waging war in Gaza, killing 40,000 civilians, bombing Lebanon and conducting raids in the West Bank. Israel did not even tell its best friend, the United States, about its latest military operations.

I'd put Wisconsin in Harris' column.

In all three must-win states for her, a Senate seat is also on the ballot, leaning Democratic. Every bit of political alchemy in this tug-of-war election helps one or the other candidate.

Harris has a fighting chance in North Carolina, and there may be some other surprises in store. Yet her energy and time are probably best invested in the cities and college towns of the upper Midwest and Pennsylvania: Milwaukee, Madison, Detroit, Ann Arbor, Pittsburgh and Philadelphia.

Harris is strong on the stump, and I'll declare her the winner over Trump.

The good news for Senate Democrats: They're getting rid of their troublesome twosome, Joe Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema. They prevented voting rights from going forward on the floor, pledging allegiance to the filibuster before bowing out of the 2024 races.

Much has to fall into place for Democrats to hold the Senate. Popular incumbent Sherrod Brown has to win in Republican-red Ohio; same with working farmer Jon Tester in Montana.

“(Jon Tester) knows how to win in (Montana),” Sen. Gary Peters (D-Mich.), Democratic Senate reelection campaign chair, said.

Democrats hope for a “pickup” in Texas or Florida, where Sens. Ted Cruz and Rick Scott are vulnerable. Rep. Colin Allred, a former NFL linebacker, is challenging Cruz, with a funding boost from the party.

Now the blue Senate is 51-49. It could slip to 50-50 in a heartbeat, or Republicans could overtake Democrats and make it 51-49 in their favor.

Whatever happens, the useless House Republicans deserve the drubbing voters will dish out: “A mix of the Do Nothings and the Know Nothings” was heard in the halls as Congress left town.

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.

Where Did The Fun Go?

By BARRY FRIEDMAN

It's probably an apocryphal story, but in 1930, when Babe Ruth was negotiating his contract — he wanted \$85,000 per season — Jacob Ruppert, then-owner of the New York Yankees, asked how could Ruth possibly justify wanting to make more money than Herbert Hoover, the president of the United States.

“I had a better year,” said Ruth.

In 1929, Babe Ruth hit .345 with 46 homers, 154 RBIs, and 121 runs scored in 135 games. Hoover presided over the stock-market crash and the beginning of the Great Depression.

Ruth wasn't lying.

A few weeks back, I went with my high school son — stepson, actually, but I have been told if one uses a hyphen in referencing his or her child, stop — to his wrestling orientation. Gregory is not a standout wrestler, or even, from what I can tell, very good. He knows it, too, which may explain why he won't invite his mother or me to his meets — not that we would care if he wins or not. The meeting was held in the school gym, which was empty and devoid of any wrestling championship banners. The team was there, as were some of the parents, as were the three coaches, including the new head coach. The program has been through much in the past year. Two students from the school, one a female wrestler, were found dead in a parked car outside of a local Dunkin' in 2023. It was carbon-monoxide poisoning. Gregory didn't talk much about it — he's 18, so, like most teens, doesn't talk much about anything — but he knew the girl. How teens process death — I have no idea.

In the gym that day, there was no mention of the dead.

The coach handed out a contract that he makes all the wrestlers sign, which states how the team will dress on days there are meets (suits, while encouraged, are not required),

how wrestlers not chosen to compete will comport themselves when a match is going on, and how they will behave in the classroom. He spoke about how his father was a wrestler and how wrestling can open doors for wrestlers later in life.

“It's a special club,” he said. “Our sport begins where other sports end,” which I'm still trying to figure out what that meant. “We're competitive. We're in this together. We need parents, we need the community.”

Nothing wrong with any of that, but I couldn't help think something was missing.

He promised us parents he'd be accessible by email and texts, but then reminded us that due to a new school policy, he could no longer contact students directly. He didn't seem to agree with the policy, but he wasn't going to lose his job over it either. He then told us he would not tolerate abuse from parents to his team members.

“I'll get in your face,” he said, “if I see some parent have a kid up against a wall — even if it's your kid.”

I have no idea what the backstory is on that.

But something was missing.

After the meeting, as Gregory and I were leaving, I realized what it was.

The coach never told the team to have fun, to just enjoy themselves this season.

According to scholarshipstats.com, in America there are 238,924 high school boys wrestling. Of those, 12,318 will wrestle in college, or about 5% — and only 2,791 of those will wrestle for an NCAA Division I school (about 1.2%).

He didn't mention that either.

The numbers for other sports are just as sobering. A high school basketball player in America has a 0.9% chance of playing for a Division I college program, and only 1.1% of that 0.9%, according to the NCAA, will play in the pros. According to sportster.com, once the 0.9% of the 1.1% get to the pros, their careers will last 4.5 years.

To put these numbers in perspective, of 538,446 high school football players in America last year, 46 will some-

day make the pros.

America is an odd place when it comes to competition. We have the strongest military, and win the most Olympic gold medals, but Luxembourg has better healthcare, and Iceland has paid maternity leave for six months ... for both parents.

“Friday Night Lights” is not just the title of a book about football. In Oklahoma, those lights are our solar system. There are thousands of high school athletes in the state playing under billions of stars — and almost all of them anonymous.

Considering what's going in college athletics these days, with the advent of NIL (name, image, and likeness), sports are now as impersonal as the oil and gas industry.

The SEC is OPEC.

We're all bemused.

As University of Colorado head coach Deion Sanders recently said — and there is no one in collegiate sports these days quite as sanctimonious or as insufferable — to reporters after a game, “Why you being so hard on these kids? You were never like this. Is it because they're all making more money than you?”

He's right to be annoyed. But the media is right to treat his athletes like professionals (they are), and the players are right to want to be paid like professionals. We've changed our relationship with sports. Maybe there's no room for fun anymore, be it pro, college, or even high school wrestling — or maybe we just quit reminding ourselves to look for it.

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

SATIRE/Rosie Sorenson

In This Corner ...

Marjorie Taylor Greene, the blond MAGA Goddess from Georgia, the FanGirl of Q-Anon, the spreader of conspiracy theories about Jewish space lasers and Democrat pedophile rings, to name a few, has gotten her knickers in a twist after having finally met her match in Laura Loomer.

Who knew that God could create someone even loonier than MTG? What a sense of humor, that old guy (or gal) has.

Loony Loomer emerged from the primordial ooze of lies, hate and self-aggrandizement to meet her match in Donald Trump. Once kicked off Twitter because of her endless conspiracy theories, including lies about COVID vaccines and accusations that 911 was an “inside job,” she was welcomed into the warm embrace of Elon

Musk when he bought Twitter and transmogrified it into a free-for-all-free-speech zone, X.

Oh, what terrifying babies they could make!

One has to wonder at what point did Loomer wake up of a morning and decide, “I'm gonna become a thoroughly disgusting waste of human flesh who wants nothing more than to gain ATTENTION for spewing tanker cars full of lies.”

Loomer, who has expressed her love for Trump, now travels with him to his rallies, whispering in his eager ears about Haitians in Ohio eating cats, dogs—everyone's pets. Trump apparently bought into these lies or maybe just decided he could sell them to his useful idiots, not knowing what an idiot he would make of himself on television when he screamed at ABC debate moderator, David Muir, as David corrected him in real time with factual information from the Mayor of Springfield, Ohio.

David to Trump: “Mayor Rob Rue said, and I quote, ‘There were no such things going on in my town.’”

“No,” cried Trump, red-faced. “I heard it on television—people saying, ‘They ate my

pet.’ It's horrible!”

Loony Loomer snarked one day on X that should Kamala Harris—whose heritage is Black and Indian—win the election, “The White House will smell like curry, and White House speeches will be facilitated via a Call Center.”

Marjorie Taylor Greene fired back: “This is appalling and extremely racist. It does not represent who we are as Republicans or MAGA. This does not represent President Trump. This type of behavior should not be tolerated ever.”

This from a woman who once encouraged the execution of President Obama and Speaker Nancy Pelosi, crying, “Let the hangings begin!”

Whereupon, last-word Loomer snickered and said: “I knew Marjorie had lost her edge when I saw her at a Congressional hearing making fun of Congresswoman Jasmine Crockett's eyelashes. All Marjorie accomplished with her little stunt was to propel that bitch to the Big Show. Now the skank is everywhere, all the time, with the liberal talking heads. Marjorie is so last decade.”

Marjorie has been overheard crying, “Waaa, waaa, I wanna be on that plane and

whisper sweet crap into Trump's ears. My crap is better than her crap any day of the week and twice on Sundays. I thought Trump loved me best. After all the sh*t I have spewed on his behalf and he goes and dumps me for Loomer?!? What a putz!! I'll show him!!!

“Maybe I'll just go over to the dark side like Dick Cheney and all of Trump's past Generals and campaign for that KaMabala bitch. That'll fix him.”

Rosie Sorenson is a humor writer in the San Francisco Bay Area. Her column is satire and, like Fox “News,” cannot be believed as fact. Email RosieSorenson29@yahoo.com. See RosieSorenson.com

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Public Radio, Public Media and Local News Deserts – Our New Report

The late '60s was a heady time for the civic pioneers who persuaded Congressional lawmakers to provide the American people with radio and television programs with real news – local and national – and also report what civic advocates and civic communities were proposing or doing. In 1961 commercial television stations were described by the chairman of the Federal Communications Commission Newton Minow as a “vast wasteland,” before the National Association of Broadcasters. The audience was startled. (He could have included radio in his critique.) But things only got more commercial, profit-driven, and violative of the Communications Act of 1934 standard of providing for the “public interest, convenience and necessity,” information needs of viewers and listeners.

Encouraged by pragmatic visionaries like the former president of CBS Fred Friendly, the Carnegie Corporation, and the Ford Foundation, Congress acted and, in 1969, gave birth to Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) and in 1970 the National Public Radio (NPR). They were mandated to be publicly-funded serious news gatherers, featuring presenters and reflectors of diverse voices, political and civic institutions, culture, and people in their communities. Commer-

cial entertainment, music, sports, and incessant advertisements were left for the commercial stations.

As Bill Siemering, one of the organizers and first program director of NPR, said in 1970: “National Public Radio will not regard its audience as a ‘market’ or in terms of disposable income...”

Fast forward, NPR’s budget, mostly stripped of Congressional funding, became reliant on funding from corporations and wealthy donors and has indeed become a “market” with all that such commercialization entails for its programming priorities and biases.

Today, NPR and its affiliate stations have about 30 ads an hour using the repetitive phrase “support for this station comes from...” It has too many entertainment-celebrity stories, too much music time (especially after 6:00 pm on weekends), too little local content being produced by NPR’s hundreds of local station affiliates, too much self-censorship regarding corporate malfeasance and power, too much indifference to the civic community, too much aloof smugness. Many of their editors and reporters are uncommunicative and many of their managers are obsessed with raising money and shaping programming decisions accordingly.

NPR has been largely ignored by Congress because the former critics – conservative Republicans – now like its receptivity to their opinions and because commercial interests like Walmart, Chevron, Eli Lilly, Amazon, Raymond James Brokers, and large Banks advertise and support NPR and PBS. As a result, there has been a serious absence of supportive Congressional hearings and oversight. The House Energy & Commerce Committee did, however, hold a hearing because House Speaker Mike Johnson believes

23% of current worker wages will be replaced by automation, but it won’t happen immediately “because of the large upfront costs of AI systems.” Disruptive technologies like A.I. will create new jobs. Overall, however, McKinsey consulting group believes that 12 million Americans will be kicked off their payrolls by 2030.

“Probably none of us will have a job,” Elon Musk said earlier this year. “If you want to do a job that’s kinda like a hobby, you can do a job. But otherwise, A.I. and the robots will provide any goods and services that you want.”

For this to work, Musk observed, idled workers would have to be paid a “universal high income” – the equivalent of a full-time salary, but to stay at home. This is not to be conflated with the “universal basic income” touted by people like Andrew Yang, which is a nominal annual government subsidy, not enough to pay all your expenses.

“It will be an age of abundance,” Musk predicts.

The history of technological progress suggests otherwise. From the construction of bridges across the Thames during the late 18th and early 19th centuries that sidelined London’s wherry men who ferried passengers and goods, to the deindustrialization of the Midwest that has left the heartland of the United States with boarded-up houses and an epic opioid crisis, to Uber and Lyft’s solution to a non-existent problem that now has yellow-taxi drivers committing suicide, ruling-class political and business elites rarely worry about the people who lose their livelihoods to “creative destruction.”

Whether you’re a 55-year-old wherry man or cabbie or accountant who loses your job through no fault of your own other than having the bad luck to be born at a time of dramatic change in the workplace, you always get the same advice. Pay to retrain in another field – hopefully you have savings to pay for it, hopefully your new profession doesn’t become obsolete too! “Embrace a growth mindset.” Whatever that means. Use new tech to help you with your current occupation – until your boss figures out what you’re up to and decides to make do with just the machine.

Look at it from their – the boss’s – perspective. Costs are down, profits are up.

NPR needs to be held “accountable for its ideological bias and contempt for facts.” Speaker Johnson is not known for his appreciation of facts.

Public media escapes scrutiny and higher expectation levels by its audience because comparisons with the rancid commercial radio/TV stations makes it look good. NPR and PBS do have some good programs – documentaries, features from the field, and some investigative reports, especially when, for example, NPR collaborates with nonprofit media groups like Pro Publica.

However, its news slots raise the issue of mimicry of their commercial counterparts. Top-of-the-hour news by NPR is just like that of CBS or ABC – just three minutes or less of often the same news bite stories. The local affiliates are not much better with the exception of several stations like WNYC-FM (New York) or WAMC (Albany), WGBH (Boston), KQED-FM (San Francisco), and KAXE (Northern Minnesota) that have numerous full-time local reporters. Restoring public media to its founding purposes is more essential than ever as financing for the private press has collapsed and 1800 counties now lack a daily local news source.

Michael Swerdlow, the author of our report, “The Public’s Media: The Case for a Democratically Funded and Locally Rooted News Media in an Era of Newsroom Closures,” demonstrated that NPR’s “commercialization means that public media remains reliant on the satisfaction of corporate donors and is obsessed with treating its ‘audience’ as a market...” This has meant that many of its talented, experienced reporters are underchallenged, working on routine, repetitive abbreviated deliveries that invoke pathos.

Our report is designed to spark support to return Public Media to its original public interest missions and decrease corporate domination on its national and local station Boards of Directors. The report notes that “The United States spends \$3 per person,

They don’t know you, they don’t care about you, guilt isn’t a thing for them. What’s not to like about the robotics revolution?

Those profits, however, belong to us at least as much as they do to “them” – employers, bosses, stockholders. Artificial intelligence and robots are not magic; they were not conjured up from thin air. These technologies were created and developed by human beings on the backs of hundreds of millions of American workers in legacy and now-moribund industries. If the wealthy winners of this latest tech revolu-

New Zealand spends \$21, Canada spends \$33, Australia \$53, Japan spends \$67, the U.K. spends \$97, and Germany spends 41 times more at \$124.” Public Media needs more adequate public and per capita funding. The Public Media must become structurally more open to the civic communities’ information needs and inputs which were the legislation’s original inspiration.

Swerdlow’s report is deep on constructive reforms, innovative proposals, and references to other Western nations’ approaches to governance and funding of their Public Media. His analysis explains how the collapses of the “business model” for local for-profit news media – hundreds of daily and weekly newspaper closings or retrenchments – leaves Public Media with even greater responsibilities to fill gaps created by the spread of news deserts in county after county.

We invite audiences to raise their expectation levels for Public Media’s daily performance and demand an annual public budget of about \$10 billion (the cost of two-thirds of an unneeded aircraft carrier) to provide the information and two-way engagements with the audience that gives meaning to the functioning of our First Amendment protections. We also invite PBS and NPR staff to share their concerns about the decline of Public Media with us by sending an email to: info@csrl.org or sending a letter to the address below.

You can receive a printed copy of Michael Swerdlow’s report on The Public’s Media by sending a check for \$15 to: CSRL, P.O. Box 19367, Washington, DC, 20036 (a PDF version is available online at CSRL.ORG).

You should find it troubling, fascinating, empowering, and quite original in its analysis, data, and recommendations.

Ralph Nader is a consumer advocate, lawyer and author. See www.nader.org or facebook.com/ralphnader.

TED RALL

We Need a Universal High Income

“Get a job!” That’s the clichéd response to panhandlers and anyone else who complains of being broke. But what if you can’t?

That dilemma is the crux of an evolving silent crisis that threatens to undermine the foundation of the American economic model.

Two-thirds of gross domestic product, most of the economy, is fueled by personal consumer spending. Most spending is sourced from personal income, overwhelmingly from salaries paid by employers. But employers will need fewer and fewer employees.

You don’t need a business degree to understand the nature of the doom loop. A smaller labor force earns a smaller national income and spends less. As demand shrinks, companies lay off many of their remaining workers, who themselves spend less, on and on until we’re all in bread lines.

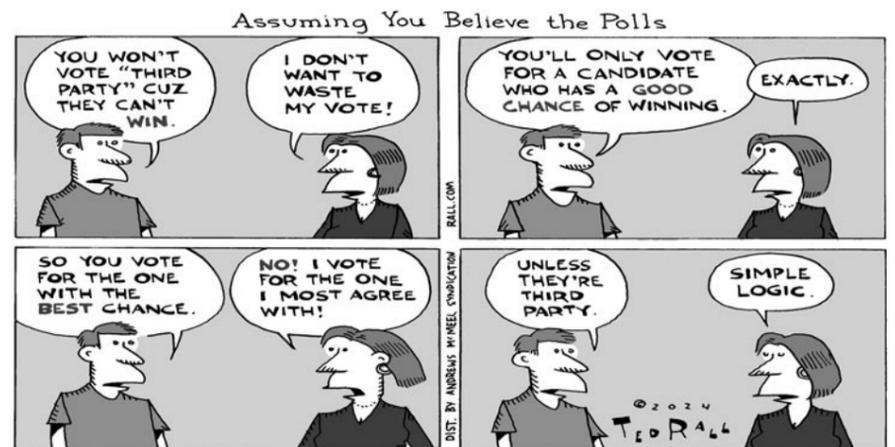
Assuming there are any charities collecting enough donations to pay for the bread.

The workforce participation rate has already been shrinking for more than two decades, forcing fewer workers to pay higher taxes. It’s about to get much worse.

Workers are already being replaced by robotics, artificial intelligence and other forms of automation. Estimates vary about how many and how quickly these technologies will kill American jobs as they scale and become widely accepted, but there’s no doubt the effects will be huge and that we will see them sooner rather than later. A report by MIT and Boston University finds that two million manufacturing jobs will disappear within the coming year; Freethink sounds the death knell for 65% of retail gigs in the same startlingly short time span. A different MIT study predicts that “only

tion are too short-sighted and cruel to share the abundance with their fellow citizens – if for no better reason than to save their skins from a future violent uprising and their portfolios from disaster when our consumerism-based economy comes crashing down – we should force them to do so.

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



Sibert...

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rity measures.

Like the European Union, voting rights for national elections would be based on citizenship, whereas those for local elections would be based on residence. For instance, a returning Palestinian refugee who opts to live in Jaffa would vote for the Palestinian National Assembly, not the Knesset, but would be able to vote for the Yafa-Tel Aviv city council. Conversely, an Israeli residing in a (former) settlement such as Ariel would vote in the Knesset, not the Palestinian National Assembly, but could participate in choosing representatives in an integrated Ariel municipal government.

Dajani and Yehuda’s model doesn’t require a mass evacuation of settlers, nor does it undermine Palestinian sovereignty. It al-

lows Jerusalem to be one city, not divided by a barrier. It also does not require Israelis or Palestinians to surrender their attachment to any part of the country; it lowers the stakes of determining where the border between the two states will be.

The two writers rightly stated that such a confederation would be complicated, and a ceasefire would be the first step. As of the writing of this story, Israel is bombing Lebanon, and most hope the conflict doesn’t become a regional war. Everyone who cares about peace must acknowledge that millions of people, both Jews and Palestinians, will continue to live in this area and call it home. Building a confederation in Israel is a must if either faction wants to live a life defined by human rights, peace, and democracy.

Jason Sibert is the Lead Writer of the Peace Economy Project.

Glen Canyon Dam Faces Deadpool

By ZAK PODMORE

In 1998, when I was in fourth grade, I joined a class field trip to Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado. But when we got to Cortez, the road was barricaded. Hours earlier, three men had stolen a water-tanker truck and killed a police officer before fleeing into the desert.

In his book “Dead Run,” writer Dan Schultz makes the case that the criminals were inspired by Edward Abbey’s 1975 novel, “The Monkey Wrench Gang.” The men were survivalists planning to turn the water truck into a mobile bomb, Schultz says. Their probable goal: To pack the tanker truck with explosives and blowup Glen Canyon Dam.

Back then, the idea of draining Lake Powell was a fringe idea, attractive to anti-government extremists and radical environmentalists. Those who advocated a legal decommissioning of the Glen Canyon Dam, including supporters of the Glen Canyon Institute in Salt Lake City, were often laughed out of the room.

In those years, the dam was working as intended. Lake Powell was nearly full in the late '90s. Hydropower production was going full tilt, and millions of people were visiting the reservoir annually to fish, houseboat, and water ski.

But since the year 2000, Lake Powell has been in decline. Climate change has reduced runoff throughout the Colorado River Basin by around 20% compared to the previous century. In 2022, the reservoir—the second-largest in the country after Lake Mead—was less than a quarter full.

Nearly every boat ramp on Lake Powell was unusable last spring, and there was barely enough water to sustain hydroelectric generation. One more bad snow year would have pushed the Colorado River system to the brink of collapse, dropping the reservoir’s surface toward the lowest outlets on the Glen Canyon Dam—a point known as “dead pool.”

At dead pool, the 27 million people who rely on Colorado River water downstream from the dam would likely be forced to reduce water use quickly and involuntarily.

But Lake Powell would still stretch 100 miles into Glen Canyon at dead pool.

That’s because there is a significant design flaw in the dam: There is no drain at

the bottom. Billions of gallons of water would be trapped in the dead-pool reservoir with no easy way to release them into the Grand Canyon.

Luckily, that catastrophic scenario didn’t play out in 2023, thanks to a near-record snow year that brought Lake Powell to around 40% full. After another decent runoff this spring, the reservoir level held steady.

Twenty-four years of low levels in Lake Powell haven’t been all bad, either. Over 100,000 acres of land that were once flooded had been exposed by early 2023, including countless cultural sites sacred to Indigenous people. Along Glen Canyon’s tributaries, whole ecosystems have sprung back to life, biologically diverse and dominated by native species. Ecologists have been surprised by just how healthy the reemerging landscape is, despite spending decades underwater.

The Bureau of Reclamation has been studying potential modifications to the Glen Canyon Dam, including the drilling of tunnels at or near river level that would allow Lake Powell to be emptied if necessary. Until those modifications are made, however, the potential for a crisis—caused in part by the current dam design—remains as real as ever. Two back-to-back years of se-

vere drought, such as we’ve seen several times since 2000, would halt hydropower production at the dam and bring us dangerously close to dead pool.

Allowing the Colorado River to flow freely through Glen Canyon was a radical idea in the 1990s, but the opposite is true today. Climate change and steady water demand in the Southwest have shown us that the Glen Canyon Dam, instead of being a boon to water users, is part of the problem. Modifying the dam would give water managers greater flexibility in dry years, and it would allow Glen Canyon to continue its ecological rebirth. Since dam modifications would likely take several years to complete, there is no time to waste.

The extremists today are those who deny climate change, assuming that Lake Powell will refill again soon. In a rapidly warming world, business as usual should be treated as the fringe position.

Zak Podmore is a contributor to Writers on the Range, writersontherange.org, an independent nonprofit dedicated to spurring lively debate about Western issues. He is a Utah-based journalist and the author of “Life After Dead Pool: Lake Powell’s Last Days and the Rebirth of the Colorado River,” published by Torrey House Press in August.

Jon Voight’s Thespian Skills Lift Him Above Lunatic Politics

By ROB PATTERSON

It’s certainly been interesting to meet many stars and celebrities over my nearly half a century as an entertainment journalist. Especially when my enjoyable experience with them rubs up uncomfortably with our vastly different beliefs and politics.

This contrast is greatest with Jon Voight. His almost paranoid far-right-wing bloviating is so intense and out on the lunatic fringe that it raises doubts about his grasp of reason and reality. At the time I write this, his once highly-estranged daughter Angelina Jolie has ended their rapprochement by cutting off communication with him. His talk of indoctrination and conspiracies and fealty to the madman Trump, and of late, support of Israel’s vicious Palestinian policies, offer ample reason to thoroughly dismiss the man.

But in some ways I simply cannot do that.

First, there’s the Jon Voight I met in the early 1980s and interviewed for a feature profile for United Feature Syndicate. I no longer have the recording, but our hour together is etched into my memory. As he opened the door to his suite at the Sherry Netherland Hotel on Manhattan’s Fifth Avenue, he was welcoming and warm, engaging me in a deep and satisfyingly intense way that goes above and beyond any of the many hundreds of talks I’ve had with actors and musical stars.

Our talk about whatever eminently forgettable film he was supposed to be touting was quickly touched on and tossed aside as we began an hour of passionate discourse on topics that mattered to us deeply. At the time he was reading the Niko Kazantzakis novel “The Last Temptation of Christ,” and insisted that I read it. It took me a few years, but I made sure that I did so because of him. And am grateful for that. I left our interview vibrantly energized and inspired, feeling a bit of a natural high from how fervently we connected.

I am not alone in my good feeling about the man. My friend Bob Hill, brother of pioneering female film producer and screenwriter Debra Hill, would run into her neighbor Voight when taking his sister’s dog for a walk. Like me, he found him indelibly

warm, engaging and irresistibly likable.

The other reason I can’t fully write off Voight is the sheer magnitude of his thespian talents. Films like “Midnight Cowboy” and the Vietnam War protest tale “Coming Home” – yes, Voight once leaned left – are enough citation alone to underscore his greatness (he won a Best Actor Oscar for his work in the latter). But his acting is a gift that has richly blossomed and deepened over time into a stunningly delectable vintage dramatic wine.

The biggest reason why I kept watching the series “Ray Donovan” after it jumped the shark by moving to New York was to marvel and even swoon at his magnificent performance as bent family patriarch Mickey Donovan. Voight so fully inhabited the character with life, personality and a pulsing blood flow that when he was in a scene it crackled with magic. It felt like every cell of his being was not just inhabited but possessed by the role. His delivery of every line, expressions, gestures, posture and manner of walking all simmered with the soul of the character. I came away from watching him in the series convinced that Voight’s skills soar to the most celestial levels of acting artistry.

Yet his politics make me want to vomit. Almost invariably, my personal distaste for

the foul character and beliefs with creatives tend to sour me on their art. But not with Voight. Yeah, one can insist on separating the person from the art. I usually can’t do that. But Voight’s thespian skills are so stunning and brilliant I simply cannot deny them.

Populist Picks

ALBUM: “Smoke & Fiction” by X – The leading Los Angeles punk rock group from the late '70s call it quits with this album. Its assured delivery of their propulsive sound, solid and appealing songs and the mature comfort of the John Doe/Exene Cervenka vocals assure they bow out on a very high note.

DOCUMENTARY: “England’s Forgotten Queen: The Life and Death of Lady Jane Gray” – The teenaged first female to rule Great Britain had but a nine-day reign. This three-episode series with historian comments and dramatic recreations tells the full dramatic tale well.

Rob Patterson is a music and entertainment writer in Austin, Texas. Email robpatterson054@gmail.com.

Globalize This: Reviewing ‘Socialist Register 2024’

By SETH SANDRONSKY

The essays in “A New Global Geometry? Socialist Register 2024,” an annual publication, unpack a wide range of anti-capitalist analyses on past and current political and social contradictions and relations. The contributors’ field of inquiry ranges from China to Germany, India, Japan, Latin America, Turkey and the U.S.

The volume under review maps global capitalism’s ebbs and flows during and after the years between the Great Recession and the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, James Meadway’s essay is titled “The First Crisis of the Anthropocene: the World Economy Since COVID.”

An overarching theme in this volume maps the changing factors and forces around Uncle Sam’s role atop the global system. What are the meanings of American leadership in a world system evolving from a unipolar order to one that is multipolar?

Jerome Klassen and Ingo Schmidt weigh in on the US political economy in an era where the global balance of power is shifting away from Wall Street and Washington. Klassen in part fleshes out President Joe Biden’s pursuit of “armed primacy,” with the proxy war against Russia, in the

context of the US rise to power after World War 2.

How do strategies for a socialist transition connect with the aforementioned evolution of the global system of nation-states? The end of history that Fukuyama opined about after the fall of the former Soviet Union and finality of capitalism forevermore has given way to ongoing chaos and uncertainty amid the existential crises of eco-collapse and escalatory wars.

What are the meanings of counterrevolutionary dangers such as thermonuclear war? A useful starting point is John Bellamy Foster’s essay “The US Quest for Nuclear Primacy: the Counterforce Doctrine and the Ideology of Moral Asymmetry.”

Consider the rise of the Chinese economy. A “digital tech war” between China and the US, its history and global context, is the special focus of Tanner Mireles, situating the dynamics of this rivalry in and out of the American Empire.

Achin Vanaik looks at the “nationalist character of the ruling elite” of India concerning its domestic and foreign policies in the era of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s BJP Party. We hear and see echoes of former President Trump’s sowing of division and fear, neofascism’s playbook as late-stage global capitalism careens from one flashpoint of conflict to the next.

Ken C. Kawashima explores the pre-war and post-war social ruptures and structures in Japan. His essay, “Japan’s ‘New Pre-War’: Five Dislocations of Its Historical Development,” begins with a materialist

analysis of the nation’s development as a capitalist society facing off with European and North American power, beginning in the 19th century.

Thomas Sablowski traces the role of Germany in global capitalism. He begins with “the German economy’s fragile foundations and internal transformations,” and wraps up with socialist alternatives to rising neofascist tendencies, or the global virus of Trumpism that has gained strength from the spread of neoliberalism since the former Soviet Union imploded.

Alan Cafruny and Vassilis K. Fouskas’ essay, “Europe, the World Economy and New Imperial Grossraums,” takes up in part the impact of the Russian invasion of Ukraine on global capitalism. The authors analyze how this war and its impacts on energy prices and supplies shape the formation and dissolution of capital accumulation and industrial production.

As the Biden-Harris White House arms and supports the Israeli genocide in Gaza, now expanding to Lebanon, the contradictory role of Turkey in those operations and the proxy US war against Russia, looms large. Eren Duzgun and Cam Cemgil help us to understand what is happening and why in terms of the perils and promises of an existing social order containing the seeds of a potentially equitable economy and society.

Claudio Katz disentangles a region that has been and remains, though contested, a source of labor exploitation and resource extraction for American capital. In “The

New Geopolitical Scene in Latin America,” he analyzes the meanings of China’s challenges to US power in the region, and integrates that with the class forces from below whose struggles for justice prefigure a peaceful and sustainable future.

Lindsey German disentangles British militarism amid capitalist competition between China and the US. This rivalry includes America’s proxy war with Russia. Global military spending is spiking as the ecology worsens and a nuclear exchange threatens, endangering human sustainability on the planet.

Birgit Mahnkopf’s essay, “From Globalization to Geopolitics—a Way Back, Not Forward,” wraps up SR 2024. She contrasts partly the current order and battle for hegemony between China and the US with global capitalism before World War I. We know this global war preceded a depression decade that spawned the Second World War, the largest loss of life in a war ever, with the specter of WW3 hanging over humanity’s head like a sword of Damocles now.

The late Leo Panitch, author, activist and university professor, assisted in the planning of “Socialist Register 2024.” He also contributed to this annual volume for decades as an editor and writer.

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Decolonizing Hispanic History Onscreen

From Aztecs to United Farm Workers, John Leguizamo tells 'The Untold History of Latinos' in documentary series.

By ED RAMPPELL

Since his 1986 TV debut on *Miami Vice*, actor John Leguizamo has been a drag queen in 1995's "To Wong Foo," Tybalt in 1995's "Romeo + Juliet," Toulouse-Lautrec in 2001's "Moulin Rouge!" Estragon in 2021's "Waiting for Godot," and voiced characters in animated features, including "Ice Age."

During National Hispanic Heritage Month, the Colombia-born actor/writer/director/producer is bringing his "Brown and proud" sensibility to TV with a three-part PBS series, *American Historia: The Untold History of Latinos*, featuring historians, academics and activists providing commentary plus actors reading texts. I interviewed Leguizamo via Zoom in Washington, D.C., where he's rehearsing his play "The Other Americans."

What are the worst misconceptions of Latinos?

JOHN LEGUIZAMO: Obviously, there's the pervasive negative stereotyping, as Trump has said, and lots of Hollywood did us a disservice as well, portraying us as drug dealers, villains – not that there's anything wrong with being a service worker, but we're more than all that: Lawyers, doctors, presidential nominees and candidates, executives, we do lots more.

What are you telling us in *The Untold History of Latinos*?

The first episode shows the mighty empires thousands of years before the conquest, the Aztec, the Maya, the Inca, the Taíno. The second episode is from the conquest to the 1900s and all the things we did to build

America. We contributed our inventions to the world, chewing gum, popcorn, peanut butter, galvanizing, rubber, the ball. The suspension bridge was an Inca invention and Incans had binary code before computers. We helped build infrastructure in America...

I'm telling you we Latinos have built America and don't get credit because we've been otherized in this country since the beginning. The first European language spoken in America was not English, it was Spanish. We've been here since 1492 and before there were the empires. Ten thousand of us fought in the American Revolution, 20,000 in the Civil War, 120,000 in World War I; in World War II, 500,000. Over 60 Medal of Honor honorees.

Our contributions to the making of America are massive. That's what this show is about: Putting those facts back into history. Johns Hopkins University did a study: 87% of Latino contributions are not in textbooks ...

Traditionally, Columbus is considered a great hero, but what's *Historia's* take?

You can't "discover" us; you didn't "discover" us; we were here. Columbus did not discover America. There were a whole bunch of cultures and empires here – people were living here. We discovered Columbus – because he was lost.

Columbus was first contact. He brought 33 pandemics that decimated us and so much violence. He was like a Hitler to us Latinos. He forced men to work. Brutalized people, burned them alive, chopped their hands off if they weren't bringing enough gold. If they tried running away, he'd cut feet, set dogs to eat children. He had a prostitution ring of nine-year-old girls. He was horrific ...

How were the empires conquered/subjugated?

Obviously, there were the first contact diseases we didn't have – syphilis, whooping cough, malaria. There were no roaches, rats, pigeons, all brought by conquistadors and Europeans. Then came violence, taking our gold. Five hundred thousand tons of our gold was taken from us and it helped build the great European empires. Our silver was double that ... The conquest came here and destroyed these incredibly advanced civilizations ... The Renaissance was built on our wealth...

In Part II *Historia* moves to the US. How did "Manifest Destiny" impact Latinos?

Mexico was almost from the Mississippi to the Pacific and then the US came up with a flimsy excuse to invade and take all that land. But most Latin people there remained. They had land, political wealth and all that was taken from them. They were lynched, burned alive, shot, segregated, redlined, experimented on. Women were sterilized in the early 1900s without their knowledge.

[An early] lynching in America was Antonio Gómez in 191[1] Texas; the first woman lynched in America was Josefa Segovia during the Gold Rush ... We've been fighting to preserve ourselves in this country for 500 years.

What role did slavery play in White Texans' war of "independence"?

Mexico was against slavery all along and Texas was part of Mexico. When Euro-Americans moved there they wanted to bring slavery; because it was Mexican territory, they started a revolution to free themselves, so they could have slavery.

What were the White Caps?

Vigilantes in California and the West trying to protect Latino farmers after the invasion of the US in the 1830s. They had been ranching there for centuries and the US wanted to put fences and borders. They'd cut fences because they believed the land belonged to everybody and cattle should roam free.

You claim two million Mexicans/Chicanos were deported after the 1929 stock market crash?

It was the Repatriation act. President Herbert Hoover said Latinos were taking jobs, so they deported almost 2 million people. The only US citizens ever deported are Latinos.

Trump now has a plan to deport 20-ish million "illegal aliens."

It's horrific. Are you going to round us up and profile American citizens? It's very dangerous, hostile and aggressive and will hurt millions of people. It's a stupid idea, because immigrants fuel this economy. They do all the jobs nobody wants to do.

What were "Juan Crow Laws"?

All over the Southwest and West, Latinos were not allowed – we were segregated

– to go to parks with Whites, theaters, churches, etc. [Down South] they had "Jim Crow" laws – for us, they had "Juan Crow" laws.

What was it like interviewing legendary Dolores Huerta, United Farm Workers co-founder?

Meeting Dolores Huerta was incredible. She's a force of nature, still going strong at 90, so positive, still fighting the good fight. Her whole thing is unity, that we're better and stronger together.

What were the "Walkouts"?

Latinos in L.A. had fought against segregation and redlining. But their schools were still underfunded, teachers were making kids take trade classes and talking them out of professional careers because of racism. So, students, teachers and parents orchestrated these walkouts in the '60s to fight against lack of funding, racist ideas, all over L.A. schools.

Who were the Brown Berets?

The Black Panthers borrowed Che Guevara's black beret and we borrowed from the Panthers and turned the black berets into brown berets. These were young activists fighting segregation, racism, police brutality, all over California.

Tell us about the Young Lords?

The Chicago and New York version of the Panthers and Brown Berets. Intellectuals, young Puerto Ricans who basically created the medical Bill of Rights for Patients. There were no services above 96th street in [Manhattan], where Spanish Harlem was. They protested to get services.

What is Latinos' role in the presidential race?

We're the largest voting bloc after White people. We're going to decide who the president is going to be.

"American Historia: The Untold History of Latinos" premiered Sept. 27, Oct. 4 and 11, on PBS, PBS.org and PBS app.

This is an edited version of an interview that appeared at Truthdig Sept. 26.

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.

EDGE OF SPORTS/*Dave Zirin*

Gambling Is an Addiction. So Why Was Pete Rose an Outcast?

The baseball legend was an example of not only the perils of gambling but also why the sports leagues' embrace of the online-betting industry makes them predatory hypocrites.

"Banned for life for gambling."

These are the words that are affixed to baseball legend Pete Rose, who died Sept. 30 at the age of 83. Not "the Hit King"—for his Major League Baseball record 4,256 base hits—or his nickname "Charlie Hustle." Not as a 17-time All-Star. Not as the player who made the All-Star team at five different positions. Not as the fierce soul of the iconic 1970s Cincinnati team known as the Big Red Machine. Not as the legend going airborne in headfirst belly-flop slides. He's not even being remembered for the horrid parts of his life: the accusations of statutory rape, which he denied (and later settled out of court), as well as his years of living hard and ugly.

He was a sports star of the 1970s and could indulge in every temptation. His addiction of choice was gambling. Betting on baseball as a Reds manager was his sin, and the late commissioner Angelo Bartlett Giamatti was determined to drive gambling from the sport, even if that meant banning Rose for life.

Coming to baseball after a stint as the youngest president in the history of Yale University, Giamatti saw his job as warding off those who would vandalize baseball's place in the American fabric. He was a dramatic figure—the father of actor Paul Giamatti—and unafraid of the big gesture. When Giamatti died of a heart attack at age 51 in 1989, friends said the stress of banning Rose played a role in his

early death. Giamatti's dear friend Fay Vincent succeeded him, and he saw sustaining Rose's lifetime banishment as a duty to Giamatti's legacy. Rose never helped his case by issuing denials for decades that he bet on baseball. He only admitted it 30 years later as a gambit to finally get into the Hall of Fame. This last effort to fulfill his dream of taking a place in Cooperstown failed, and the lifetime ban would remain.

Today, we've come to understand Rose's compulsion to bet on anything and everything, including baseball, as a function of addiction. Rose, however unsavory the allegations about his personal life, was a gambling addict. He needed Major League Baseball to direct him to treatment and eventually offer him an open, transparent path back into the game he loved. Instead, the league preferred him to be a living warning to players.

I interviewed Rose a decade ago for Sirius/XM radio, and he spoke to me from a Las Vegas convention-center hallway, outside a room where he was signing memorabilia. He said that later that day he would be hitting the tables. What was memorable was how caffeinated Rose was—hyper, funny, ingratiating, and clearly an experienced spinner of yarns. One could easily see him at corporate retreats, celebrity golf courses, and rubber-chicken dinners charming crowds for a paycheck. After his ban, Charlie Hustle was really about that hustle, agreeing to attend countless baseball autograph shows and grabbing for any payday. He discovered an outlaw infamy and sustained his damaged ego by basking in the adoration of his defenders.

The other part of the interview I'll never forget occurred when I asked what he might be doing if he had never been banned, and he said words to the effect of, "I never would have left the sport. I don't care if I was just an old guy sitting on the bench giving my two cents. But that's where I would be."

He then launched into a soliloquy about his favorite current players and the advice he'd give them. He didn't speak with bitterness about his absence from those spaces. He sounded alive and thrilled to be talking baseball, breaking down complex ideas about player development in plain-spoken language. Then, suddenly, he sounded crestfallen, and he finished the interview talking about yearning to get back in the game. Maybe it was a sympathy-seeking con from a guy always seeking an angle. But I imagined him glumly looking around the cavernous convention center, wearing an out-of-style sport coat in a city that serves up adrenaline and alienation in equal helpings: Willy Loman with poker chips.

I think he was, for a moment, imagining himself in his familiar polyester uniform, feeling the sweaty line on the brim of his baseball hat, and that he mourned a loss. For those who see in Rose a cautionary tale or loathe him for the sneering arrogance of his younger years, such an ending could be considered just deserts for someone who trespassed against the national pastime. But understanding gambling as an addiction matters, and that creates a different kind of cautionary tale. Rose risked what he cared about most in the world, and came out on the losing end. Gambling can develop into an addiction like smoking, where you itch without the (figurative or literal) dice in your hands.

This matters now because the same sports world that banned Rose, with the haughty air of a pope excommunicating an inveterate sinner, is now besotted with gambling. Our smartphones are now portable sportsbooks, and the leagues have reaped billions from the industry. Broadcasts are flooded with ads. Members of the sports media we are supposed to trust are giving out betting lines during highlight shows. And now, brazenly, even athletes like NBA stars LeBron James and Kevin Durant are featured in gambling advertisements. The NBA happily profits from this, even though the league banned a player, Jontay Porter, just last year for betting on the apps. It ruined his young career. Porter and Rose are two examples of the countless people, especially young fans, becoming addicts thanks to widespread legalized sports betting.

The sports leagues have also, while peddling addiction, been PR-conscious enough to offer phone numbers for those who cannot escape its grasp. And a new generation of addicts is now seeking help in shocking numbers.

As for Rose, in this orgy of gambling and addiction, MLB continued to use him as a symbol: warning players, coaches, and referees that, while the world may be betting on their games, they are to resist all temptations. You can advertise gambling, just not partake, or you'll end up like Rose: a tragic figure with his nose pressed up against the class. This is wrong. Rose should be remembered as an example of not only of the perils of gambling addiction but also why the leagues' embrace of this revenue stream makes them predatory hypocrites. If we had a different discussion about Rose's addiction 35 years ago, perhaps this epidemic of the sports world has unleashed could have been avoided.

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." Email edgeofsports@gmail.com

AMY GOODMAN



One year after Hamas's attack on Israel, the bombardment, military assault and siege of the Gaza Strip continues. Now on to Lebanon.

Israel Cannot Bomb Its Way to Peace

Renowned dissident Noam Chomsky wrote in "Fateful Triangle," his seminal book on Israel/Palestine, "For some time, I've been compelled to arrange speaking engagements long in advance. Sometimes a title is requested for a talk scheduled several years ahead. There is, I've found, one title that always works: 'The current crisis in the Middle East.' One can't predict exactly what the crisis will be far down the road, but that there will be one is a fairly safe prediction."

While Noam at 95 has left public life, his words from 35 years ago ring chillingly true today. Only now, Israel, backed by the United States, is fanning the flames of what

could quickly become a much wider war.

One year after Hamas's attack on Israel, the bombardment, military assault and intense siege of the Gaza Strip continues. The Oct. 7, 2023, death toll in Israel included over 1,100 people, while the official death toll in Gaza since then is close to 42,000 (a number many observers consider a gross undercount), climbing daily with ongoing attacks on schools, residential buildings and displacement camps. Reporting on the continued slaughter in Gaza is largely overlooked now, with global attention focused on Lebanon.

On one day in Gaza in early October, Israel killed over 100 people, with 51 in Khan Younis alone, including 12 children. Gaza's media office told the Turkish Anadolu Agency that, since October 2023, Israel has eliminated "902 Palestinian families, erasing them from the civil registry by killing all their members," and has "exterminated 1,364 Palestinian families by killing all their members, leaving only one individual per family, and...3,472 Palestinian families, leaving just two individuals per family." An earlier Israeli strike reportedly hit an orphanage. But in a conflict that has created the term, "WCNSF," for "Wounded Child, No Surviving Family," perhaps the entire Gaza Strip should be considered an orphanage.

Meanwhile, in Lebanon, Israel has begun its ground incursion and stepped up the intensity and range of its aerial assault. This follows its assassination in late September of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, and the massive exploding pager and walkie-

talkie attack in Lebanon, which killed over 35 people and injured more than 3,500.

Lebanese authorities estimate that the number of displaced has now risen to 1.2 million people, in a nation of 5.8 million. As of Thursday, Oct. 3, according to NBC, Lebanese health officials reported 1,300 people in Lebanon had been killed by Israeli military action. Israel, meanwhile, reported eight of its soldiers had been killed in southern Lebanon.

In response to the assassination of Nasrallah, Iran launched an estimated 180 ballistic missiles at military targets in Israel, with little damage reported.

"We were left with no choice but to respond. If Israel decides to retaliate, then it will face harsher reactions," Iran's new president, Masoud Pezeshkian, said, following the attack.

Former Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett told CNN, "Now is the time that we can attack, because Iran is fully vulnerable. The Islamic Republic of Iran, it's time to hit."

Lebanese attorney Nadim Houry has simple advice for Israel:

"Don't do it."

Houry, executive director of the Arab Reform Initiative, spoke from Paris on the *Democracy Now!* news hour: "Don't do it. You will fail. You've failed in the past. We know that there is another pathway. There are two central questions that as long as they're not resolved, the Middle East is not going to know peace. The first one is the Palestine question. And the second one has been central to the region since 1979, which is: What

is the legitimate place of Iran ... if the region is to know proper peace, we need to answer these two questions."

Nadim Houry points to the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, and the U.S./Israeli claim that the occupation of Iraq would ultimately hurt Iran and reshape the Middle East:

"At the time, I remember a younger Netanyahu telling the Americans in Congress, 'It's all going to be fine. Iran is going to lose. We're going to have democracy. Everyone is going to welcome us.' Well, guess what: It didn't turn out exactly the same way. Yes, the U.S. had overwhelming power. Yes, the U.S. invaded and occupied Iraq. And the occupation was a disaster. And today, Iran is stronger than it ever was."

In late September, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq attacked Eilat, the southern Israeli city on the Red Sea, with a drone. Yemen's Iranian-backed Houthis fired missiles and drones at Israel. Israel bombed Yemen in retaliation. Hamas remains active, and Hezbollah is fighting where it is strongest, on its own terrain.

Israel cannot bomb its way to peace, and certainly shouldn't be allowed to do so with U.S. arms and ammunition. The time is long past for ceasefire and negotiation.

Denis Moynihan cowrote this column. Amy Goodman is the host of Democracy Now!, a daily international TV/radio news hour airing on more than 1,400 radio and TV stations. Her sixth book, co-authored with Moynihan and David Goodman, is "Democracy Now!: Twenty Years Covering the Movements Changing America."

Be Part of the Solution: Don't Engage With Rage

By BONNIE JEAN FELDKAMP

Someone recently told me, "The minute I took this job, I became part of the problem." I'd never thought of it that way before but instantly understood what they meant. They work within a government system, a completely different profession than me, but I couldn't help but come back to that phrase again and again. It also applied to me and could apply to anyone else working within a corporate, government or industry structure.

I became a columnist to shine light in my community, in our country. I want to write the stories of everyday people who remind us of our humanity. My dogma is to tie personal experience to current events in a way that helps the reader empathize, relate and care. That is what I strive to do each time I sit down to write. But I do work within a system: corporate journalism.

As an industry we are a little lost, trying to find our way. The purpose of journalism is generally still the same, at least if you ask the reporters and columnists on the ground in your community. They got into this work for the shoe-leather journalism, a true public service with the aim of writing the first draft of history for their neighborhoods and cities.

However, to sustain that we also need subscribers, people invested in their communities who want to read and understand. That's just not happening like it did before the internet. So what happens instead is, editors and journalists have conversations about what readers want instead of what the community needs. Whole departments are dedicated to what's trending instead of having a dutiful reporter bearing witness to decisions being made at city council and school board meetings, or in the courtroom. We have news deserts in rural spaces with people getting information that hasn't been vetted or fact-checked from social media and neighborhood groups, or they are only consuming biased national cable news.

This means when I pitch a local column that I feel is worth writing, I'm faced with the

question, "But will it do well?" Which translates to, "How many people will click on it?" All I want to ask in response is, what does it matter if the masses read it? Isn't it enough if the right person reads it and a policy changes? What happened to quantifying success with community impact instead of eyeballs?

That's where I am. That's where we all are in this world. Metrics may be good for business and selling ad space, but is it responsible? I'm entrenched in this problem, and it leaves me looking for my way out — or at least a way through.

Maya Angelou wrote, "There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you."

I'm 49 years old and I feel like that story inside me is me. What I choose to write and put creative energy into tells my story. What do I want my story to say?

I want to be part of the solution. The inspiration. The wisdom that helps our next generation thrive. Writing screeds that "do well" as rage-click bait for the masses means nothing to me. But if someone reads something I wrote and uses that to reflect and ask themselves what they can learn? That's

worth everything.

Social scientist Brene Brown says we don't come to a midlife crisis but a midlife unraveling. Brown says that midlife is when the universe pulls you close and says: "I'm not screwing around. ... Time is growing short. ... You were made to live and love with your whole heart. It's time to show up and be seen."

I want to not only be seen but help others feel seen. These are the stories that matter, and they should inspire us in our shared humanity. We all have a story to share. A worthy life lesson of value and belonging. We're in this together. It's about time we act like it. What I choose to create with words has a lasting impact. I want to inspire and engage, not divide and enrage. I hope you'll join me and choose to click on stories that serve our collective good.

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/bonniejeanfildkamp>.

Dispatches ...

Continued from page 5

jobs is higher than at any point during the Trump administration, and indeed, it's the highest it's ever been since the BLS started publishing these numbers," Wolpers tweeted.

The Trump-Vance campaign's feigned ignorance and blatant, debunked lies on the economy are surging as polling indicates women are learning to trust Vice President Kamala Harris more on the economy. Wall Street also supports her, while billionaires who aren't conspiracy theorists are opening their wallets in support of her campaign. Not to mention, economists have repeatedly blasted Trump's economic plan for his second term, insisting high tariffs would increase inflation, not quell it.

Elise Gould, a senior economist at the progressive Economic Policy Institute, also championed the "strong" figures.

In a blog post on Oct. 3, a day ahead of the BLS report, Gould detailed the strength of the labor market, despite the real pain that many workers and families still feel in their day to day lives:

"It is indisputable that the U.S. labor market is strong. The share of the population ages 25–54 with a job is at a 23-year high, median household incomes rose 4.0% last year, and real wage growth over the last four years has been broad-based and strong. The economy has not only regained the nearly 22 million jobs lost in the pandemic recession, but

also added another 6.5 million.

"Are some folks still having a hard time? Absolutely. Even when the unemployment rate is low, there are still sidelined workers, and it remains difficult for many families to make ends meet on wages that are still too low. Unfortunately, that's a long-term phenomenon stemming from a too-stingy U.S. welfare state, rising inequality, and the legacy of anemic wage growth during past economic recoveries. But when comparing the labor market with four years ago (during the pandemic recession) or even before the pandemic began, the answer is clear: More workers have jobs and wages are beating inflation by solid margins."

With the Federal Reserve easing interest rates, in part based on the strength of the hiring trends alongside lower inflation, the jobs report was welcomed as a show of strength for progressives who have argued since the COVID-19 pandemic that pro-worker policies—as opposed to endless fealty to the demands of corporate powers and Wall Street—alongside public investments can work together to create strong economic foundations for the nation, Jon Queally noted at CommonDreams.org (10/4).

DOCKWORKERS SUSPEND STRIKE AFTER WINNING TENTATIVE DEAL WITH 62% WAGE BOOST. The union representing East and Gulf Coast dockworkers suspended its strike on Oct. 3 after reaching a tentative agreement with shipping giants that reportedly includes a 62% wage boost

over six years, Jake Johnson noted at CommonDreams.org (10/4).

The International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) said in a joint statement with the United States Maritime Alliance (USMX) that the union would suspend its strike until Jan. 15 so the two sides can "return to the bargaining table to negotiate all other outstanding issues."

"Effective immediately, all current job actions will cease and all work covered by the Master Contract will resume," the statement added.

The tentative deal followed three days on the picket line during which dockworkers—who are essential to the functioning of the U.S. economy—cast their fight as a critical struggle against multinational corporations that raked in huge profits during the COVID-19 pandemic and enriched their investors as wages failed to keep pace with inflation.

According to one estimate, the dozens of ports affected by the strike handle a combined 25% of the United States' international trade.

The Associated Press reported that the two sides reached a tentative deal after "the ports sweetened their wage offer from about 50% over six years to 62%."

The union originally sought a 77% raise, but in recent days Harold Daggett, the union president, said the ILA would pursue a 61.5% raise for workers over the course of a new contract. Daggett rejected the shipping industry's previous wage offers as "insulting."

Under the contract that expired Sept. 30, starting pay for dockworkers was \$20 an hour.

Any final agreement must be ratified by

union members, who also demanded protections from automation and other benefit improvements. Reuters reported that automation is among the "key issues that remain unresolved."

The Biden administration declined to intervene on the side of industry to halt the strike, and President Joe Biden issued a statement earlier this week noting that "ocean carriers have made record profits since the pandemic and in some cases profits grew in excess of 800% compared to their profits prior to the pandemic."

"Executive compensation has grown in line with those profits and profits have been returned to shareholders at record rates," said Biden. "It's only fair that workers, who put themselves at risk during the pandemic to keep ports open, see a meaningful increase in their wages as well."

UAW SLAMS TRUMP-VANCE AS 'MENACE TO THE WORKING CLASS.' The United Auto Workers reiterated its warning that the Republican presidential ticket of Donald Trump and JD Vance is a threat to working-class Americans in response to a refusal by Vance to commit to honoring a \$500 million federal grant for an electric vehicle plant in Michigan. Jessica Corbett noted at CommonDreams.org (10/4).

Both Trump and Vance—a venture capitalist turned U.S. senator from Ohio who often postures as a working-class ally—are campaigning in Michigan, a key swing state, in early October.

The *Detroit News* reported that on the

Continued on next page

At Debate, Vance Whines: You Weren't Supposed to Fact Check Me!

By DANA MILBANK

Half an hour into the Oct. 1 vice-presidential debate, J.D. Vance lodged a whiny protest.

"Margaret," he said to moderator Margaret Brennan of CBS News, "the rules were that you guys weren't going to fact check!"

It was a lie on top of another lie, supplemented by a pair of other lies, in support of an even bigger lie.

There was no "rule" against fact-checking. And Vance had just told a whopper. He had alleged that, in Springfield, Ohio, "you've got schools that are overwhelmed, you've got hospitals that are overwhelmed, you have got housing that is totally unaffordable because we brought in millions of illegal immigrants."

There is no "open border," Kamala Harris isn't the president, and the thousands of Haitian migrants to which Vance was referring have legal status, which Brennan had accurately pointed out. But Vance claimed that "what's actually going on" was that the Haitian migrants are there as part of "the facilitation of illegal immigration" — and he kept going until the moderators shut off the candidates' microphones.

From the sidelines, Donald Trump

cheered on his running mate. "Margaret Brennan just lied again about the ILLEGAL MI-GRANTS let into our Country by Lyrin' Kamala Harris, and then she cut off JD's mic to stop him from correcting her!" he posted on Truth Social.

The up-is-down moment was all the worse because it was in response to Vance's original libels about the Haitian immigrants in Springfield: that they were bringing crime, disease and, yes, eating the cats and dogs of the town's residents. Vance declined to walk back that calumny during the debate, instead saying: "The people that I'm most worried about in Springfield, Ohio, are the American citizens who have had their lives destroyed by Kamala Harris's open border."

It feels entirely appropriate that CBS chose to hold the vice-presidential debate in a studio once home to "Captain Kangaroo."

For three decades beginning in the mid-1950s, the Captain, along with Mr. Green Jeans, Mr. Bunny Rabbit, Mr. Moose and other friends, regaled children with fantastic stories, a Magic Drawing Board, and cartoons featuring the likes of Tom Terrific, a shape-shifting boy who lived in a tree house and could transform himself into anything he wanted by using the funnel-shaped hat that sat on his head.

But Captain Kangaroo never conjured a figure quite so outlandish as JD Vance.

This shape-shifting boy has gone from being a never-Trump author who in 2016 compared the "reprehensible" Trump to Adolf Hitler, to a venture capitalist who in 2020 said Trump "thoroughly failed to deliver," to the junior senator from Ohio who, as Trump's

running mate in 2024, worships the ground the former president walks on.

Vance has used his own Magic Drawing Board to create a whimsical portrait of reality in this election season. He has embraced the fiction that Trump won the 2020 election. He has falsely claimed that Democrats were responsible for two assassination attempts against Trump. He has seconded Trump's routine lies about crime, jobs, tariffs and the border. He has slandered his vice-presidential opponent, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, accusing him of "stolen valor" after Walz's 24 years of honorable military service. And he has led the vile demonization of the Haitians in Springfield.

"If I have to create stories so that the American media actually pays attention to the suffering of the American people, then that's what I'm going to do," he admitted in August on CNN.

And that's just what he did during the debate. Walz wasn't a particularly skilled debater; he tripped over words and at one point said, "I've become friends with school shooters" when he was referring to the families of school-shooting victims. But even if Walz had been quicker on his feet, there wouldn't have been a way to keep up with the fictions Vance submitted.

The senator said Harris "became the appointed border czar." She received no such appointment.

He said "over \$100 billion" of Iranian assets were unfrozen "thanks to the Kamala Harris administration." Not so.

On abortion, he said he "never supported a national ban." When running for the Senate

two years ago, he said he "certainly would like abortion to be illegal nationally."

On health care, he served up the howler of the night when he said that Trump "saved" the "collapsing" Affordable Care Act. Instead of destroying Obamacare, Vance said, "Donald Trump worked in a bipartisan way to ensure that Americans have access to affordable care."

In reality, of course, Trump tried his best to kill Obamacare. (John McCain famously thwarted the effort in the Senate.)

Vance capped the night by saying that Trump "peacefully" surrendered power four years ago. When Walz asked him point-blank whether Trump had lost that election, Vance would not answer.

Throughout the debate, Vance pretended that Harris was the president, referring to "Kamala Harris's open border" and "Kamala Harris's atrocious economic record." He claimed that "Kamala Harris let in fentanyl" and "enabled the Mexican drug cartels to operate freely in this country."

And on Truth Social, Trump added still zanier claims. "Tim Walz wants to abolish ICE. ... I SAVED our Country from the China Virus. ... CBS is LYING AGAIN about the 2020 Election." And best of all: "JD Vance just CRUSHED Tampon Tim with the FACTS."

Fact check: Half true. JD Vance just crushed the facts.

Dana Milbank is a political columnist for the Washington Post, where this appeared. Follow him on Twitter @Milbank. Email dana.milbank@washpost.com

A Simple Reminder

By GENE NICHOL

Since Donald Trump began dominating our politics, we have gotten extraordinarily accustomed to horrifying language and behavior by leaders and candidates. I'd guess, when you think about it, that's why we're dealing with folks like Mark Robinson and Michelle Morrow these days in North Carolina.

We've come to think it normal to consider selecting folks to important offices who we would never tolerate where we work, where we worship, or where we learn. Think "some folks need killing"; or "Obama" should be put before "a firing squad" on "pay-per-view." (It's hard to actually type out what we seem to have become.)

But all that said, even if this is what we've been reduced to, as we approach the presidential election, I wanted to remind of one set of Trump interactions. As it, too, amazingly,

has seemed to fade. The "unfadeable" has largely disappeared.

During a phone call on Jan. 2, 2021, Trump asked Georgia Republican Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger to "find votes" so he could overturn the state's election in his favor.

"All I want to do is this: I just want to find 11,780 votes, which is one more than we have. Fellas, I need 11,000 votes. Give me a break."

Later in the call, he suggested Raffensperger would face legal trouble if he didn't play along.

Let that sink in. Or re-sink in.

There's no doubt the conversation happened. It's on tape. There's no doubt what Trump was trying to do. No doubt he attempted to do it. All other transgressions aside — and there are admittedly tons of them — this single, undeniable, absolutely-proven set of utterances conclusively demonstrates that Donald Trump should be in the penitentiary, not the White House. That, simply put, cannot be denied.

The Raffensperger call proves some other things too.

It proves our legal system has stunningly failed us. Both the federal special prosecutor and the Fulton County prosecutions have been delayed or blocked. And, in this instance, justice delayed is, literally, denied. The American "rule of law" has been unceremoniously defeated. The Roberts/Trump Court merely piled on.

It proves, also, that the hapless and fearful U.S. Attorney General, Merrick Garland, has been unwilling, and unable, flatly, to do his duty. It's been clear, from the first, he never would. He didn't want to make anyone mad. The Georgia call could have been prosecuted almost immediately. It should have been. Must have been. When Garland refused to obey his oath, he should have been fired. Joe Biden, too, failed, existentially, to "take care" that the laws be executed. He didn't have the stomach for it. He hoped Trump would just disappear. Biden pretended he could stay above the fray. Not in these times. So here we are.

And then there are the Republicans.

Good God. Their senators voted, overwhelmingly, to acquit Trump in impeachment. As a party, Republicans have fallen into place, by astonishing margins, to embrace a man who has committed blatant, disloyal sedition without even denying it. The Republicans murmur and avert their eyes. The mafioso must be given his way. They can't be expected to stand against anything. Even rank, democracy-destroying criminality. They don't even consider it. Especially the religious ones.

This is where we are. It is, I'll concede, grotesque. No single excuse can justify it. No single vote for Trump is anything other than an abandonment of character and patriotism. Not a single one.

We have fallen far. But this far?

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

Dispatches ...

Continued from previous page

campaign trail, Vance was "noncommittal" about the promised funding, part of \$1.7 billion distributed by the Biden administration. The \$500 million grant would help General Motors convert its Lansing Grand River Assembly Plant into an EV facility.

The UAW, one of several labor unions that have endorsed Democratic Vice President Kamala Harris and Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, fired back Oct. 3, echoing its previous criticism of Trump and Vance.

"Donald Trump was the job-killer-in-chief while in the White House," the union said in a statement. "His failed United States-Mexico-Canada trade agreement—or Trump's NAFTA as we prefer to call it—has led to the mass exodus of good, blue-collar jobs from the United States. In sharp contrast, the Biden-Harris administration has bet on the American worker and thanks to their policies, hundreds of thousands of good manufacturing jobs are returning to the United States."

"Now, Trump and JD Vance are invading Michigan and threatening the \$500 million investment the Biden-Harris administration made in the General Motors Grand River Assembly Plant and the union jobs that investment would provide," the UAW continued. "The bottom line is that Donald Trump and JD Vance are a menace to the working class and are openly threatening to double down on Trump's legacy of job destruction."

TRUMP LIED ABOUT HAITIAN IMMIGRANTS. NOW HE WANTS TO DEPORT THEM. Donald Trump has not only vilified Haitian immigrants in Springfield, Ohio, falsely claiming they were stealing and eating pets, but now he's also threatening to kick them out of the country.

In an interview with NewsNation (10/3), Trump said he would revoke the immigrants' Temporary Protected Status, which legally allows them to temporarily live and work in the United States while their home country remains torn apart by conflict. Morgan Stephens noted at DailyKos.com (10/4).

"Absolutely, I'd revoke it," he said. "It has nothing to do with Haiti or anything else," he added. "You have to remove the people, and you have to bring them back to their own country."

During his first term as president, Trump removed Haiti from Temporary Protected Status, despite an earthquake having devastated the country in 2010. Behind closed doors, he asked lawmakers why the U.S. would admit more immigrants from Haiti and "sh*hole countries" in Africa instead of from nations like Norway.

Then, of course, there's the Sept. 10 presidential debate, during which he repeated a racist hoax about Haitian immigrants in Springfield, saying, "They're eating the dogs. They're eating the cats. They're eating the pets."

It's a lie that he and his campaign continued to push even after being told it was baseless. Then again, a lack of facts has never stopped them from trying to hitch every issue to immigration, from housing shortages to crime and

gun violence.

Earlier this year, President Joe Biden gave TPS back to Haitians due to government instability and gang violence in Haiti.

Introduced by Congress through the Immigration Act of 1990, TPS was signed into law by Republican President George H.W. Bush. The act allows not only immigrants fleeing conflict-torn countries to stay and work legally in the U.S. but also those fleeing environmental disaster and other extraordinary and temporary circumstances. The designation is granted for up to 18 months at a time, then the secretary of Homeland Security determines if TPS should continue depending on the conditions in the country.

As of March 2024, around 863,880 residents with TPS lived in the U.S., with about an additional 486,000 initial or renewal applications pending. Data also shows that immigrants from Venezuela, El Salvador, and Haiti are the top three beneficiaries of TPS. The three largest populations of TPS residents are in Florida, Texas and New York.

According to a 2017 report from the Center for Migration Studies, a nonpartisan think tank that studies immigration, the industries that employ the greatest number of TPS beneficiaries from El Salvador, Honduras and Haiti were construction, restaurants and food services, landscaping, day-care services and grocery stores.

Experts on immigration reform, such as the Center for Migration Studies, have argued that extending TPS is vital until the immigrants can "safely return home and can successfully reintegrate into their home communities." They also

advocate that long-term TPS recipients should be afforded a path to permanent U.S. citizenship.

With immigration being one of the top issues for voters in the 2024 election, it's evident that Trump's cruel rhetoric isn't an empty threat. It's a preview of what his second term would involve.

ANALYSIS: TRUMP TAX PLAN WOULD MAKE RICH PEOPLE RICHER, POOR PEOPLE POORER.

Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump's proposal to further reduce the U.S. corporate tax rate from 21% to 15% would make the bottom half of the nation's income distribution poorer while boosting the fortunes of those at the very top, according to an analysis published Oct. 3 by economists at American University.

The analysis, released just over a month before the high-stakes Nov. 5 election, projects the impacts of corporate tax rate plans put forth by Trump and Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic nominee. Harris has called for increasing the corporate tax rate to 28%, Jake Johnson noted at CommonDreams.org (10/3).

If implemented, the economists found, Trump's plan would "modestly reduce" the nation's gross domestic product (GDP), decrease government revenue, and "significantly increase inequality," given that wealthier households "are the primary owners of corporate stocks" that would benefit from the former president's tax cuts.

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Progressive populists believe that people are more important than corporations, and that government should be of the people, by the people and for the people. Nowadays, we hear, that's a pretty radical notion.

The corporate media failed to report on the Republican attempts to sabotage the economic recovery after Barack Obama took office in 2009. When Donald Trump emerged to lead the MAGAs to the White House, the infotainment channels that replaced network news became even less reliable. An informed citizenry needs the independent and adversary media that was envisioned when the Founders framed the First Amendment in the Bill of Rights. *The Progressive Populist* aims to be a witness for folks on Main Street.

A handful of corporations are consolidating their grip on the nation's primary information sources. Megacorporations and hedge funds already own the major radio and TV networks, newspapers, magazines, book publishers and movie studios. Now they're moving to control the Internet. Is it any surprise that editors and news directors reflect the concerns of their corporate bosses?

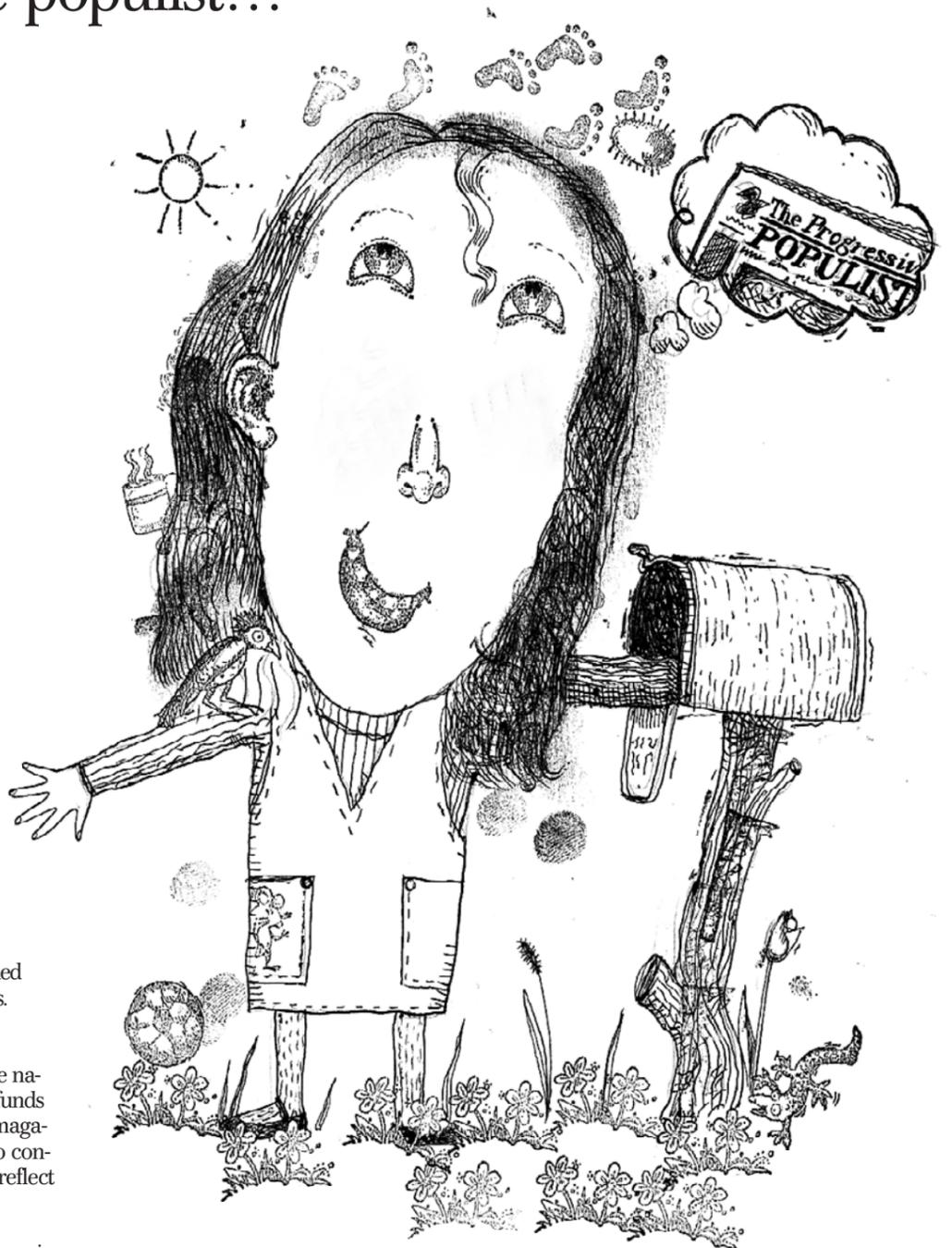
Little wonder that populism — the theory that people are more important than corporations, and government needs to be strong enough to keep corporations in line — gets short shrift in public policy discussions, and politicians and journalists who question the power of corporate barons are dismissed as radicals. Well, there are a few of us in the Heartland of America armed with the First Amendment, access to a printing press and a newspaper with a mission: to tell the stories of working people and how we can regain control of the United States.

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