





TIME (ISSN 0040-781X) is published twice a month (except monthly in January and August) by TIME USA, LLC. **PRINCIPAL OFFICE**: 3 Bryant Park, New York, NY 10036. Periodicals postage paid at New York, N.Y., and additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER**: Send all UAA to CFS (See DMM 507.1.5.2); **Non-Postal and Military Facilities**: Send address corrections to TIME Magazine, PO Box 37508, Boone, IA 50037-0508. Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement # 40069223. BN# 704925882RT0001. © 2025 TIME USA, LLC. All rights reserved. Printed in the U.S.A. **CUSTOMER SERVICE AND SUBSCRIPTIONS**: For 24/7 service, please use our website: **www.time.com/myaccount**. You can also call 1-800-843-8463 or write TIME Magazine, PO Box 37508, Boone, IA 50037-0508. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is strictly prohibited. Your bank may provide updates to the card information we have on file. You may opt out of this service at any time.



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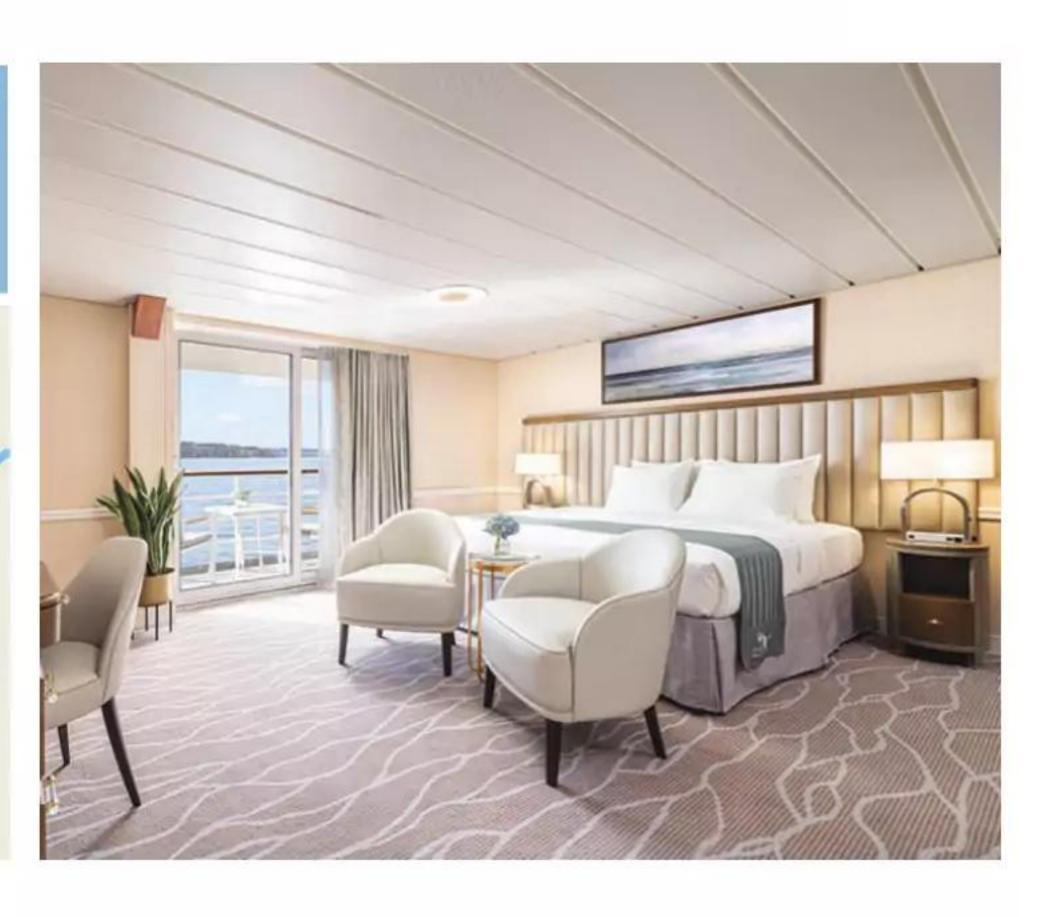
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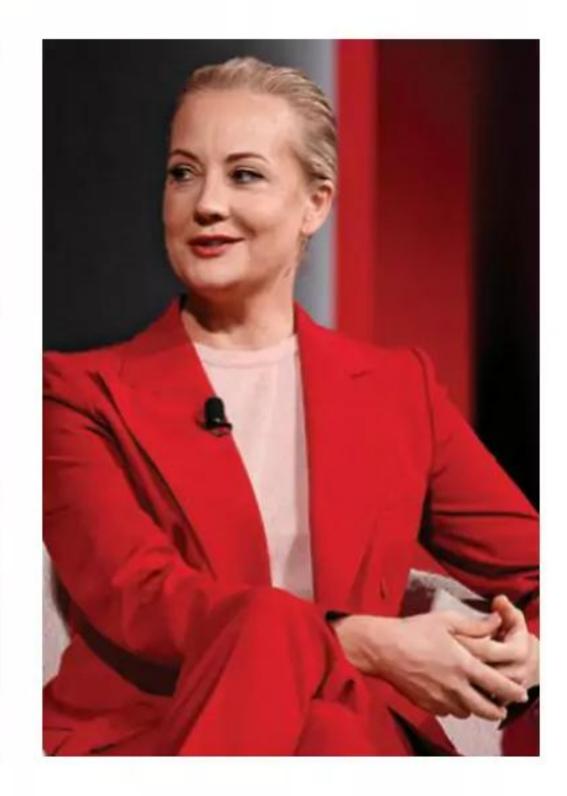
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TIME100 Summit

Past and present TIME100 honorees gathered on April 23 in New York City for the annual TIME100 Summit. Top, from left: TIME executive editor Nikhil Kumar and Al experts Demis Hassabis, Glenn Fogel, and Kate Crawford; actor Demi Moore with her dog Pilaf. Above, from left: actor Ryan Reynolds; TIME editor-in-chief Sam Jacobs, TIME CEO Jessica Sibley, Duke and Duchess of Sussex Meghan and Prince Harry; activist Yulia Navalnaya. time.com/summit-gala-2025

The Earth Awards

Environmental leaders were celebrated at TIME's Earth Awards on April 23 in New York City. From left: TIME chief climate officer Shyla Raghav, chef Selassie Atadika, former Washington governor Jay Inslee, former New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg, actor Rainn Wilson, Prime Minister of Barbados Mia Mottley, former U.S. Senate majority leader Bill Frist, activist Catherine Coleman Flowers, and TIME CEO Jessica Sibley.

time.com/earth-awards-2025



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SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

In "Yoshiki" (April 28)
we misstated the
Los Angeles location
of the musician's
hand- and footprints;
it is the TCL Chinese
Theatre.

On the covers



"I've been using this water motif to speak to a shared history and a collective memory across the Black diaspora. The water gives us a chance to reflect, but it can also be a flood. Our stories, challenges, and triumphs are connected by oceans. This family unit is inundated by the rising water, yet they stay above it. The hope may be found in the younger generation."

Painting by Tajh Rust for TIME



Photograph by Stefano Dal Pozzolo— Contrasto/Redux



Photograph by Robert Clark for TIME



TIME photo-illustration

TheBrief



WHY CHINESE MOCK THE NOTION OF AN AMERICAN FACTORY RENAISSANCE

THE QUESTIONS PATIENTS
NEED TO ASK THEIR DOCTORS

like ChatGPT and Claude now outperform Ph.D.-level virologists in problem-solving in wet labs, where scientists analyze chemicals and biological material. This discovery is a double-edged sword, experts say. Ultra-smart AI models could help researchers prevent the spread of infectious diseases. But nonexperts could also weaponize the models to create catastrophic bioweapons.

The study, shared exclusively with TIME, was conducted by researchers at the Center for AI Safety, MIT's Media Lab, the Brazilian university UFABC, and the pandemic-prevention nonprofit SecureBio. The authors consulted virologists to create an extremely difficult practical test that measured the ability to troubleshoot complex lab procedures and protocols.

While Ph.D.-level virologists scored an average of 22.1% in their declared areas of expertise, OpenAI's o3 reached 43.8% accuracy. Google's Gemini 2.5 Pro scored 37.6%.

Seth Donoughe, a research scientist at SecureBio and a co-author of the paper, says the results make him a "little nervous," because for the first time in history, virtually anyone has access to a nonjudgmental AI virology expert that might walk them through complex lab processes to create bioweapons.

"Throughout history, there are a fair number of cases where someone attempted to make a bioweapon—and one of the major reasons why they didn't succeed is because they didn't have access to the right level of expertise," he says. "So it seems worthwhile to be cautious about how these capabilities are being distributed."

specifically for these difficult, non-Google-able questions. And virtually every AI model outperformed Ph.D.-level virologists on the test, even within their own areas of expertise. The researchers also found that the models showed significant improvement over time. A preview of OpenAI's GPT-4.5 in February outperformed GPT-40 by almost 10 percentage points.

IF AI MODELS are indeed as capable in wet-lab settings as the study finds, then the implications are massive. In terms of benefits, AIs could help experienced virologists in their critical work of fighting viruses, accelerating vaccine development, and improving clinical trials. One group of researchers, for example, found that AI helped them better understand hemorrhagic fever viruses in sub-Saharan Africa.

But bad-faith actors can now use AI models to walk them through how to create viruses. Dan Hendrycks, the

director of the Center for AI Safety, urges AI companies to put up guardrails to prevent this type of usage. He says one solution is to make the models gated, so that only trusted third parties get access to their unfiltered versions. "We want to give the people who have a legitimate use for asking how to manipulate deadly viruses—like a researcher at the MIT biology department—the ability to do so," he says.

Months ago, the paper's authors sent the results to the major AI labs. In response, Elon Musk's xAI published a risk-management framework pledging its intention to implement virology safeguards for future versions of its AI model Grok, including training Grok to decline harmful requests and

applying input and output filters.

OpenAI told TIME that it "deployed new system-level mitigations for biological risks" for its new models released in April. The company said that it ran a thousand-hour red-teaming campaign in which 98.7% of unsafe biorelated conversations were successfully flagged and blocked.

Tom Inglesby, the director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, argues that industry self-regulation is not enough, and calls for government rules.

"The current situation is that the companies that are most virtuous are taking time and money to do this work, which is good for all of us, but other companies don't have to do it," he says. "When a new version of a [large language model] is about to be released, there should be a requirement for that model to be evaluated to make sure it will not produce pandemic-level outcomes."

'AI models are getting a concerning amount of practical knowledge.'

—DAN HENDRYCKS, DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR AI SAFETY

VIROLOGY AND BIOMEDICINE have long been at the forefront of AI leaders' motivations for building ever more powerful AI models. "As this technology progresses, we will see diseases get cured at an unprecedented rate," OpenAI CEO Sam Altman said at the White House in January.

But up to this point, there had not been a major study dedicated to analyzing AI models' ability to actually conduct virology lab work.

"We've known for some time that AIs are fairly strong at providing academic-style information," says Donoughe. "It's been unclear whether the models are also able to offer detailed practical assistance. This includes interpreting images, information that might not be written down in any academic paper, or material that is socially passed down from more experienced colleagues."

So Donoughe and his colleagues created a test

ENING PAGE: THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD/GETTY IMAGES; THIS PAGE: JADE GAO—AFP/GETTY IMAGES

GOOD QUESTION

Will a trade war with China bring back U.S. factory jobs?

BY MIRANDA JEYARETNAM/SINGAPORE

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP HAS PROMISED HIS TARIFFS will usher in a "new golden age" for American workers, harking back to an industrial past that has been lost to decades of globalization. The logic goes that by raising the price of foreign goods, businesses and consumers will be discouraged from importing and instead invest in U.S.-based manufacturing and American-made goods. But the irony, economists say, is that the trade deficits that he seeks to reverse are a sign of the U.S. economy's relative dominance, not weakness.

"The U.S. is at a state of development where it has moved beyond manufacturing," Jayant Menon, a research fellow at the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, tells TIME.

"This is what manufacturing countries are trying to aspire to, and this guy is trying to go the

other way."

What is more likely to happen, economists say, is that as the goods Americans are accustomed to buying relatively cheaply rise dramatically in price, consumers will simply buy fewer things. And more U.S.-based manufacturing wouldn't necessarily result in lower prices because it would still involve higher labor and operating costs. Many manufacturers may calculate that paying tariffs is cheaper than relocating.

The main reasons China and not the U.S. has come to be "the

world's factory" are its greater labor supply and thus lower wages, more efficient domestic business and supply-chain ecosystem, and relatively lax regulatory environment. Tariffs alone won't change these underlying factors for the U.S.

"If you think about producing a laptop in China vs. the U.S.," says Yuan Mei, assistant economics professor at Singapore Management University, "in China a lot of parts of the laptop are produced within China, so shipping those components within the country is pretty cheap."

The U.S.'s comparative advantage is in the services sector, Mei says: "Think Silicon Valley." Some observers believe that in the trade war, Beijing will next target U.S. services exports, leveling tariffs or restrictions on American professional, legal, technological, telecommunications, education, health, entertainment, and other services.

But the mismatch between America's workforce and China's is perhaps the biggest obstacle to shifting a significant amount of manufacturing from China to the U.S. Just under 13 million U.S. workers are employed in the manufacturing sector, while just over 7 million Americans

Employees
assemble
LED lights in
Zhongshan,
China, on April 17



'The U.S. has moved beyond manufacturing.'

—JAYANT MENON, RESEARCHER are unemployed. China's manufacturing sector, meanwhile, employs more than 100 million people, and higher unemployment in the nation of 1.4 billion, alongside lax regulation, have helped to suppress wages and workers' rights.

And while many Americans agree with the idea that the U.S. would be better off if more of them worked in manufacturing, surveys show far fewer would actually want to take such a job themselves. On the Chinese internet, popular memes generated by state media mock the notion of a U.S. industrial renaissance with images of obese Americans in a sweatshop, surrounded by junk food and struggling to assemble sneakers. "The joke is Americans don't want to do those jobs," says Mark Cogan, associate pro-

fessor of peace and conflict studies at Japan's Kansai Gaidai University, and a U.S. national. "We're the punch line."

AS CHINA'S ECONOMY

has advanced, factory work is falling out of favor there too. Ashley Dudarenok, who runs a China and Hong Kongbased consumerresearch consultancy, says across Chinese social media she's seen comments say-

ing, "Chinese people don't want to do these jobs, why would Americans want to do these jobs?"

Economists also note that much of the manufacturing work that could be transplanted to the U.S. may actually be more efficient if automated and require human skills the U.S. is short on.

The manufacturing sector leans heavily on engineers, Mei says, and engineering is among China's most popular college majors. In the U.S., a large proportion of engineering and tech talent is international students—and with the Trump Administration's crackdowns on immigrants and international students, there might eventually be, Mei says, a "gap in the supply" of engineers that the U.S. needs to boost its domestic manufacturing.

5 questions you should always ask at doctor's appointments

BY ANGELA HAUPT

When you go to the doctor, you're probably the one answering most of the questions. Yet it's essential to make sure you're asking plenty of your own. "We need to get someone to fund a bazillion-dollar PSA to tell people to be bolder when they talk to their doctors," says Risa Arin, founder and CEO of XpertPatient, a patient-education platform. "I see this over and over again: people aren't asking any questions, never mind the right ones."

We asked experts to share the questions you should ask your doctor to help you get well or stay that way.

1. What screenings should I get?

Exactly which health screenings you need, and when, depends on factors like age, sex, and your personal and family medical history. At your annual physical, ask your doctor what you should prioritize in the coming year, so you don't miss anything, suggests Dr. Jessica Edwards, founder and CEO of Zara Medical, a hybrid primary-care practice. Screening yearly for mental-health disorders like depression is important too—so if your doctor doesn't bring it up, initiate the conversation, she says.

2. What vitamins and supplements might be helpful?

Some vitamins and supplements are a waste of money. Others could be harmful. And then there are the ones that could actually benefit your health. To figure out which is which, ask your doctor, Edwards advises. Talking through your lab reports and specific concerns can help your doctor determine what might be appropriate, while helping you steer clear of the choices that could jeopardize your health.

3. What kind of financial support is available?

Always ask how your insurance will affect treatment expenses; if something isn't covered, your doctor might be able to suggest cost-effective alternatives. It's also a good idea to start a conversation about more out-of-the-box ways to chip away at medical bills, especially if you're dealing with an ongoing illness. "There's a lot of financial support available, both from pharmaceutical companies and advocacy groups," Arin says.

4. What should I do if my symptoms worsen or don't improve?

Whether you're at the doctor because you're struggling with allergies, broke a bone, or are recovering from surgery, ask when you should start to feel better—and what kind of red flags could signal the need for more care. Your doctor can tell you exactly when you should call her office or go to the emergency department—while setting your expectations for what's simply part of the healing process. As emergency-medicine physician Dr. Kate Burke puts it, "If you see this, then do that."

5. What are my treatment options, and how do they compare?

People often focus treatment questions on efficacy, but quality of life matters too. Will you need to take a daily pill—or have to arrange childcare, transportation, and time off work for a monthly infusion? Will you experience a weakened immune system? Constant fatigue? Shaky hands that interfere with the knitting you love? Treatment options come with "very different side effects and life experiences," Arin points out, and influence which makes the most sense for you.

Your personal goals matter too. Arin recalls a friend's father who had Stage IV pancreatic cancer and told his doctor he wanted to spend his final six months doing what he loved: going to the opera as often as possible. "He had to be able to stay awake at night—he couldn't be knocked out and exhausted," she says. "The doctors had to think, 'OK, here's this wonderful man. He's in a terrible situation. How can we help him enjoy opera?' It set such a different tone for figuring out treatment."

The View

NATION

AJUDGE'S WARNING

Excerpts from the April 17 opinion of J. Harvie Wilkinson III, chief judge of the U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, addressing the Trump Administration

It is difficult in some cases to get to the very heart of the matter. But in this case, it is not hard at all. The government is asserting a right to stash away residents of this country in foreign prisons without the semblance of due process that is the foundation of our constitutional order. Further, it claims in essence that because it has rid itself of custody there is nothing that can be done.

INSIDE

The Supreme Court's decision remains, as always, our guidepost. That decision rightly requires the lower federal courts to give "due regard for the deference owed to the Executive Branch in the conduct of foreign affairs." The Supreme Court's decision does not, however, allow the government to do essentially nothing. It requires the government "to facilitate' Abrego Garcia's release from custody in El Salvador."

"Facilitate" is an active verb. The government's argument that all it must do is "remove any domestic barriers to [Abrego Garcia's] return" is not well taken in light of the Supreme Court's command that the government facilitate Abrego Garcia's release from custody in El Salvador.

"Facilitation" does not permit the admittedly erroneous deportation of an individual to the one country's prisons that the withholding order forbids and, further, to do so in disregard of a court order that the government not so subtly spurns. "Facilitation" does not sanction the abrogation of habeas corpus through the transfer of custody to foreign detention centers in the manner attempted here. Allowing all this would "facilitate" foreign detention more than it would domestic return. It would reduce the rule of law to lawlessness and tarnish the very values for which Americans of diverse views and persuasions have always stood.

The government is obviously frustrated and displeased with the rulings of the court. Let one thing be clear. Court rulings are not above criticism. Criticism keeps us on our toes and helps us do a better job. Courts thus speak with the knowledge of their imperfections but also with a sense that they instill a fidelity to law that would be sorely missed in their absence.

The basic differences between



In the Oval Office on April 14, President Donald Trump and El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele told reporters they could do nothing for Abrego Garcia

the branches mandate a serious effort at mutual respect. The respect that courts must accord the Executive must be reciprocated by the Executive's respect for the courts. Too often today this has not been the case, as calls for impeachment of judges for decisions the Executive disfavors and exhortations to disregard court orders sadly illustrate.

IT IS IN THIS ATMOSPHERE that we are reminded of President Eisenhower's sage example. Putting his "personal opinions" aside, President Eisenhower honored his "inescapable" duty to enforce the Supreme Court's decision in Brown v. Board of Education to desegregate schools "with all deliberate speed." This great man expressed his unflagging belief that "[t]he very basis of our individual rights and freedoms is the certainty that the President and the Executive Branch of Government will support and [e]nsure the carrying out of the decisions of the Federal Courts." Indeed, in our late Executive's own words, "[u]nless the President did so, anarchy would result."

Now the branches come too close to grinding irrevocably against one

another in a conflict that promises to diminish both.

This is a losing proposition all around. The Judiciary will lose much from the constant intimations of its illegitimacy, to which by dint of custom and detachment we can only sparingly reply. The Executive will lose much from a public perception of its lawlessness and all of its attendant contagions. The Executive may succeed for a time in weakening the courts, but over time history will script the tragic gap between what was and all that might have been, and law in time will sign its epitaph.

It is, as we have noted, all too possible to see in this case an incipient crisis, but it may present an opportunity as well. We yet cling to the hope that it is not naive to believe our good brethren in the Executive Branch perceive the rule of law as vital to the American ethos. This case presents their unique chance to vindicate that value and to summon the best that is within us while there is still time.

Wilkinson is a conservative jurist nominated to the Fourth Circuit in 1983 by President Ronald Reagan; he was on President George W. Bush's short list of potential Supreme Court nominees

THE RISK REPORT BY IAN BREMMER

The Trump, Taiwan, and China puzzle



since the inaugurations of William
Lai as Taiwan's President in May 2024
and Donald Trump
as U.S. President in
January, Beijing has

been on edge. Will Lai take provocative actions that demand a response? And what is Trump's attitude toward Taiwan and its fight to remain outside China's orbit?

The answers have proved complicated. In the early days of his presidency, Lai carefully avoided riling Beijing unnecessarily. The strength of Taiwan's economy last year appeared to relieve him of any political need to rally his nationalist base with fist-shaking actions or rhetoric toward the mainland. But his Democratic Progressive Party lacks a parliamentary majority, and he can't be sure the Trump Administration has his back. Whatever his political intent, Lai has become more strident on cross-Taiwan Strait questions in recent weeks.

On March 13, Lai delivered a speech in which he proposed 17 steps Taiwan should take to counter threats posed by China and its bid to infiltrate his government and Taiwanese society. Predictably, Beijing one-upped him, with 18 pieces of official commentary via state media that attacked Lai and his plans. Two weeks later, he was denounced as a "danger maker" and China's People's Liberation Army released propaganda videos simulating a blockade of the self-ruled island. If that was too subtle, China's navy

conducted joint exercises around
Taiwan on April 1 to simulate an
"assault on maritime and ground
targets, and a blockade on key areas
and sea lanes," according to a PLA
official. The Chinese coast guard
deployed vessels in a circumnavigation patrol around Taiwan.

We've seen similar moves and countermoves in the waters between China and Taiwan many times before. But this time both



Taiwan's President William Lai visits a naval base in Taoyuan, Taiwan, in October 2024

sides are trying to decipher what the mercurial Trump really thinks.

For now, Taiwan needs to safeguard its economy against Trump's tariff pressures. Lai's negotiators held their first trade talks with the White House on April 11, a day after Bloomberg published an op-ed by Lai that proposed a reciprocal zerotariff regime with the U.S. and an increase in purchases and investments in the U.S. Lai then called on April 14 for a "Taiwan plus the U.S." framework to help Taiwanese companies relocate and expand into the American market.

Though we don't yet know his tariff intentions toward Taiwan, Trump is extremely unlikely to cut it loose, at least in the near term. Yes, he's made clear his flexibility on territorial integrity (see Greenland/Denmark, Panama, and even Canada). If he won't take on costs and risks to help Ukraine repel Russian invaders, how confident can Taiwan be that Trump will commit U.S. troops and taxpayer funds to defend an "ally" thousands

of miles from American shores?

At the same time, Trump has filled his Cabinet with China hawks, and if there's one U.S. ally most every Republican in Washington wants to defend, it's Taiwan against China. Beijing knows a full-scale invasion would risk direct war with the U.S., a destructive gamble for China's already wobbly economy at a time when Trump has added 145% tariffs to its burdens.

For China's leaders, it's much safer to hold off on a full-scale invasion until the military balance more decisively

favors its forces, its economy is on more solid footing, and the U.S. is led by a more predictable President. The real risk is that China will test U.S. resolve and probe Trump's responses with incremental escalations of pressure on Taiwan, none big enough on its own to create a crisis.

Would it were that simple. As U.S.-China relations further break down, the shutting down of key lines of communication between Washington and Beijing could enable any accident or miscalculation to escalate into a full-blown military crisis that both would much prefer to avoid.





Health Matters By Alana Semuels

SENIOR CORRESPONDENT

MERE HOURS AFTER BIRTH, MOST newborns are tested for two things: whether they have signs of hearing loss and whether they have a range of rare conditions that could severely affect their health and their lives.

If they test positive for either, they qualify for a number of interventions that can dramatically improve their prospects over their lifetime.

But both tests could undergo dramatic changes under the Trump Administration because of drastic cutbacks at federal health agencies that public-health advocates say imperil applicable programs. These cutbacks could mean that certain states will not test for and respond to conditions that currently set services into motion.

"There are a lot of worthy causes that fall by the wayside when there isn't some kind of centralized government support," says Karl White, director of the National Center for Hearing Assessment and Management at Utah State University.

One program facing cuts is the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention service (EHDI), which is run partially out of the U.S. Centers

for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The program helps states coordinate newborn hearing screening and respond to infants who fail the hearing tests. It falls under the CDC's Disability and Health Promotion branch.

But this entire branch was eliminated in the April 1 cutbacks at CDC that slashed about 2,400 employees. EHDI had eight full-time workers and one fellow; all but one were dismissed in the cutbacks, according to current and former staff.

EHDI worked with states to analyze data to help communities follow up with families so that babies born deaf or hard of hearing got support as early as possible. Under the program, states apply for funding grants under EHDI. They submitted the applications to the CDC in January, and now the applications are sitting unattended with no one left to review

'There are a lot of worthy causes that fall by the wayside.'

—KARL WHITE, UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY

A hearing screening in June 2014; significant hearing loss affects 1% to 2% of newborns

them, according to White. "There are real questions about what's going to happen," White says, "and whether that money is going to be available."

Newborn hearing screenings are a true public-health success story. Hospitals did not start screening children for hearing loss at birth until the 1990s; it wasn't until 2000 that screening was nearly universal across states. Children's lives can be changed dramatically by early screening and response. In the 1970s and 1980s, children weren't diagnosed with profound hearing loss until they were 2 or 3 years old, which hampered their ability to read and write, White says. Now, children are screened at birth, and early interventions can help them meet more of these milestones.

According to a survey conducted by White in early 2024, 18 states said that their EHDI programs would be discontinued if federal money disappeared. Though hearing testing may continue at hospitals, there would be a gap in the coordinated response and interventions for affected babies.

Some EHDI funding is still administered through the Health Resources and Services Administration, an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) that was less affected by cuts. But the HRSA funding relies on EHDI data, and it will be impossible to know where problems lie and where to send money.

Newborn hearing screening isn't the only testing program being cut. In their first days of life, babies also are tested, often with a blood sample drawn from a heel prick, for a host of rare diseases that respond to early intervention. These tests can change a child's life. Exactly which conditions they are tested for varies from state to state; Pennsylvania tests for 38 rare diseases, while Alaska tests for only 32, according to the National Organization for Rare Disorders (NORD), an advocacy group.

State testing has become more

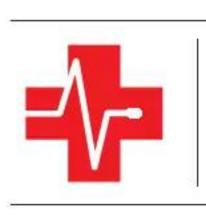
uniform over the past 15 years because of something called the Recommended Uniform Screening Panel, which specifies which diseases states include in their testing panels. The HHS Secretary decides what diseases are added to the list each year—usually adding one or two based on the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Heritable Disorders in Newborns and Children. This committee decides to add new diseases if there is a screening test that can be used at population scale and if a treatment is available.

Though the advisory committee is made up almost entirely of volunteers—meaning it didn't cost the government much money—it was disbanded by the Trump Administration on April 3, says a spokesperson for NORD. The advisory committee was set to vote on May 9 whether to recommend adding two rare genetic diseases to the panel: metachromatic leukodystrophy (MLD) and Duchenne muscular dystrophy. Now, the advocates who spent years advocating for those diseases to be added have no remedy.

"The longer it's delayed before these conditions are screened at the state level, the more children are potentially born with these conditions and don't get the opportunity to be identified and access care," says Allison Herrity, senior policy analyst at NORD.

Screening for disorders is essential because in the past few years, treatments like gene therapy have become available to treat children early in life, Herrity says.

HHS did not respond to a request for comment about the layoffs at EHDI or about the dissolution of the advisory committee. HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has said publicly that some staff cuts were made in error and that those staff would be restored, but there has been no movement to restore either newborn-screening program, according to current and former employees.



For more health news, sign up for the TIME newsletter at time.com/



ELISSA SLOTKIN KNOWS SOMEthing about strategy. The Michigan Senator worked for George W. Bush's National Security Council and Barack Obama's Departments of State and Defense before winning a Michigan congressional seat in 2018. After winning her Senate seat in a rare bright spot for Democrats, Slotkin is applying her strategic thinking to how her party can best fight Donald Trump.

Do Democrats have a plan for countering Trump?

'He may

create a self-

inflicted

recession.'

—U.S. SENATOR

ELISSA SLOTKIN,

MICHIGAN DEMOCRAT

I don't think it's a secret that Democrats have been on their heels since Trump was elected. I constantly am looking for a strong, comprehensive strategy. It can't be kind of reacting every single day to every single thing that he does.

What should the plan be? I think that most Americans who voted for President Trump voted for him because they wanted more money in their pockets. They did not vote for chaos. They did not vote for the instability that he's created. They didn't vote for cuts to veterans. They didn't vote for willhe-won't-he on tariffs. Certainly in my state, it was an economicsecurity vote. We need to spend time clearly articulating that he is gonna make you pay in every corner of your life. People may be OK in theory with some of the DOGE cuts, but they certainly understand their family budget, and they understand what they're spending on groceries. They understand there's no plan for their

mortgage or for their rent. They understand that the tariffs could cost them money. They understand that their Medicaid, their Medicare, their Social Security, their VA benefits are being looked at as a potential area to cut. Whatever we do has to be pushing back on the complete fallacy that he's gonna save you money. He's going to cost you money. He may create a self-inflicted recession.

Do you feel like the party isn't meeting the moment right now?

I think that Trump is

very effectively flooding the zone. I think that he has people on their heels. People don't know where to look first on any given day.

If you had a magic wand and could remake the party to be

able to win again in places like Michigan, how would you have the party change? I think we need to get back to the fundamentals. The middle class is an absolutely essential part of American life. We need to grow and expand it. And we need to focus on the three big things that most Americans can agree on, which is strong economic security, strong national security, and strong democracy. I come from a world of war planning, a world of constant, prudent planning. I come from a world where you can't just play defense only. There's no such thing as winning, in any operation or in any war, by just playing defense.



For more from Washington, sign up forTIME's politics newsletter at time.com/theDCbrief

IMMIGRATION

Fear of the 'other' in a nation of immigrants

BY VIET THANH NGUYEN

THE U.S. HAS ALWAYS HAD A TRICKY RELATIONSHIP WITH immigrants and refugees, even if part of the American mythology is that we are a land of newcomers. In this mythology, they—migrants—are a part of us. At the same time, the U.S. has also gone through periodic spasms of intense antimmigrant feeling. So it is now, with the Trump Administration promoting a moral panic about strangers coming to our shores. When these people, including those who are also Americans, become seen as a threat to the nation, they are no longer a part of us. Instead, they become the "other" to our collective self as a country.

This is not new. In the late 1800s, many Americans believed that Chinese immigrants brought disease, crime, and vice, along with an inhuman work ethic. The result was the burning of Chinatowns, the lynching of Chinese immigrants, and the banning of most Chinese immigration. With his tariffs, President Donald Trump may yet target the Chinese even more explicitly than when he characterized COVID-19 as the "kung flu." But in 2015 he campaigned on sealing American borders to protect the nation against Mexican "rapists" and in 2025 against alleged Venezuelan gangsters. His promised deportation campaign recalls the 1920s and 1930s, when the government indiscriminately rounded up roughly 1 million Mexicans and Mexican American citizens and dispatched them to Mexico.

Punishing this other takes the form of theater and spectacle, meant to entertain and satisfy some while silencing and disciplining the rest. Thus, renditioning Venezuelans to El Salvador on flights operated by ICE is flaunted before cameras that record them as subhuman, heads shaved bald, anonymous, and humiliated in infantilizing uniforms of white shirts and shorts. Renditioning is a more appropriate word than deportation, since many people are being returned not to their country of origin but to somewhere else. It also evokes suspected terrorists vanished by the CIA into so-called black sites, which suits how Trump invoked the Alien Enemies Act of 1798 (a wartime authority last used to intern Japanese immigrants and Japanese American citizens in World War II) to describe alleged Venezuelan gangsters as "terrorists" who are "infiltrating" the U.S. Presidents and states describing alleged criminals as terrorists should frighten us all, because the terrorist is a name of infinite flexibility that can be applied to anyone who the state says is subverting it. Terror is an unending wellspring, embodied by actual threats but also coming from within us and giving birth to ever new demons.

President George W. Bush's War on Terror might have resonated with Americans because terror has been a part of American life since the first European settlers came to these shores. Perhaps the first terrifying others for these



New citizens are sworn in during a naturalization ceremony in Los Angeles in October 2024

settlers were the Indigenous peoples, followed by the kidnapped and enslaved Africans whose labor and bodies made the U.S. possible. Or perhaps the first other was the vast land itself, promising bounty and threatening disaster. What the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas called the face of the Other could elicit feelings of compassion or terror. These polaropposite reactions continue to define our American political and cultural landscape.

While some call for empathy for others, the Trump Administration casts these gestures as part of a "diversity, equity, inclusion" ideology that must be destroyed. Levinas thought the face-to-face encounter with one's other was a crucial ethical task. Elon Musk says the "fundamental weakness of Western civilization is empathy," opening it to be taken over by non-Western and nonwhite people. Those sent to El Salvador's prison are paraded with their heads forcibly bowed. We are not allowed to see their very human faces.

It is not simply gangsters who are terrorists in the imagination that fears





Punishing assorted others quells empathy and dissent

the other, it is also refugees and immigrants, documented and undocumented, who are said to be seeking to replace white people. Their difference from the norms of the nation—white, male, heterosexual, Christian—seemingly precludes them from the right to dissent that is supposed to be a part of Americanism. All of the international students who have so far been arrested and detained incommunicado for protesting what they argue is Israel's genocidal attack on Gaza are nonwhite.

Whether or not one agrees with what they say, as permanent legal residents and international students they, too, have free-speech rights protected by the U.S. Constitution. But it's worth asking how much separates a citizen from Columbia graduate Mahmoud Khalil, who is a permanent legal resident—or Tufts graduate student Rumeysa Ozturk, an international student, arrested by masked ICE officers who barely deign to show identification or badges. An erosion of those rights can be extended to citizens as well. As the line is blurred between arresting and kidnapping, between

official police and secret police, we—citizen or noncitizen—are meant to be intimidated. We are meant to submit to power, to any masked person saying they are the law.

THE MECHANISM IS of power based on paranoia, one threat metastasizing and expanding. The Trump Administration's crusade against pro-Palestinian students, for example, is enmeshed with its argument that it is defending Jewish people on and off campuses. But this is a weaponization of antisemitism, turning a very real racism into a tool to advance a political agenda whereby Palestinians become the new others, temporarily replacing Jewish people as perpetual others.

Punishing assorted others quells empathy and dissent, for we do not want to be targeted ourselves. Documented immigrants condoning the deportation of undocumented immigrants is an example of those who might be considered other turning against those already marked as others.

This is a classic divide-and-conquer political strategy. The Trump Administration methodically attacks university after university, law firm after law firm, immigrant group after immigrant group, individual after individual. The lesson is that we are not safer by sacrificing others. Authoritarian power will not be satisfied with one sacrifice or one enemy or one other but will require more, since that power thrives on the spectacle of punishment. Each punishment diminishes the ability of everyone else to resist that power. Meanwhile, the more power that authoritarianism accrues in its willingness to break any rule or law, the less power there is in those rules and laws to protect us.

The solution to such an approach has always been the same but bears repeating: unity is our only hope, solidarity our primary strategy. We must refuse to be divided, even as we are offered the temptation of sacrificing others, or the bargain of giving up one right after another in the hopes of securing safety from unending terror. We are at a moment now where Trump is pursuing the idea of eroding, even ending, birthright citizenship, and embracing the idea of sending "homegrown" Americans to El Salvador's prisons. His Administration is also seeking an expansion of a for-profit immigrant-detention system, with a budget of \$45 billion. When do detention camps become concentration camps, which is what Franklin Delano Roosevelt initially called the places where Japanese Americans were interned? At what point will enough of us say enough?

What might destroy our society is not immigrants or refugees or Palestinians or women seeking abortions or trans people or any of the other assorted others that have been posited as undermining American society. What might destroy us is our own fear, not just of the other who is a neighbor and a stranger, but also of ourselves, of that black hole of abiding mysteries within us that so many of us cannot solve on our own. What might help us overcome that fear and terror is not to banish others but to keep company with them, to speak with them, to meet them face to face.

Nguyen is the author of To Save and to Destroy: Writing as an Other



POPE FRANCIS

1936-2025

An Argentine with a gift for empathy, a discomfort with opulence, and a profound love for the poor changed the face of the Catholic Church



Francis greeted migrants at the Moria refugee camp on Lesbos, Greece, in 2016



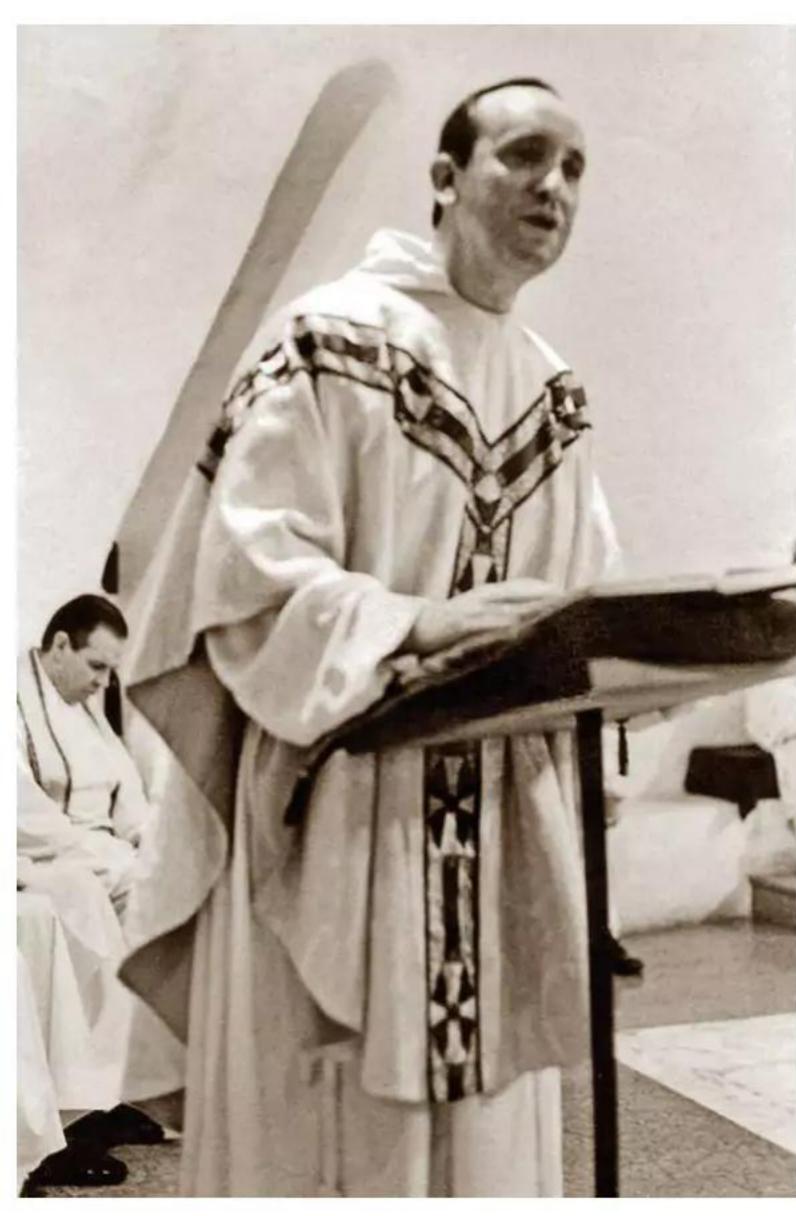
HE WAS A DEPARTURE. FRANCIS WAS THE FIRST POPE FROM THE AMERICAS.

The first, in fact, from anywhere but Europe. There had been 265 before him, but no one had taken his name from St. Francis of Assisi, famous for ministering to the poor.

Until his death on April 21, at age 88, the first Pope Francis was known for his willingness to hear out different views on controversial issues—marriage, sexuality, the priesthood—that predecessors had been unwilling to debate. Though the church's corrosive, long-denied childsex-abuse scandal had created a crisis of conscience, particularly among young Catholics, Francis exuded a level of empathy, humility, and mercy that people felt connected to in a way they said they had not with past Pontiffs. He served credibly as the world's conscience. After Russia invaded Ukraine, Francis urged Vladimir Putin to "stop this spiral of violence and death." While hospitalized for the pneumonia that nearly killed him in March, he kept up regular weekly chats aimed at comforting a Catholic parish in Gaza. As TIME explained in choosing Francis as its 2013 Person of the Year, he "changed the tone and perception and focus of one of the world's largest institutions in an extraordinary way."

Jorge Mario Bergoglio was born on Dec. 17, 1936, in Buenos Aires, Argentina's capital city, the eldest of accountant Mario Bergoglio and Regina Sivori's five children. His parents were Italian immigrants who had fled Benito Mussolini's fascist regime, and his grandmother Rosa Margherita Vassallo di Bergoglio was active in Catholic Action, formed







by Italian bishops who wanted to maintain their independence from Mussolini's authoritarian rule. His grandmother had the biggest influence on him, according to biographer Austen Ivereigh, who wrote in Wounded Shepherd: Pope Francis and His Struggle to Convert the Catholic Church, that "it was an austere but happy lower middle-class family life." Grandma Bergoglio would take him to Mass, educated him about the saints and the rosary, and introduced him and his siblings to Italian literature and his favorite novel, Alessandro Manzoni's The Betrothed. His family retained their love for Italian culture, and Bergoglio grew up listening to opera and watching every Italian movie that came to town. His love for soccer dates back to this period, when he followed the small Buenos Aires soccer team San Lorenzo with his father.

As a preteen, he wrote to a girl, "If I don't become a priest, I'll marry you." At 16, he was en route to meet classmates from the vocational school where he studied chemistry when he passed San José de

Flores Church. He went into the confessional booth, and came out of it convinced that he should become a priest. "I felt I had to enter: it was one of those things one feels inside and one doesn't know why," he said in a 2012 Buenos Aires radio interview. He ended up going home instead of going out with his friends because he felt "overwhelmed." Yet it wasn't until four days before his 33rd birthday that he was ordained, with the Society of Jesus, better known as the Jesuits.

A measure of the openness Francis would display as Pope can be traced to unpopular decisions he made as leader of the order in Argentina. During the country's so-called Dirty War, two Jesuits serving in slums were among those seen as rebels. After a military coup in 1976, they were kidnapped and tortured. Bergoglio was accused of not doing all he could to protect them, and though he testified that he

FROM LEFT: Undated photo of young Jorge Mario Bergoglio

Francis was ordained as a Jesuit priest in 1969, photo not dated

Pope John Paul II named him a Cardinal in 2001

In 2015 Francis was the first Pontiff to address the U.S. Congress

Francis after Palm Sunday Mass on April 13

had met military officers privately and pressed for their release, after becoming Pope he admitted he had regrets about the way he handled the situation.

WHILE SERVING AS RECTOR of the Colegio de San José in Buenos Aires, he had his students work on farms—harvesting crops and milking cows to feed the city's poor. This made him unpopular among those who emphasized more classroom time, and he was eventually forced out of the role. He spent two years living in a tiny room in a Jesuit residence, essentially in exile, "a time of great interior crisis," he said.

But in 1992, Pope John Paul II named Bergoglio auxiliary bishop in Buenos Aires, on the recommendation of the city's Archbishop Antonio Quarracino, to whom he had grown close. He succeeded Quarracino in 1998, became a Cardinal in 2001, and was Buenos Aires Archbishop on Feb. 11, 2013, when Pope Benedict XVI became the first Pope in 600 years to retire. The College

of Cardinals elected him on March 13 on the fifth ballot in one of the fastest papal conclaves.

"Clearly the Cardinals were looking for something and someone different, and so his very otherness may have been appealing," James Martin, the Jesuit priest and editor-at-large at America, wrote for TIME two days later. "On the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica, as he addressed the crowd, Pope Francis joked about his Latin American origins. It seemed, he said, that the Cardinals had to go to the 'ends of the earth' to find a Pope. But often someone from the margins is just what the center needs."

Initially there was concern about whether he could breathe new life into the church if he was missing a lung the Vatican clarified that part of his lung had been removed after a bout of severe pneumonia when he was a 21-year-old seminary student—but Francis hit the ground







running. His actions in his first year made clear that business as usual was not going to be sufficient. That year, a commission to investigate the Vatican bank was created, leading to the bank's first financial report in 125 years. While Pope Benedict had described homosexuality as "a strong tendency ordered toward an intrinsic moral evil," Francis made headlines for saying, "If someone is gay and he searches for the Lord and has goodwill, who am I to judge?" Ten years later, he approved a new rule allowing priests to bless same-sex couples, though he always maintained that gay marriage is not marriage. While upholding doctrine, he also encouraged church communities to be more welcoming toward the divorced, and aimed to more fully acknowledge women in the church, hailing

"unknown and forgotten" mothers and grandmothers and the "genius" of female saints. But he was firm that only men could be priests.

Pope Francis grappled with the child-sex-abuse scandals that have been a stain on the Catholic Church for decades. Early on, he made the claim

that "no one else has done more" than the church in cracking down on pedophiles in the clergy, hailing its "transparency." He also stood by Juan Barros, the Chilean bishop accused of covering up for a mentor found guilty of sexually abusing minors. Francis called the cover-up accusation a "calumny" and called for a Vatican investigation. After listening to dozens of testimonies, however, he publicly apologized.

"I was part of the problem," Francis reportedly told Chilean victims of sexual abuse who visited the Vatican. In February 2019 he defrocked Theodore McCarrick, an ex-Cardinal accused of sexual abuse. And to enable clergy to report sex-abuse claims to law enforcement, he nixed a 2001 decree that had allowed church officials to classify such allegations as "pontifical secrets."

Living up to Francis of Assisi's recognition as the pa-

tron saint of ecology and the poor, ahead of the Paris climate accords the late Pontiff released a groundbreaking June 2015 encyclical, arguing climate change was undeniable and disproportionately hits developing countries. Pope Francis also tried to repair the church's relations with Indigenous groups, embarking on a weeklong "pilgrimage of penance" in Canada to publicly apologize for residential boarding schools run by church missionaries, notorious for decades of physical and emotional abuse. "I'm here to remember the past, and to cry with you," he told survivors.

And as Francis of Assisi traveled to Egypt to stop the Crusades, so Pope Francis went to the Middle East to promote tolerance between Christians and Muslims, visiting Baghdad and the United Arab Emirates. He and

Ahmed el-Tayeb, the Grand Imam of al-Azhar and the equivalent of the Pope to Sunni worshippers, signed "The Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together" in an effort to set a new tone when the migrant crisis exacerbated anti-Muslim sentiment.

'I TRY TO THINK OF MY SINS, MY MISTAKES, NOT TO BECOME PROUD.'

-POPE FRANCIS

His modest lifestyle was also part of this Pope's appeal. He chose to live in a penthouse apartment in St. Martha's house, regarding the Apostolic Palace as too extravagant. Noting that bishops must be servants, he famously washed the feet of inmates of local jails.

"People will approach me to say, 'I've been away from the church for a year, but Pope Francis is drawing me back,' or 'I'm not a Catholic, but I sure love this Pope,'" Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Archbishop of New York, said in 2018.

A decade before his health collapsed, Francis also talked openly about dying. Asked on a 2014 flight from South Korea to the Vatican how he felt about global fame, he told reporters, "I try to think of my sins, my mistakes, not to become proud. Because I know it will last only a short time. Two or three years and then I'll be off to the Father's house."





Stefano dal pozzolo—contrasto/redux 23

THE SELFIE POPE AND MEME-ING THE FAITH

By Olivia B. Waxman

Pope Francis knew how to preach in the social media era.

He kept up with the latest apps, seeing them as opportunities to reach Catholics wherever they are. Though he stopped watching television in 1990, he joined Instagram in 2016, setting a record with 1.4 million followers in less than 12 hours. In the final days of his life, he was on weekly WhatsApp and video calls with a parish in the war zone of Gaza.

Young Catholics found him relatable, and it helped that the leader of the largest Christian church was also a fan of the world's most-watched sport, soccer. He grew up rooting for the club San Lorenzo from his native Buenos Aires and met with legendary Argentine players Lionel Messi and Diego Maradona.

Though his days as nightclub bouncer (true) ended decades ago, he knew how to party. Tango, he said in 2010, "comes from deep within me." In 2014, hundreds of couples danced it in St. Peter's Square in a show of appreciation for him.

As with other newly anointed celebrities, it took Francis a while to get used to being in the spotlight. "The only thing I would like

'THE INTERNET... IS SOMETHING TRULY GOOD, A GIFT FROM GOD.'

-POPE FRANCIS

is to go out one day, without being recognized, and go to a pizzeria for a pizza," he told an interviewer in 2015. So the Pope ordered in; in 2017, he blew out a candle on a 13-ft.-long mozzarella and tomato pie for his 81st birthday.

The only thing he loved more than pizza was sweets. Friends from Argentina would bring him alfajores, Argentine cookies filled with caramel and covered in chocolate. In February 2014, he posed with a life-size chocolate statue of himself, a gift made out of 1.5 tons of cocoa. His go-to caffeinated drink was maté, and he would accept a cup whenever one was offered on a rope line.

What social media users ate up were his photo ops. True to his eponym St. Francis of Assisi's love of animals, and his role as shepherd of more than 1 billion Catholics, he went viral in 2018 posing with a baby lamb around his neck at a live nativity scene.

After homilies, Francis was always game to pose for selfies, especially with teens. And though he once described the internet as "a gift from God," he also worried that the social media platforms designed to keep people connected were making them more isolated, stating in 2018, "The world of virtual communication is a good thing, but when it becomes alienating, it makes you forget to shake hands." It's a lesson that can apply to adults too.

ONTO THE CONCLAVE

The next Pope will emerge in a process combining strict rules, subtle politics, and a puff of smoke By TIME Staff

AS THE WORLD MOURNED POPE FRANCIS AND COMMEMOrated his legacy, the *sede vacante*, or "vacant seat," at the Vatican kick-started a leadership transition period known as the papal interregnum, when there is no Pope in place. For a span of weeks, ultimate power in the church will roil quietly among the College of Cardinals, who gather in Rome to secretly decide the next Pontiff.

The origins of the process date to the 13th century, anchoring papal succession in equal parts tradition, real-politik, and mystery.

When a Pope dies, the Vatican's customary nine days of mourning, called the *novendiales*, begins. The election of a new Pope must commence 15 to 20 days after the death. Organizing the conclave, or election, falls to the *camerlengo*, or chamberlain, the Cardinal in charge of the process recently dramatized in the Oscar-winning film *Conclave*. Francis appointed the Irish-born American Kevin Farrell to serve as *camerlengo* in February 2019.

In the days before the actual election, the Cardinals meet in "general congregations" to discuss the growing challenges facing the Catholic Church. According to the Apostolic Constitution, these general congregations must be attended by all Cardinals who "are not legitimately impeded."

Cardinals are special bishops or other Vatican officials who serve as the Pope's counselors, visually distinguished by their bright red cloaks. There are 252 Cardinals in total: all are men and most come from Europe, according to the Vatican. While all Cardinals can participate in the daily meetings that occur before the election, only about half of the Cardinals—who have to be under the age of 80—can actually vote in the conclave. That means 135 Cardinals are eligible to choose Francis' successor. During his 12 years as the Bishop of Rome, Francis appointed 108 of them. The 21 most recently appointed Cardinals were named in December. Hailing from six continents, some of the most recent additions reflect a more modern and progressive approach, including support for inclusivity of LGBTQ+ Catholics, according to NPR.

At the Vatican, the electors stay in the Domus Sanctae Marthae residence. It's where Francis chose to live, in a two-room suite, rather than the posh papal apartments of the Apostolic Palace. Typically, the electorate begins its work with a Mass to ask for spiritual guidance, according to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

As the conclave starts, Vatican City becomes extremely regulated, since Cardinals are not permitted to communicate with anyone "outside the area where the election is

taking place, except in cases of proven and urgent necessity," per the Apostolic Constitution.

After the Mass, the Cardinals march together to the Sistine Chapel, singing hymns along the way. Inside, beneath Michelangelo's famous ceiling, an oath of discretion is administered in Latin, binding the Cardinals to secrecy, and the doors are closed.

ELECTORS VOTE SECRETLY by filling in cards reading *ELIGO IN SUMMUM PONTIFICEM*, or "I elect as supreme Pon-

tiff." The ballots are folded twice and placed in urns before being counted. Three Cardinals record each vote, and the tally is read aloud. The process continues until a candidate receives two-thirds of the vote. A maximum of four votes are held per day.

The public is kept abreast of the voting process through smoke signals created by burning the ballots.

White smoke means that the Cardinals have selected a new Pope, while black smoke means another round of voting has to take place.

Once the conclave elects a Pope, the dean of the College of Cardinals asks if he accepts the title. If the candidate agrees, within an hour, he is dressed in papal robes and proceeds to the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica. There, the senior Cardinal deacon—who at the time of Francis' death was French Cardinal Dominique Mamberti—tells the crowd assembled below, "Habemus Papam" (Latin for "We have a Pope") and introduces the new prelate by the name he has chosen.

Who will it be this time? Prognosticators around the globe have readied their forecasts. The College of Cardinals Report, a website providing information on potential successors, identified 22 Cardinals it believes are *papabili*, or most likely to be elected Pope. According to the report, among the qualities *papabili* should have include humility, zeal for the Catholic faith, and the promotion of goodness.

"But predicting the next Pope is notoriously precarious and he may be none of those we propose," the site caveats. In 2013, few *papabili* lists included Jorge Mario Bergoglio.

Besides hailing from outside Europe (which produced all of the 265 previous Popes), and from the Global South to boot, the Cardinal of Buenos Aires, then 76, was considered by many as too old to be named Pope.

As the son of Italian immigrants, Francis may end up having served as something of a transitional figure (217 Popes have been Italian) to a pa-

pacy that better reflects a Catholic Church that has grown increasingly Latin American and African. But as preparations were under way for his burial near his favorite icon of the Madonna in Rome's Basilica of St. Mary Major, the only sure bet was that the next Pope would be a Cardinal—which means a man. Despite calls for greater leadership opportunities for women in the Catholic Church during last year's synod, women are still ineligible to be ordained as priests, and therefore also ineligible for the papacy.—SOLCYRÉ BURGA, CHAD DE GUZMAN, MIRANDA JEYARETNAM, and SIMMONE SHAH

POSSIBLE NEXT PONTIFF?

PAPAL SUCCESSION

IS ANCHORED IN EQUAL

PARTS TRADITION,

REALPOLITIK,

AND MYSTERY

A few of the Cardinals tipped as top options to succeed Pope Francis



LUIS ANTONIO TAGLE

67, Philippines

Tagle is more leftleaning, having spoken about the isolating impact of the church's harsh language against same-sex marriage. He would be the first Asian Pope.



72, Hungary

A more conservative pick, Erdo has opposed divorced and remarried individuals' taking communion, and is against same-sex marriage. His views on immigration have also come

under fire at times.



JEAN-MARC AVELINE

66, France

Known for supporting migrants and interfaith dialogue, he was 4 when his family fled war in Algeria. Aveline has a doctorate in theology and is ideologically close to Francis.



PIETRO PAROLIN

70, Italy

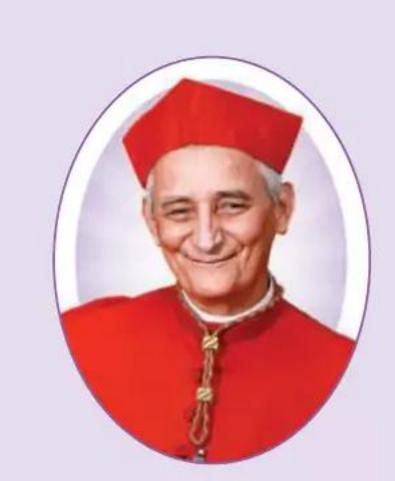
The Vatican's
Secretary of
State since 2013,
Parolin is the
highest-ranking
Cardinal in the
electing conclave,
and is considered
an expert on a
number of geopolitical issues.



JUAN JOSÉ OMELLA

79, Spain

Known for his devotion to social causes, Omella made controversial comments about sexual abuse after a 2023 report estimated some 440,000 victims in Spain.



MATTEO MARIA ZUPPI

69, Italy

Zuppi has fostered a more inclusive church: he supports accepting homosexuality, migrants' rights, and ending the death penalty. He's also led diplomatic efforts.

RADICAL MERCY

Pope Francis' greatest achievement was pushing the church to prioritize compassion By Austen Ivereigh

WHEN THEY GATHER IN ROME TO CONSIDER POPE FRANcis' successor, the world's Cardinals will consider his legacy. Much of the media coverage will portray the decision as a contest between competing visions: one "liberal," reforming, modernizing, and compassionate; the other "conservative," seeking to preserve tradition, teach with clarity, and defend law and morality. Yet most Cardinals do not look through that lens, and nor did Francis. They do not see truth and mercy as rivals, where more of one means less of the other, but that truth and mercy must be held together, as a Gospel imperative. Francis' legacy was his insistence on this.

The past three Popes were convinced the church has too often emphasized proclaiming truth and doctrine without at the same time showing mercy as the way God interacts with us. Benedict XVI insisted the recovery of mercy was the great line of continuity between him, his predecessors, and Francis. What truly made Francis different from those who came before was the way he sought to put mercy—"God's style," he called it—at the heart of all the church

teaches and does.

When Americans hear the word mercy, they often think of an exemption from the application of the law—an act of compassion. They may view mercy as "being soft." But for the church, mercy is closer to the Latin word misericordia: it is to have a heart for those who suffer. When Francis spoke of the church

as a battlefield hospital, this is what he meant: a place of salvation and healing that begins with attentiveness to the individual that honors the dignity of all, an attention we do not merit by our actions, but which flows from God's love. True mercy does not mean downgrading morality or law. It means morality and law are not enough.

The church's task these days is no longer that of the law-maker. Instead it is to help people to live fruitfully and well. "We have long thought that simply by stressing doctrinal, bioethical, and moral issues, without encouraging openness to grace, we were providing sufficient support to families, strengthening the marriage bond, and giving meaning to marital life," Francis notes in "Amoris Laetitia" (The Joy of Love), his 2016 document on the family. He saw that in a culture where transitory relationships and divorce are the norm, it had become insufficient to say marriage is for life; rather, the church must support people to marry for life. "Amoris Laetitia" is about equipping the church to do just that. The church is called "to form consciences, not to replace them," said Francis.

'EACH PERSON ENCOUNTERS GOD IN HIS OR HER OWN WAY, WITHIN THE CHURCH.'

-POPE FRANCIS

From his election as Pope in 2013, Francis sought to reform the church by helping develop its "heart for the poor," its capacity for listening and accompanying, for sensing need and responding. In Latin America, they called this "pastoral and missionary conversion." Francis dedicated a special jubilee to teaching the mindset—he labeled 2016 the Year of Mercy—and in the same year "Amoris Laetitia" showed how to put mercy into practice when dealing with marriage and divorce. Francis preached that you can both uphold the law of Catholic teachings and give people the space to grow in their capacity to live them.

In 2022, Francis approved a new constitution for the Vatican, which made clear that the power handed to the church was given not to exact service, but to serve. This was the power that Francis wanted the church to embrace: a gentle, holy power.

Though the Francis reform has been popular, some have claimed that on moral questions, Francis placed too much stress on mercy and individual circumstances, and risked diluting the church's doctrine. Some Cardinals criticized a document put out in December 2023 by Francis' close collaborator, Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, declaring that while the church could not bless the relationships of samesex couples, it was fine for those in them to be blessed, if they asked for it. As with "Amoris Laetitia," which Fernández also helped author, this work upheld church doctrine on sexuality and marriage. But many bishops said the distinction was too subtle, too prone to be misinterpreted and

exploited by the liberal forces at the church's gates. "Each person encounters God in his or her own way, within the church," Francis once said.

In his radical integration of mercy into the church, Francis made clear it is not enough to stay in the abstract, at the level of ideals and generalities. He asked us to discern realities, holding the wisdom of the church in fruitful

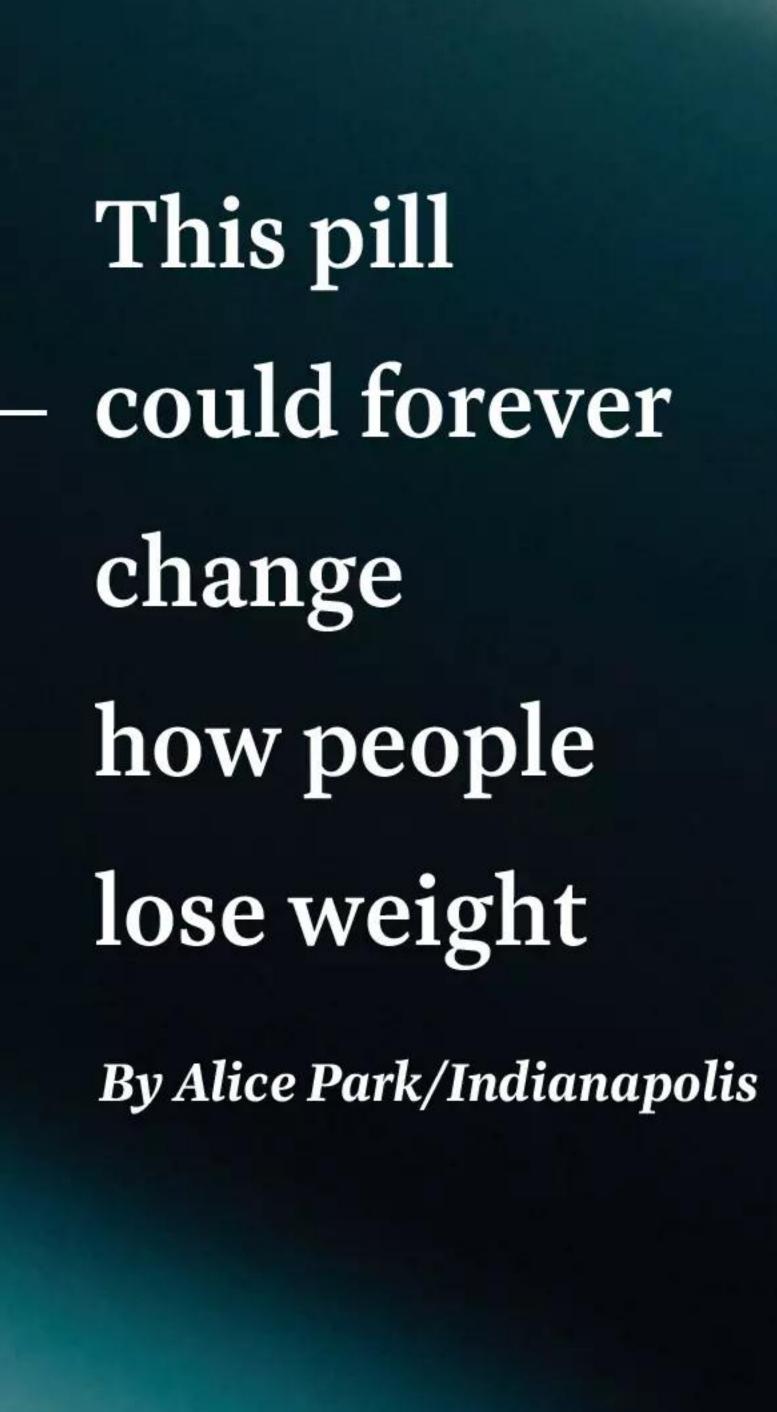
tension with concrete individual stories and experiences.

The three-year Synod on Synodality, which concluded in October 2024, was arguably Francis' most significant reform. It was the largest global listening exercise ever undertaken, and through its many stages from local to universal produced a blueprint to broadly transform the culture of the church. Synodality refers to the habit of gathering, listening, discerning, and deciding, a way of operating that involves all the faithful in the life and mission of the church. It takes for granted that all of the baptized—Pope, Cardinals, bishops, clergy, religious, lay men and women—are equal in dignity.

Many of the Cardinals who will elect Francis' successor have been involved in the synod process and have seen the transformations. They have seen how, over the past 12 years, the church has begun to relate to humanity in a more merciful way. Whatever else they think the next Pope needs to do, they will believe that implementing synodality will be his key task—not just for a church entering a new era, but to show an increasingly polarized and divided world that another way of relating to each other is possible.







In an hour-long meeting

at Eli Lilly and Co.'s headquarters in Indianapolis on April 15, the pharmaceutical company's top executives met, like they had dozens of times before, to hear the long-awaited results of a study involving a new drug.

There's always a lot riding on these presentations, called readouts. But this one, for Lilly's first diabetes and weight-loss pill based on the GLP-1 hormone, was particularly fraught. Days before, rival pharma giant Pfizer had announced it was abandoning its oral weight-loss drug after worrying side effects involving liver problems were reported in one participant in the trial. It was the second drug in its class that had failed for Pfizer.

So, David Ricks, Lilly's CEO, was understandably cautious. It was the latest in a string of milestone moments for the understated leader of the country's most dynamic pharmaceutical company. Lilly executives took TIME inside the complex process of developing the new pill. The reporting involved a series of conversations and a visit to the company's headquarters and labs in Indianapolis to detail both the scientific advancements as well as the unique culture at the pharma giant that made the drug possible. And now it all came down to this meeting. Early-phase studies had been promising, but anything can happen when a new drug is tested on thousands more people.

"In my job as CEO, I've walked into a room like that about 30 times, and most of them have been for successful drugs—but there have been failures," he says. "You can kind of tell by the way people are sitting what the outcome is going to be. But what you don't know is the degree."

The body language was encouraging. And the data, outlined in about 50 slides shown to Ricks and his team over the course of the hour, was clear: the pill, called orforglipron, was a success.

For the diabetes patients in the

study, taking the drug daily lowered their A1C—a measure of blood sugar and helped them lose weight at slightly lower rates than Lilly's injectable drug in the same category, tirzepatide (known as Mounjaro). Tirzepatide targets two weight-related hormones while orforglipron targets only one, so the fact that orforglipron came close was impressive. But it wasn't until Ricks saw the slide comparing the side effects experienced by those on the drug vs. those receiving a placebo that he was truly reassured. There were no liver issues recorded, and the side effects, such as diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, and constipation, were similar to those linked to tirzepatide. "When that slide came up, I was like, 'OK, we have a drug,'" says Ricks.

Orforglipron still has more hurdles to clear before the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) decides whether to approve it. And while establishing the benefits among people with diabetes is a critical first step, Lilly is conducting further studies. This summer, Ricks expects to sit through a few more readouts, where his team will see results from studies testing the drug for weight loss in people who are overweight or obese but don't have diabetes. Still, these first findings are exciting and reassuring, Ricks says, since the drug appears safe. Plus, people with diabetes tend to lose less weight on these types of medications than people without diabetes.

If orforglipron is eventually approved by federal regulators, it could become the first GLP-1 oral drug for weight loss to hit the market. While Novo Nordisk currently makes an oral GLP-1 drug, it's only approved for diabetes; it also uses a lower dose than orforglipron and produces about half the weight loss on average. Orforglipron comes with no food or drink restrictions, while people have to take Novo's drug 30 minutes before eating or drinking, and must limit their consumption of fatty, spicy, and sweet foods.

The implications—if Lilly's drug makes it through the testing and review process—could be transformative, not just for the company, but for patients.

The promise and excitement around orforglipron stems from what doctors have learned about popular injectable



medicines—Mounjaro, Zepbound, Ozempic, and Wegovy—that target a group of hormones known as incretins, which include GLP-1. They are potent ways to treat diabetes and obesity, yes, but they've also helped reduce the risk of heart disease, sleep apnea, and other chronic conditions associated with weight, including kidney and liver diseases. Even beyond chronic conditions, there is encouraging evidence that they may help to address addiction because of the way they affect satiety and reward centers in the brain—and even Alzheimer's, thanks to their antiinflammatory features. (These are not benign medications for everyone who takes them, however, and have been linked to many mild to severe side effects, from gastrointestinal issues to blood clots, an eye disease, hair loss, and more.)

As a pill, orforglipron would be cheaper to make and reach more people than its injectable predecessors, since it





Eli Lilly CEO David Ricks at company headquarters in Indianapolis on March 31

wouldn't require refrigeration to store or special injector pens to use.

"We can think about its use in disease beyond Type 2 diabetes and obesity," says Dr. Dan Skovronsky, Lilly's chief scientific officer, "where patients typically want an oral medicine. We're testing it for hypertension, for example." An oral medicine that's more effective than current treatments could transform the way obesity is managed, potentially even preventing people who are on the verge of diabetes or obesity from developing the diseases at all by helping them control their blood sugar or weight with a daily pill. As doctors and patients start relying on these new treatments, a drug like orforglipron may also help people maintain weight loss.

"After people have lost weight, maybe by using an injectable, could they stay on an oral [medicine] to maintain their weight?" says Skovronsky.

"These are the kinds of ideas we're thinking about."

All of this could unlock a huge financial windfall for Lilly. The market for injectable antiobesity drugs, currently dominated by Zepbound (made by Lilly) and Wegovy (from Novo Nordisk), is expected to grow to \$100 billion in sales by 2030. A pill would expand this market in significant ways, and potentially dominate it, by reaching people in parts of the world where an injectable drug that has to be refrigerated is simply out of reach.

A more accessible way to manage weight and the myriad chronic conditions linked to obesity could transform not just the health care system as more people potentially avoid the heart, liver, and kidney diseases that

account for much of the disease burden worldwide—but also the processedfood and diet industries that have fueled and capitalized on the obesity epidemic. Because GLP-1 medications are so effective in curbing appetite, demand for high-calorie and sweetened foods and beverages is already dipping in some instances, and significant shifts in what people eat, and how much they consume, are likely to follow.

MOST DRUG COMPANIES are lucky to have one breakthrough or blockbuster drug at a time. Lilly has two (and counting). In July 2024, it received FDA approval for Kisunla, an Alzheimer's treatment that reduces symptoms of cognitive decline more dramatically than any other drug. It also announced encouraging early results in 2024 from its new gene therapy, which helped a deaf boy hear again. All of this has made Lilly, at nearly 150 years old, the most valuable drug company in the world and potentially on its way to becoming the first trillion-dollar health care company.

Since Ricks became CEO in 2017, the company's market capitalization, a reflection of the value of its stock, has soared to nearly \$700 billion—nearly double that of the next most valuable pharma company, Johnson & Johnson. Yet Ricks, a regular in the company cafeteria, is not exactly the ruthless corporate titan you might expect. More mildmannered than take-charge showman, Ricks prefers an under-the-radar approach to dominating the industry.

When he is "flummoxed" about something, "I go talk to people on the ground. I've got a big job, and they know who I am. These are hourly workers, but they're not impressed by me. They're basically like, 'Fix this, it's frustrating.' They'll tell you what's wrong."

And Ricks finds a way to fix it fast an approach that has earned him admirers among fellow CEOs.

WHEN RICKS JOINED LILLY right out of business school in 1996, he never imagined he'd one day run it. His fiancée now wife—was in medical school at Indiana University, and he just needed a job. "It was a necessity in a way," he says of his first job at the company. Roles in sales, marketing, and overseeing

operations in the U.S. and abroad led him to the CEO job in 2017.

By then, Lilly was already known for launching the first human insulin in 1982—which was also the first recombinant drug of any kind approved by the FDA—along with other diabetes treatments and marquee drugs in other disease areas, like Prozac for depression in 1987.

Concerned that Lilly was perhaps getting too complacent from its past success, in his first speech as CEO to 150 company executives, Ricks emphasized three things Lilly needed to prioritize in order to maintain its leading role in the pharmaceutical world: speed, an openness to looking outside its four walls to enrich its pipeline, and teamwork. Today, he says, "we're seeking to be the fastest-moving large pharma company, which I think we basically are, but now we're trying to beat our own benchmarks," he says. Orforglipron was developed in six years, which is 30% to 40% faster than any competitor, Ricks says.

He's keen to acquire and bring in outside experts and ideas—something Lilly historically liked to keep in-house. Former board members saw Lilly's focus on building internal expertise for specific diseases as a double-edged sword: while it gave the company in-depth knowledge that could streamline drug development, it was also insular and limiting when it came to ensuring Lilly had access to the most innovative strategies. "We often, at our worst, were pretty satisfied," Ricks says of the company's culture. "We're here in Indianapolis—we're the anchor tenant of the city and state, and we're the largest employer. Pretty much if you live here and work at Lilly, all your neighbors think you're awesome. And so you think you're awesome. But sometimes you are, and sometimes you're not. Improvement starts by rebasing what your assumptions are about what 'good' is."

Finding new ways to control blood sugar was the perfect test case. "When I arrived [at Lilly], there was a moment to go beyond insulin," says Ricks. In the early 2000s, Lilly had partnered with biotech Amylin Pharmaceuticals to develop the first-in-class drugs that would eventually lead to Mounjaro. "It was a

big step, although the drug needed to be improved a lot to be as useful as the ones we have today," says Ricks.

The potential was obvious. So was Ricks' drive; he never lost sight of that goal. "If it's going to be a great drug," Ricks told his leadership team, "let's make sure it says Lilly on it."

ORFORGLIPRON WAS such a drug. By 2018, Ricks had a comrade in arms in Skovronsky, who had joined the company after Lilly acquired his biotech company in 2010. Like Ricks, Skovronsky wasn't shy about questioning the inertia that often plagues a big place like Lilly. At a meeting about drug-development timelines, in which Lilly fell short of industry benchmarks, "I kind of spoke up and said, 'If I understand correctly, our goal is to be below average?" says Skovronsky.

Like Ricks, he was eager to ensure that the company didn't miss important opportunities—like orforglipron. The drug was developed by the Japanese pharmaceutical company Chugai, which had found a way to put some of the weight-loss features of incretins into an oral form that wouldn't lose potency after getting chewed up by the acids in the stomach and digestive system. Compelled by the early data, Ricks decided in 2018 to license the development and commercialization of the drug. That was just a year after Ozempic, Novo Nordisk's diabetes drug, was approved by the FDA and four years before Lilly's first incretin-based diabetes treatment, Mounjaro, was launched. There was no way to predict then that these

'The key thing is to direct our research intensity not where the market is today, but where the problem is today.'

—DAVID RICKS

drugs would go on to transform the treatment of diabetes and obesity. "If [orforglipron] is successful, it will go down as probably the best business development deal in the history of pharma," says Ricks of that early decision. "And our team went out and found it."

To build the promising molecule, however, required double the number of steps as typical small-molecule medications. It had been made only in small quantities for early testing in animals and a small number of people. Sarah O'Keeffe, senior vice president of product development and research, remembers the marching orders from her managers: "Go figure out how to do that quickly," she says.

O'Keeffe and her team were accustomed to building drugs that required maybe a dozen steps. Orforglipron required 30. Using Ricks' North Star of speed, and nudged by increasing competition in the field, they took a risk and proposed an entirely new manufacturing process—one that would prioritize efficiency and environmental safety by using fewer solvents and producing less waste. She and her team tweaked the process they had used to mass-produce tirzepatide, a peptide, to now make a small molecule, orforglipron, which they hadn't done before.

They created a mini version of the manufacturing process and invited Ricks to the lab to explain the new approach and get his approval to build it to scale. "They had this little skunk-works kind of thing and said it was seven times more efficient," he says. Ricks said yes. "That decision and that process ... is a big part of our success now," he says. "We would be backlogged for years if we were just using the old process."

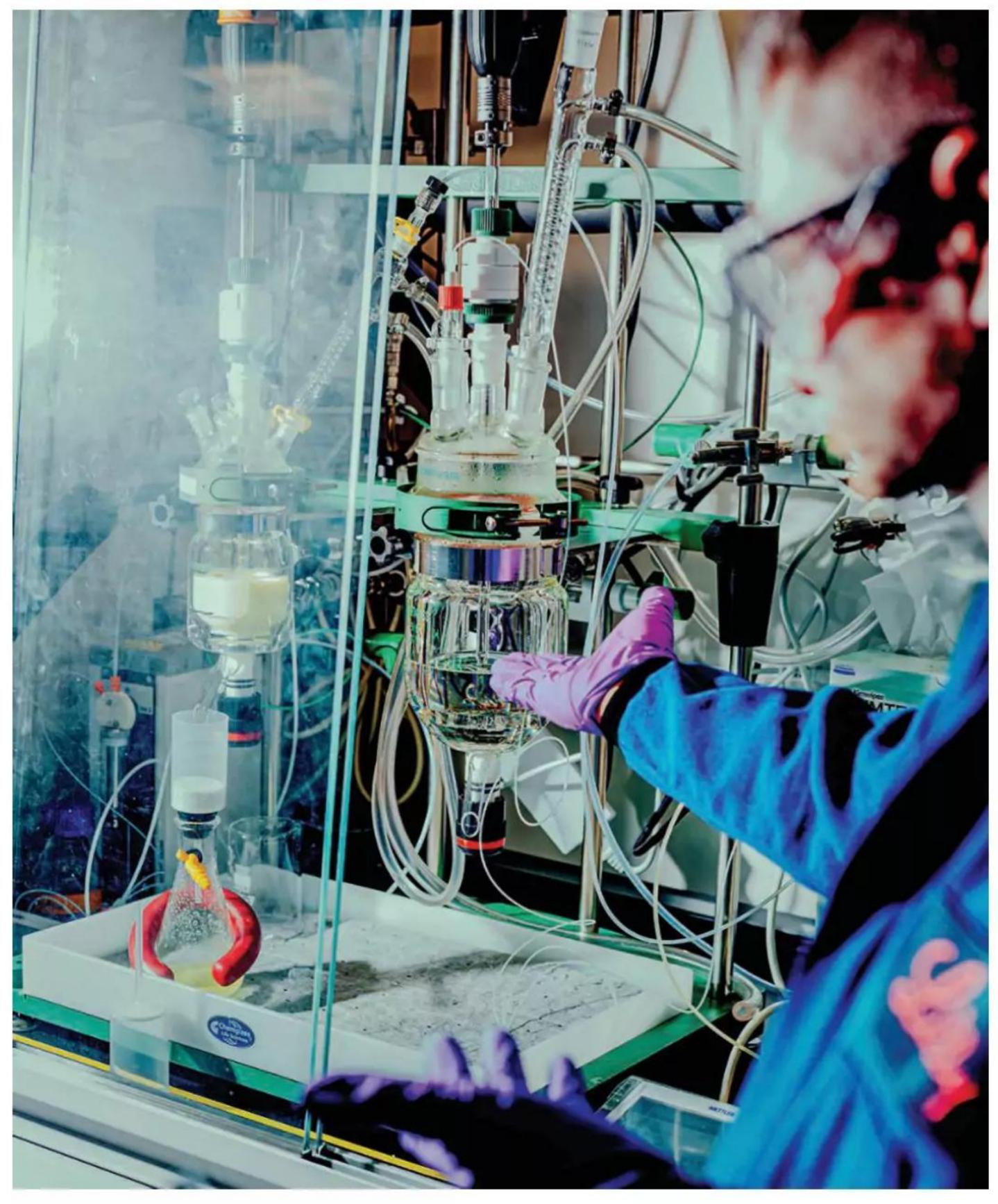
didn't happen overnight. Ricks faced a problem unique to a company founded and grounded in the heartland of the Midwest: people at the company were too nice and too respectful of one another—to the point that they would rarely contradict or argue in meetings. "Lilly nice," as it's known in the company, was actually dampening

ENCOURAGING SUCH ENTERPRISE

creativity.

Ricks had to introduce conflict and contrary opinions in meetings to induce





richer discussion and honest evaluation of projects and their risks and benefits. He encouraged teams to assign a devil's advocate to argue a dissenting view and present a case for going against the conventional wisdom or majority opinion. Ricks has his own devil's advocates on his board and on his management team; he turns to them when making critical decisions about whether to invest billions of dollars, for example, to take a promising drug into late-stage human trials. "They're one-way doors," he says of the expensive studies. "You can only start. You cannot stop once you begin these studies, so you better set them up the right way, and you better be sure

while Lilly has been satisfactorily answering to its shareholders in recent years, rewarding them with about \$34 billion in annual revenue, it and other pharmaceutical companies are increasingly having to answer to a public that is demanding broader access to medicines at lower prices. In response, Ricks launched Lilly Direct in 2024, turning Lilly into the first pharmaceutical company to offer its products, including tirzepatide, directly to consumers—and at a slightly lower cost, for those paying out of pocket. "It was about taking out intermediaries," says

about the ones you advance."

Chief scientific officer Dan Skovronsky, left, and lab equipment at Lilly's Indianapolis office

Ricks, like the pharmacy benefit managers who set prices. "There's a lot of dialogue about middlemen in health care, and we said, 'OK, let's just skip all that."

About 100,000 people purchase Zepbound for weight loss through Lilly Direct each month, which represents about 10% of the people using the drug. The program is setting a precedent for how patients may soon be getting their prescription drugs; in March, Novo Nordisk announced its NovoCare Pharmacy, which also provides its weightloss medication directly to consumers.

For Ricks, it was the logical next step after being the first company to drop prices of insulin to \$35 a month out of pocket for patients. The two decisions build on the Lilly 30x30 program that was launched the year before he became CEO, aiming to provide its drugs to 30 million people a year by 2030. "Why didn't these things happen earlier? I don't know, but I think people feel constrained by norms, and we just pushed beyond them."

Companies like Lilly may be able to push those boundaries only so far, especially when it comes to regulatory decisions and economic pressures

like the tariffs the Trump Administration is planning to levy on imports. Pharmaceuticals were exempt from the first round of tariffs, but on April 14, the Administration said they soon won't be. While some of the materials required to make orforglipron come from Europe, Ricks says that in five years, he anticipates that all of Lilly's GLP-1-based drugs for the U.S. market will be manufactured domestically. "We are planning for global introduction of orforglipron, and we're ramping up new factories to come online to support that global use," he says. He's invested nearly \$50 billion since 2020 in expanding and building four new Lilly manufacturing facilities in the U.S., including in North Carolina, Wisconsin, and Indianapolis. The Indianapolis facility includes a manufacturing plant that will begin producing drugs in 2026 and a site that represents the largest investment in the country's history to make active pharmaceutical ingredients for synthetic medicines. Lilly will also announce three more such sites in the U.S. this year.

"The key thing is to direct our research intensity not where the market is today, but where the problem is today," Ricks says. For orforglipron, that meant taking a risk on a tricky compound with big ambitions—and, he hopes, being proved right.





The Truth About Our Progress

In the summer of 2020, millions of Americans took to the streets to protest the murder of George Floyd in what would become the largest protests in U.S. history. It was a watershed moment that demanded safety, dignity, and an end to anti-Black racism.

Here is how we might make sense of that.

A SPECIAL REPORT, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CENTER FOR POLICING EQUITY, WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM:

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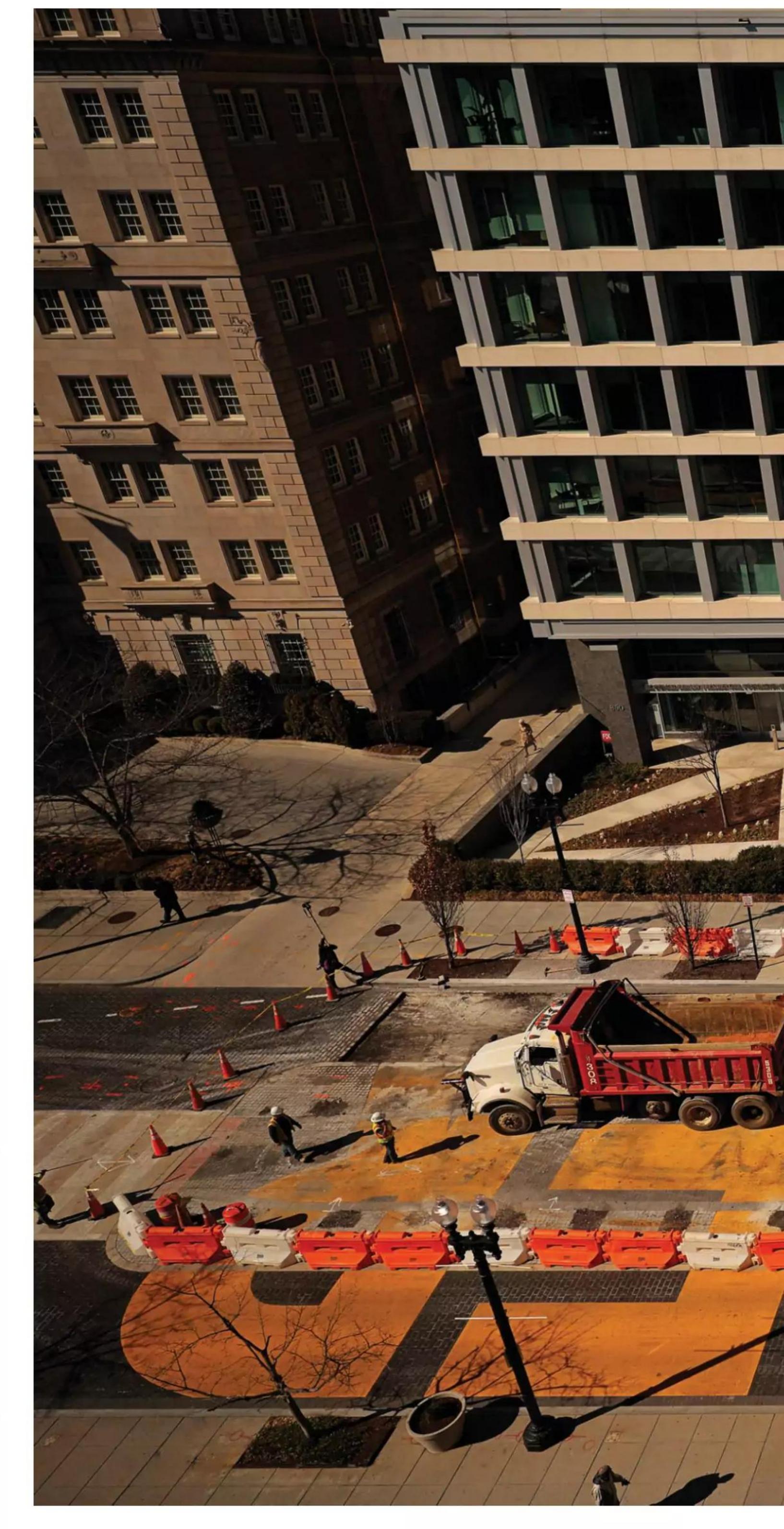
The Battle for Our Memory Is the Battle for Our Country

BY KIMBERLÉ W. CRENSHAW

ON JUNE 7, 2020, REPRESENTATIVE JOHN LEWIS MADE HIS last public appearance at the Black Lives Matter mural, painted on the road adjacent to the White House. He was so moved by the mural that he wanted to see it in person. Lewis noted, "The people in D.C. and around the world are sending a powerful message that we will get there." The installation was commissioned by Mayor Muriel Bowser, who, at the time, recognized that "there are people who are craving to be heard and to be seen and to have their humanity recognized. We had the opportunity to send that message loud and clear on a very important street in our city."

From the vantage point of the summer of nationwide protests following the police killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, Lewis' appearance on Black Lives Matter Plaza felt like a coda to the unfinished business of the civil rights movement, a symbolic christening of the nation's renewed journey to a more equitable future. His words recalled the prophecy of his mentor, Dr. Martin Luther King, who in his own last public appearance foretold a racially just future in his "I've Been to the Mountaintop" speech—one that he might not see, but one that just as surely would arrive.

Unlike the public monuments scattered around the country that continue to trumpet the Confederate message that Black lives don't matter, the plaza reflected the opposite commitment. But if this hope-filled public declaration that "Black Lives Matter" reflected the moral arc of the universe being bent toward justice, then the mayor's capitulation in 2025 to congressional Republicans' demands that she dismantle



Crews dismantle the Black Lives Matter Plaza street mural in Washington, D.C., on March 11



The much more disturbing reality is that the retrenchment is often deeper and more enduring than the modest and frequently symbolic reforms that the crisis engendered. Laws passed during Reconstruction to address more than a century of enslavement in and exclusion from the U.S. were gutted less than two decades after they were passed, while the racial tyranny of state and extrajudicial violence under

which most Black Americans endured extended into the mid-20th century.

Following this pattern—not two steps forward, one step back, but the reverse—appears to be the goal of the factions that have recently grabbed power. Beyond reining in the promises surrounding the reckoning is a more profound effort to push the battle well behind the line of scrimmage that prevailed before 2020. The destruction of the plaza is of a piece with other efforts to bury any recogni-

tion of the past that continues to live in the present—from censoring words and banning books to defunding education and threatening museums. These are not mere excesses in cost-cutting. Wiping out our collective memory is part of their targeted strategy to suppress historical literacy, empathy, and our capacity to fight for a racially just democracy.

THE PROTESTS THAT ENGULFED THE NATION in 2020 were spontaneous expressions of a broad multiracial, intergenerational, and bipartisan coalition of Americans who saw with their own eyes George Floyd's life extinguished with brazen indifference. The movement appeared to have reached far beyond the traditional constituencies that marched for civil rights protections in the '60s.

In that moment of horror, everyday Americans witnessed the inhumanity that had long been a feature of anti-Black police violence. Breonna Taylor's killing as a consequence of a botched no-knock raid further amplified that even the comfort of one's home provides no safe harbor from the ways that agents of the state can legally take an innocent woman's life. Black Lives Matter and #SayHerName became conceptual containers for the energies that these tragedies

unleashed, finding expression in the protests and demands for accountability that followed. Heightened recognition that laws, institutional culture, and public opinion facilitated practices that disproportionately imperiled Black lives led millions of people in the U.S. and around the world to realize that the endangerment of Black life was not some one-off occurrence expressed by a singular bad actor. Nor was racism a past-tense problem.

This confrontation, considered by many the largest civil mobilization in American history, drove new conversations across the country. From the streets of protests to the boardrooms of corporate America emerged a variety of commitments ranging from concrete police reforms to efforts to break the decades-long impasse on improving the life chances of Black Americans. Congress introduced the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act to enhance police accountability; corporate America embraced the imperative to rethink practices that contributed to its glass ceilings; Hollywood expanded its efforts to curate a wider template of cinematic storytelling; media and publishing gave voice to perspectives that had been marginalized; and philanthropy sought to expand the

fraction of all its dollars directed to addressing racism's continuing consequences.

And yet the sentiment-driven promises of the moment have rarely been sustained beyond the memory of events that produced them. For example, the great conflagration that gave rise to the promise of equal citizenship and equal protection—the Civil War—was momentarily realized in biracial governments in the formerly slaveholding South. But those promises were so thoroughly dis-

mantled that the American story that most people learn overlooks or denigrates it.

As the five-year anniversary of the George Floyd protests approaches, not only have Lewis' hopes expressed on Black Lives Matter Plaza not materialized, they have faced stronger headwinds than many among us could have ever imagined. Police reforms that were negotiated as consent decrees have been indefinitely paused. Congressional proposals to enact a range of reforms were whittled down to bare minimums and never passed. In Kentucky, Breonna's Law—limiting the use of no-knock warrants that put Taylor in harm's way—was passed, and yet no one was held accountable for her death. And despite the chants of #SayHerName, available data suggests that race remains a significant factor in Black women's vulnerability to police violence. While women overall are far less likely than men to experience violence at the hands of police, Black women experience everyday violence in routine interactions with police at rates that match or even exceed the violence encountered by white men.

Not only are many institutions stepping away from their unrealized commitments, they are conceding that the impulse to respond to the inhumanity that the world witnessed was



flawed. Initially targets of (and now collaborators in) the so-called war against woke, they have become bedfellows with those seeking to ensure that this response to racism will never happen again. In addition, some educators, elected officials, pundits, and others have capitulated to the right-wing defaming of critical race theory and antiracist education as unpatriotic; they have readily relinquished the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), and some have even demurred in the face of efforts to censor or distort the stories of slavery, the Montgomery bus boycott, Ruby Bridges, and even King's "Letter From Birmingham Jail."

One need only consult the recent list of words that are unacceptable throughout the federal government and its tentacles into civil society to understand how following these repressive orders would ensure that the stories of Floyd and Taylor cannot be accurately reported, remembered, or meaningfully addressed. Consider trying to teach, research, commemorate, acknowledge, or build any kind of response to the tragedies of 2020 without the essential concepts that convey the meaning of the story: discrimination, racism, bias, Black, oppression, prejudice, systemic, historical, intersectional.

In the opening months of the second Trump Administration, we have seen efforts to release police departments from modest efforts to roll back practices that have been proved to harm Black citizens. We have also seen the erasure of Black history from our shared context (including the National Park Service removing references of Harriet Tubman from its web page for the Underground Railroad, only to reinstate it after massive public outrage), Black leaders from our government, Black students from our universities, and Black employees from corporate America. The very presence of Black people in positions of authority has been associated with a derogatory embodiment of DEI, which has, in turn, been weaponized to undermine what gains from the civil rights movement remain. Even "safer" objectives like combatting Black maternal mortality and environmental racism are at great risk. There is no case to be made for reform, of policing or any other policy, when fighting discrimination itself has been framed as discriminatory.

IN THE YEARS SINCE 2020, it has become evident that neither Floyd's nor Taylor's lost lives could gain lasting traction until a stark and persistent truth was confronted: Americans have always been and will continue to be willing to accept a certain degree of racial injustice to make them feel safe. The failure to sustain meaningful efforts to protect Black Americans from this violence is a feature of our society, not a bug.

We merely have to look to Congress's unwillingness to pass legislation criminalizing lynching for more than a century to see the enduring association of Blackness with threat, one that was a bitter harvest of a society founded on the forced and stolen labor of Black bodies. Attempts to curb the lawlessness that reigned in the South had to be balanced with claims that Black populations were in need of discipline and control—an oppressive compromise that stretches into the present.

The groundswell of public support for race reform

following the Floyd protests gave reason to hope for something different. This echoed similar inflection points in our history. In his biography, John Lewis revealed how Emmett Till's lynching, and Mamie Till's courageous demand that the world bear witness to the profound savagery of white supremacy, was a pivotal moment in awakening an entire generation of young Black Americans. Similarly, in the aftermath of Floyd's and Taylor's killings, murals of their faces, banners of Black Lives Matter, and demands to #SayHerName invited a new generation of young people to reckon with the very real, very human costs of our racist policies.

Lewis and his contemporaries—the Freedom Riders, the sit-in demonstrators, and the youth-led wing of the movement that really pushed beyond what we had seen before—were part of the Emmett Till generation. Nine years after Till's death, the movement this generation went on to advance gave us not only the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, Medicaid, and other civil rights advances, they also poured a foundation upon which the rights of other marginalized groups could be legally enshrined. These hard-fought victories chipped away at the legacy of slavery and the infrastructure of Jim Crow, while widening the democratic imagination to include Indigenous rights, the women's liberation movement, marriage equality, disability rights, and many others.

It is precisely this intergenerational and cross-issue transfer of ideas that those pushing the anti-woke agenda aim to suppress. The erasure of both symbolic tributes and tangible policy gains in the aftermath of 2020 not only strikes a blow to the objectives of the great reckoning, but also is perhaps the most dangerous, radical attempt to reverse course since the massive resistance to the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision.

This spells worrisome signs for a multiracial democracy that has faltered on its Achilles' heel yet again. The painted-over Black Lives Matter murals are not so different from the erasure of the database of facts and evidence of Jan. 6 from the Department of Justice, the dismantling of the Department of Education, and the firing of thousands of federal workers dedicated to a functioning bureaucracy to support our rights. These are all part of a widespread effort to move away from the possibility of a diverse democracy by making people forget the stakes, challenges, and capacity to overcome.

The forces who would want us to forget Floyd's and Taylor's names would love nothing more than to dismiss their memories—the same way their killers dismissed their lives. There will be those who will demand more than the erasure of these stories, and the destruction of a public monument that claims that they mattered.

We refused to look away then, and we should refuse the invitation to do so now. The battle for our memory is the battle for our country. And for America to matter, Black lives must matter. There is no paving over that truth.

Crenshaw is the co-founder and executive director of the African American Policy Forum and the co-founder and executive director of the Center for Intersectionality and Social Policy Studies at Columbia Law School





Art Is a Way: Struggle, Loss, And Black Living

BY IMANI PERRY

LARCENIA FLOYD DIED IN 2018, TWO years before George. But when her son was being asphyxiated to death by Derek Chauvin, he screamed for her. It was the "Mama!" heard around the world, an anguished incantation that called millions into the streets to protest.

That wail of loss—the sound of a ripped-apart parent and child—to the cold hands of premature death has been a commonplace of Black American life throughout history. Scholar Ruth Wilson Gilmore has described it this way: "Racism, specifically, is the state-sanctioned

or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death." Poet laureate Gwendolyn Brooks put the same thought in these terms: "we jazz June/ we die soon," she wrote in her seminal poem "We Real Cool."

In 2010, fine artist Titus Kaphar completed the painting Father and Son. It depicts scholar W.E.B. DuBois—arguably the greatest thinker of the 20th century—with a cutout where his son might have been, lying across his lap. Kaphar's piece is a contemporary pietà, one not based in the story of

Mary cradling the body of Jesus after his descent from the cross, but instead, one from Black history. In DuBois' 1903 classic, The Souls of Black Folk, he included the autobiographical essay "Of the Passing of the First Born" about the death of his toddler son Burghardt, a death that might have been avoided had the diphtheria vaccine been made available to Black people in Atlanta, where DuBois was working as a professor at Atlanta University. DuBois carried that grief with him as he wrote essays, fiction, and pageants; as he edited The Crisis, the journal of the NAACP; as he rose and fell as a leader when the nation and many of his peers grew to consider him too strident, too far left, too unflinching. Kaphar's stirring portrait was completed 107 years after Souls and 47 years after DuBois' death. It followed, but it also foretold. Father and Son preceded what we think of as the beginning of the Black Lives Matter era by three years, which we tend to date to the acquittal of George Zimmerman, the man who shot and killed 17-year-old Trayvon Martin, in 2013.

These repetitions reveal a harrowing truth. Such a portrait is timeless as long as racial inequality sinks life and chances of life in this country. And despite the shrill denials heard in anti-DEI and anti-"woke" platforms, the evidence is clear: racial inequality is as it ever was in the U.S.

Art is a particularly powerful tool in this moment because it can offer more than just points for debate. Art can engage not just the intellect, but also the soul, hence the aptly titled DuBois classic. It resonates with our greatest hopes and deepest frustrations. Above all, it buoys the spirit, enabling us to continue to press for a better future, but also to imagine what that future might be by refusing the idea that our bodies are fated for abuse and destruction.

of raising Black children because I believe we deserve to feel something more than the fear of raising children in a dangerous and unequal world. I want to affirm that joy keeps us going when terror feels overwhelming using my art—writing—and my intellect as the vehicle for truth.

But, now living in the age of backlash against everything that made my life possible as a Black woman professor, it is undeniable that notwithstanding the multimillion-strong season of protest in honor of George Floyd's life, we aren't on more solid ground. In fact, we have been pushed off land and find ourselves treading water. Ours is a living inside a cascade of crises that have compounded over the past 15, 10, five years, despite the moments of respite and promises of transformation. We have marched and sung. We have voted, protested, and pleaded. And yet, suffering persists, the water deepens. It makes you wanna holler a "mama" of your own. (And perhaps you heard the echo of Marvin Gaye's 1971 track "Inner City Blues.")

It is no wonder, then, that in African American culture, art has flourished in the worst of times. In 1900, three years before DuBois published The Souls of Black Folk, civil rights leader and poet James Weldon Johnson and musician J. Rosamund Johnson composed "Lift Every Voice and Sing"—the song that told the story of Black Americans' struggle in epic terms, detailing endurance and fostering hope and collective responsibility. In 1926, when Carter G. Woodson formally declared "Negro History Week" in February (a ritual that would grow to become Black History Month in the 1970s), the song became an integral part of that annual ritual celebrated in school, religious, and civic life.

1926 was also the year in which Du-Bois published the article "Criteria of Negro Art" in which he famously said "all Art is propaganda" speaking directly to Black American artists. The message was that artists had a hand in the struggle for human and civil rights, and therefore should put their gifts in service to that duty. Though I would not be as heavy-handed as DuBois—I don't believe all art must be propaganda—it is certainly clear to me that art (visual art, music, literature, and dance) is essential for freedom dreaming. This is no less true in 2025 than it was in 2020, 1926, or 1903.

Still, like many I suspect, I wonder if my words work—if my art matters in these moments of struggle. I need only look to others to be reminded.

Mario Moore's painting Henry Bibb and/or Mary Ann Shadd hangs on my wall. In it, a Black woman in a purple embroidered robe faces the water. The title is powerful. Mary Ann Shadd was an abolitionist, a suffrage activist, the first Black woman publisher in North America, and the second Black American woman to graduate from law school. Henry Bibb was born into slavery, escaped, and made his way to freedom through Detroit (Moore's hometown) to reach Canada. After emancipation, he would write an important abolitionist narrative. The woman in Moore's painting gazes at the Detroit River. In the antebellum era, crossing that watery border was a near-certain passage to freedom. The painting is for me, and I think for many who see it when it circulates in museums or on computer screens, a reminder of the once treacherous and even deadly pathways to freedom. Even more, it begs us to seek inspiration from those who traveled them as we face treachery today.

I LEARNED THIS IMPLICITLY in my own life course too. I frequently say that as a writer I haunt the past. By that I mean I gaze into it to find the content through which we might craft our moral imaginations today. So many of the neglected and abused of generations past have a great deal to teach us. And if we can recognize the full ugliness in our past, we might be better at creating beauty in its stead for the future.

It wasn't only in my studies that I learned this, but also in my encounters with art. Like so much of Generation X, I grew up on Stevie Wonder's Songs in the Key of Life double album. His song "Love's in Need of Love Today" was a particularly potent teacher. It gave credence to the ever present terror that existed in a world filled to the brim with disasters. And yet, it also issued a belief that a disposition toward love—a discipline of hope, to borrow words from abolitionist Mariame Kaba—makes the difference.

It is hard to avoid cynicism, especially now. Especially with so much behind us and possibly even more before us. To bolster ourselves, many of us who do creative and intellectual work

have been holding fast to a quote from Toni Morrison. It seems to be in constant circulation on social media platforms: "... This is precisely the time when artists go to work—not when everything is fine, but in times of dread. That's our job!"

What too often is left out in the meme-ing, however, is that Morrison attributed those words to a friend of hers. This friend was responding to Morrison's depression about national politics in 2004. That friend's words reminded Morrison of the dangerous conditions in which so much great art has been made. Morrison concluded the essay she wrote for *The Nation* that described this interaction by saying, "I know the world is bruised and bleeding, and though it is important not to ignore its pain, it is also critical to refuse to succumb to its malevolence. Like failure, chaos contains information that can lead to knowledge-even wisdom. Like art." Indeed, she kept creating until her final days, like DuBois, through war and injustice and even after the passing of her second-born son, Slade.

Morrison's remarkable courage is a reminder that the value of art in these times is much greater than how it might inspire people to action alone. It exists in art's power to allow us to find meaning notwithstanding mourning, to imagine our way out of the morass of our present moment or personal challenges, and to keep us living rather than frozen in fear and anguish.

Art does not forestall injustice. It does not shape policy or create law. It is not the same work as political organizing or protest. But it is indispensable. One need only look at the joy of line dancing on social media and the majesty of Mardi Gras krewes in New Orleans for current examples. Each season we find new iterations of old habits, ones that refresh culture but also keep tradition alive. That combination allows us to more deeply contemplate our condition—to meditate on that which would be right and good. Most of all, it helps us find and nourish love. Love is indeed in need of love today. For our children. For all of us.

Perry is the National Book Award—winning author of South to America

Building a Moon Shot for Racial Justice

BY PHILLIP ATIBA SOLOMON

MY DISSERTATION ADVISER, A VETERAN OF SEGregated Chicago, liked to say that social science is not rocket science—it's a lot harder. Social systems and social progress have a lot more variables than physical ones and behave much less predictably.

The five years following George Floyd's lynching have demonstrated the wisdom of his words.

In 2020, after the largest protests in U.S. history, there was no shortage of outrage. No lack of political will. No confusion about what people wanted—accountability, dignity, safety. Police unions and politicians who once claimed racism was "over" suddenly spoke publicly about the need to do something in response to such a grotesque event. For a moment, our nation had moral clarity, and it felt like we might finally be on the cusp of change that was as large as our collective outrage.

But then the variables changed, and the social systems largely did not. Perhaps that is because there is still a bit about large-scale social progress that is like a moon shot. The launch is hard enough—controlling the explosion of energy, the singular mission, the sense of purpose. But the magic comes in sustaining momentum long enough to stick the landing. And, in the wake of 2020, we have not stuck the landing. There have been no lasting, federal changes in public policy. The burst of local reforms has slowed considerably, with progress haunted by the disappearance of promising programs. The rocket not only failed to land; it exploded.

How did that happen—and where do we go from here?

IF HISTORY IS ANY INDICATION, big innovations depend on three pillars: a clear vision, often framed in morally appealing terms; people who obsess over understanding the details; and funding to sustain both, through failure and success.

Giant leaps like the 1969 moon landing were built on all three. Most remember the moral clarion calls of President John F. Kennedy marshaling the nation behind NASA's mission, or Buzz Aldrin's iconic words broadcast back down on Earth. But few recall the legions of dedicated

technical experts behind the scenes, which included women like Katherine Johnson, a Black mathematician from West Virginia, who began her career in a segregated NASA research center before performing critical calculations on the Apollo mission. Not to mention the record-high funding the space program enjoyed through multiple false starts.

Social change operates on the same principles, but it is far harder to meet even one of these conditions. Funding tends to be the least stable pillar. There is also essentially no money in trying to solve racism—at least, not for the people doing it. And, unlike a moon landing, vaccines that eradicate disease, or artificial intelligence that can fabricate art, most people cannot easily imagine what "ending racism" looks like.

With excruciating balance, however, we can succeed on the strength of the other two pillars: the moral clarity to mobilize people and the depth of knowledge necessary to achieve lasting change.

Racial-justice advocates have pulled this off before. A century after slavery, activists, lawmakers, and everyday people dedicated to a more just nation secured passage of the Voting Rights Act. Civil rights lawyers did it with *Brown v. Board of Education*, marking less than 90 years from slavery to the end of legal segregation.

In both cases, accomplishing progress required moral vision and technical expertise working in tandem; one cannot create durable progress without the other. Martin Luther King's famous "I Have a Dream" speech, for instance, was made possible by the logistical and technical brilliance of adviser Bayard Rustin, who organized the March on Washington and other iconic protests. Achieving that balance has yielded successes under other banners as well, like the right to organize, for women to vote, and for consumers to be protected from harmful products. All of these landmark achievements followed a clear vision and leaders with deep expertise in how the systems they struggled to change or topple—actually functioned.

Collective action needs moral clarity—simple, powerful calls to action that cut through apathy and



Gianna Floyd,
daughter of
George Floyd,
looks on as
Philonise Floyd,
George's brother,
and attorney Ben
Crump speak to
reporters after
a meeting in
Washington, D.C.,
to mark the first
anniversary of
George's death

We do not launch rockets once and say that space has been conquered



inspire people. But that same clarity so essential for mobilization—can obscure complexity and downplay technical expertise. The glare of a galvanizing vision means we often squint at problems and champion solutions that feel right in the moment but do not hold up under scrutiny or serve our long-term goals. In other words, without delicate balance, we risk building around a goal without recognizing the means necessary to achieve it. Justice also faces an additional obstacle: unlike with most aerospace research, there are often active enemies of social progress deeply invested, culturally or materially, in the status quo. That means that cycles of backlash must be included in the calculations of our moon shots for social change.

Failing to account for backlash at this point feels negligent precisely because it is so historically predictable. Reconstruction gave way to Jim and Jane Crow. *Brown v. Board* and the victories of the '50s and '60s gave way to the racially regressive politics of Nixon, Ford, and eventually Reagan. The election of the nation's first Black President catalyzed the Tea Party and, eventually, Donald Trump.

Given these cycles, the only option is to treat moments when public opinion and progress align as narrow windows when change is possible. The task must be to wield fleeting power

effectively for durable gains. Get what you can while you can, then come back for the rest. There is little time for clarity and expertise to be at odds.

In the wake of Floyd's death, there were calls to mandate less police violence, hire more diverse police forces, track police performance, and make it easier to hold officers and departments accountable. Advocates and police chiefs largely agreed that police are tasked with too much and that we should have alternatives to police in many cases and focus on preventing crises rather than just

responding to them.

But there were also loud disagreements on whether improving police behavior was a fool's errand. So, collectively, we didn't. Consider the failure of the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act. The legislation was not close to everything the nation needed to end racism in public safety, but it aligned with public opinion and, despite the critiques of some activists, represented real progress. Measures such as a national database that would have kept corrupt cops from securing jobs in other jurisdictions, a national ban on choke holds, or a new legal standard that would make it easier to pursue claims against police—all on the table at one point or another—would have saved lives.

2020 FAILED TO PRODUCE the balance between moral clarity and policy complexity that might have led to durable gains. And so infighting flourished while momentum faded. The money (such as it was) dried up, and 2020 did not produce the changed nation so many wanted.

Working within systems may not be enough. But those who walk away from the table in service of a sense of moral purity are often leaving lives in the balance. To outlast the backlash and achieve more than symbolic gains, both vision and progress are required—even if the progress is unsatisfying. So, how do we honor the spirit of 2020 without losing hope when the progress is slow to materialize?

The first step is recognizing that progress cannot be sustained by moral clarity alone. To be clear, the language that engages communities is a necessary ingredient to progress. Lasting solutions, however, require both that clarity that inspires action and the knowledge of how systems work.

The second step is understanding that moral clarity is not the enemy of complexity. We do not have to abandon a bold vision of the type of society we want to live in—but we do have to ground our long-term demands in work that ensures they lead to substantive change. People who dreamed of going to Mars do not call NASA traitors for landing on the moon. Nor should positive changes to public safety be maligned for being too small or working within systems that should not exist. The systems do exist. And if we want to save lives, we cannot walk away from every table that does not feature our preferred moral centerpiece.

The third step is abandoning the idea that justice is a single achievement—a moon landing, one legislative win, one landmark court ruling, one budget reallocation that will fix everything. Justice is not a single scheme. It is not a destination. It is a sustained effort, something that must be secured over and over again. Insufficient gains are still gains. While legislation documenting habitually abusive police is not enough, neither is it meaningless.

We do not launch rockets once and say that space has been conquered. We keep building. We reach for new frontiers. Those striving for progress must attempt the same. Every victory is a step, not the final destination. We do not get to rest long. We do not aim to be permanently satisfied. We win a battle, then we get back to work. Because, as history keeps reminding us, the moment we stop pushing upward is the moment gravity starts pulling us down.

Solomon is the Carl I. Hovland Professor of African American Studies and Psychology at Yale. He is co-founder and CEO of the Center for Policing Equity

A Q&A WITH BASKETBALL STARS MAYA MOORE AND CARMELO ANTHONY

WHEN NEWS BROKE OF GEORGE Floyd's murder, athletes across the sports world stepped up. They participated in walkouts and protests, signaled their support for Black Lives Matter, and engaged in conversation about creating racial equity. WNBA star Maya Moore was working to free family friend Jonathan Irons, who spent 23 years in prison for a crime he did not commit, and used her platform to talk about the need for change. (Moore and Irons eventually married.) Meanwhile, Carmelo Anthony helped create the Social Change Fund United, a philanthropic effort to invest in organizations that support people of color. Five years later, the former basketball stars—both class of 2025 inductees of the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame—reflect on that period in separate interviews and share insights about how sports can inspire younger generations to lead.

The sports world was one of the first industries that reckoned with what happened to George Floyd. What do you remember about that moment? Carmelo Anthony: I think we understood the power of athletes' voices. We had the opportunity to connect and stand side by side with one single message. The NBA did a good job of getting behind the players and allowing us to lead.

Maya Moore: Different athletes displayed their humanity during the season in different ways that I feel like was super powerful and important because sports figures are so seen in American culture—and we are human beings. You're going to see the fullness of our humanity when we are honest about the pain and the grief that we're going through as a community. We're not just these plastic figurines that you watch on a screen.

Carmelo, you created the Social Change Fund United with Dwyane Wade and Chris Paul to invest in organizations fighting for long-term change. How important is providing the necessary funding toward the advancement of racial equity?

Anthony: It's imperative because the organizations that we support are the boots on the ground. They're the ones who are fighting the fight on a daily basis. It's definitely important that we invest in organizations that advocate for the Black community and for people who actually own the work. Those are the people that we want to support, the frontline people.

Maya, you've been a proponent of racial equity for a long time, despite the threat of losing sponsorships. How hard is it for you to push for change when you have such a large platform?

Moore: My perspective was that I was never driven by my platform. As I got to know Jonathan, I was just learning so much from my friendship with him before I started to really publicly speak about our journey and what I was learning. So I think when you live something authentically, you have more confidence and courage to speak regardless of what other people think, because you know that you're living a real life, doing really

good work. I think more brands and businesses are becoming holistic and understanding you can't last if you're going to dehumanize people.

What is bolstering your fight?

Moore: It's always going to come down to individual communities taking responsibility for each other. We, as the Minnesota Lynx, were saying, "Hey, this is our community. We are connected." No matter what color you are, no matter what your background is, where your feet are—that's your community.

Do you feel like you have an obligation to be a role model?

Anthony: It's how I was taught, how I learned. It was having role models like Muhammad Ali and Malcolm X, and guys like Joe Louis and Nelson Mandela. Those are the people that I've studied and read—how they moved and just how they are as activists. Especially a lot of the athletes who really stood up like Bill Russell and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar.

What would you say to young people who want to follow in your footsteps?

Moore: I would say do your best to learn from those who've gone before you. And continue to use your voice as thoughtfully as you can, to describe the world that you're in and what you see. Be selective and be as informed and humble as you can. Try to resist the temptation to be a product over a person. Your humanity is first. **Anthony:** This is the moment for athletes to actually embrace change. There's a lot of change that's happening in sports, in life, and in the universe. I would tell them to just embrace that change, and use their creativity and voices to keep moving things forward, whether it's in the Black community or in any community. —Rachel Sonis



Bearing Witness

THE ARTIST PERSPECTIVE ON PROGRESS

THE U.S. HAS A LONG history of police brutality against Black and brown people. But in the early 2010s, as camera phones and social media became more ubiquitous, images of this violence spread across the country and around the world. These visuals were essential in starting conversations and in launching the global Black Lives Matter movement. Crucially, they also highlighted the systemic abuse of Black bodies, which have all too often been reduced to symbols of crime, death, and hatred, further perpetuating harmful stereotypes. In the wake of the tragic losses of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown Jr., Breonna Taylor,

George Floyd, and others, artists have looked for ways to spotlight humanity that is frequently overlooked and to awaken compassion in society at large. Here, we present six carefully selected pieces that touch upon the climate of racial injustice in the U.S. In one, artist Carrie Mae Weems presents a stark image of her hometown of Portland, Ore., during a protest; in another, photographer Mikael Owunna presents an iridescent man in motion as a way of capturing the "boundless possibility of Black life." We asked each of the artists to reflect on their work and share how their perspective has changed in the years since they created it.

Carrie Mae Weems

My 2021 series Painting the Town was made after a visit to my hometown of Portland, Ore. During the massive demonstrations in reaction to the murder of George Floyd, protesters wrote texts on the panels that shopkeepers had used to board up their windows as a precautionary measure against looting. The authorities then rendered the slogans illegible by covering them with large patches of black, brown, and gray paint. As is often the case, I used these images to explore what it means to be a witness to an ongoing history of violence. At first glance, the photographs resemble abstract paintings, but in fact, they represent the unintended consequence of governmental censorship.

Amid the uprising, I felt glimmers of hope, but these days, with daily decrees dropping from the White House denouncing DEI, I find myself back where I started, asking why Black life doesn't matter.

Cornell Watson

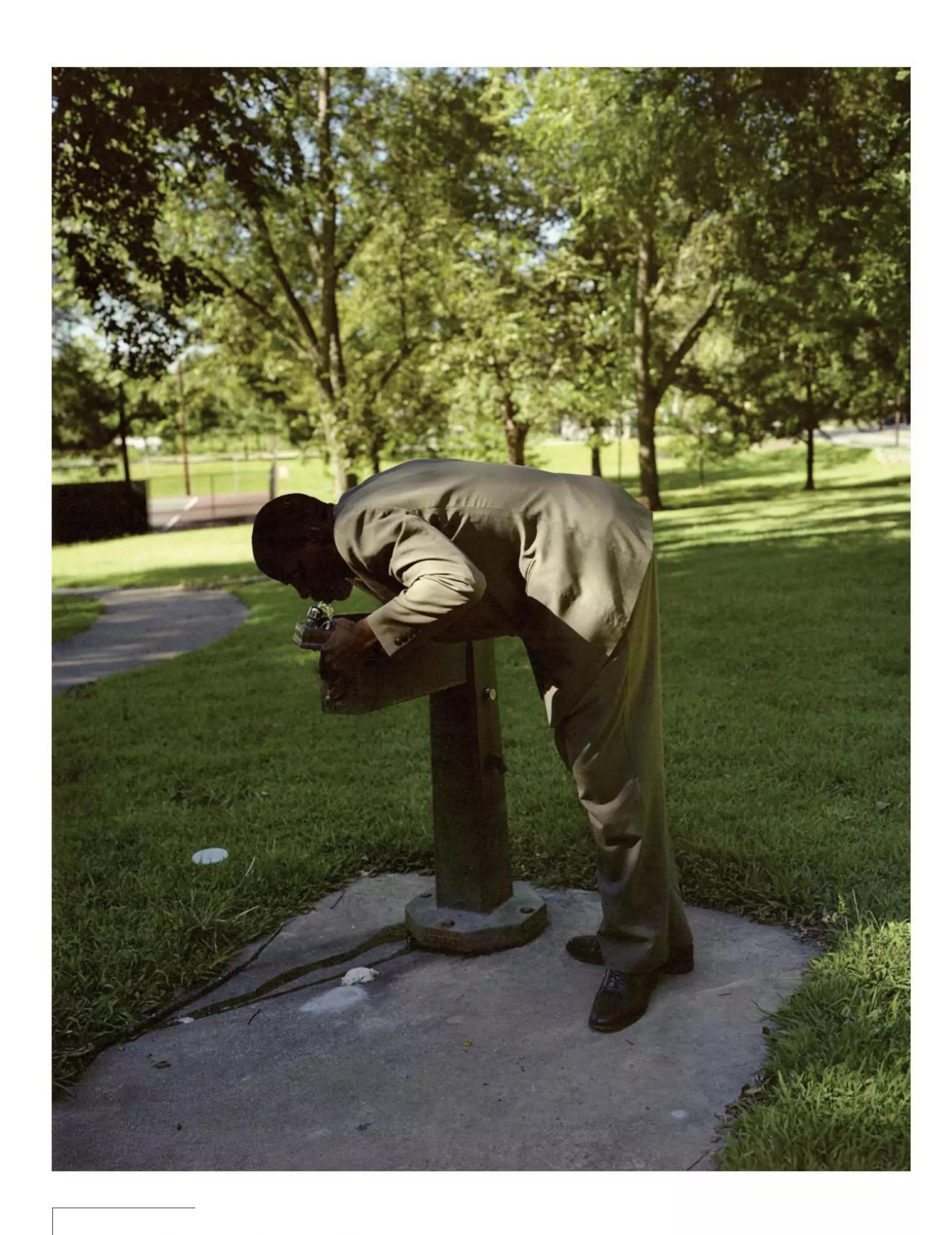
The idea for this photo came after listening to a friend describe the Black experience days after police murdered George Floyd. In a year when Breonna Taylor was also murdered by police and Ahmaud Arbery was killed by a white mob, my friend, like many Black people, was overwhelmed by America's racism and the thought of raising his two Black boys in it. On July 4, 2020,

I made this photo to illustrate the drowning sensation of being submerged in America's racial violence on Black bodies.

Five years later, police reform policies have been dismantled, Black Lives Matter murals are being scrubbed, and DEI is public enemy No. 1. The symbolism of this photo is just as relevant today, if not more than it was in 2020.







Alex Christopher Williams

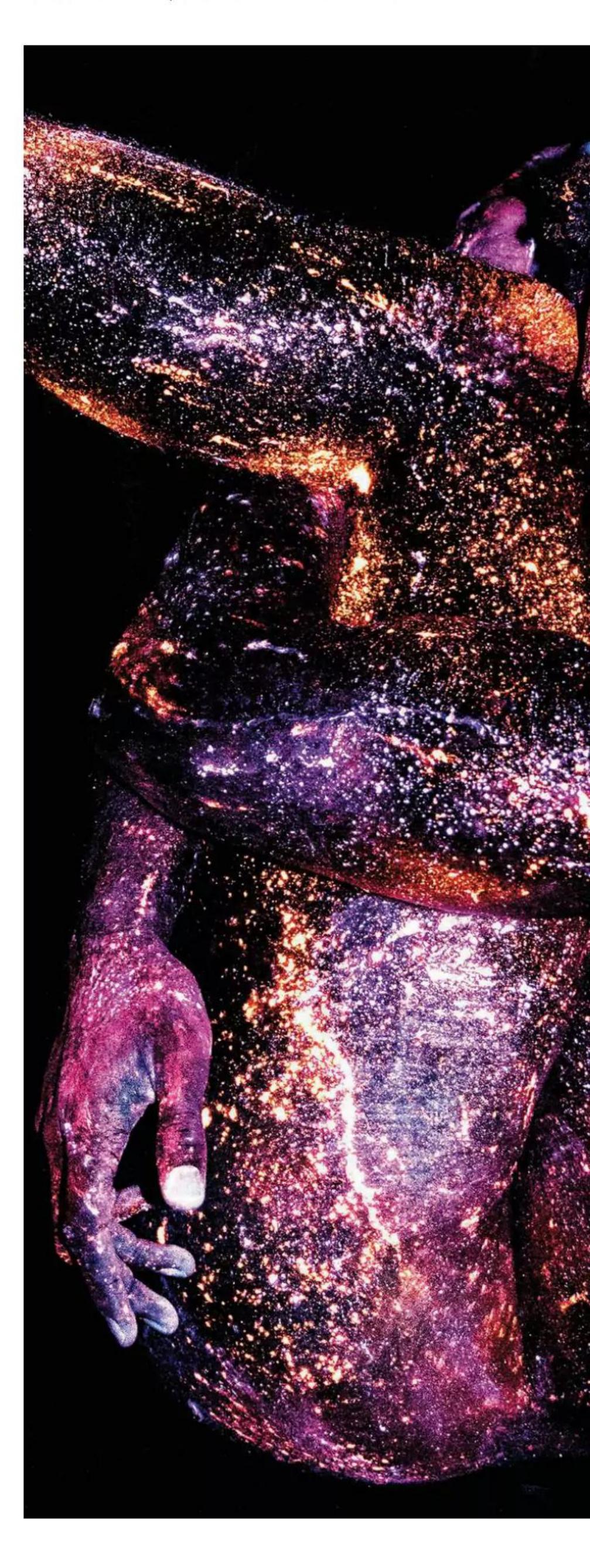
It was Atlanta's summer heat and unbearable humidity that brought me to meet this man and his two sons at the water fountain in August 2015. He shared with me how he walked his children to school each morning in a respectable outfit before changing into work clothes at his construction job. It was important for him to educate his sons on how to carry themselves in public, and that dressing and carrying themselves with respect would garner respect from others. He led by example. I was truly struck by this man's

dedication to being a good father and asked to photograph him as he was.

The image of this man was every father to me, a man who did what he had to do to protect his young boys and ensure their success. Ten years later, now a father myself, I am reminded of how these small gestures—acts of protection, lessons in dignity—are acts of resistance. In a world where so many young Black boys have lost their lives simply moving through it, this father's presence and care hold even greater weight.

Mikael Owunna

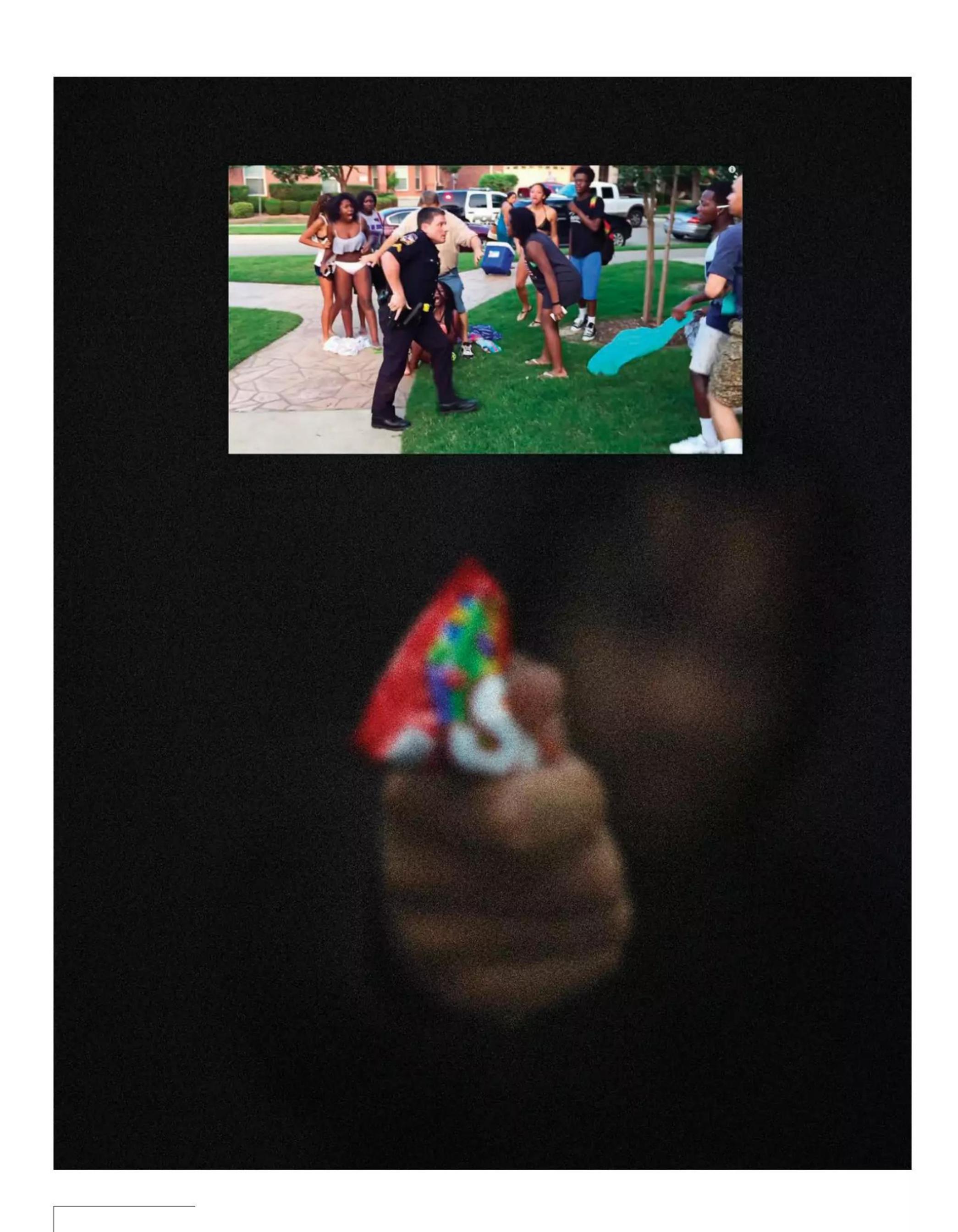
When I set out to make Infinite Essence in 2017, I wanted to articulate the beauty, majesty, and boundless possibility of Black life in the face of relentless violence. During this shoot, I vividly remember the hush that fell over our small crew the moment the model emerged from the blackness, shimmering with the painted constellations. We had spent hours meticulously painting the body in the dark, referencing cosmic lineages from Dogon cosmology like Amma's womb, merging past, present, and future. With each brushstroke, I felt a sense of rever-



ence, as if we were channeling an ancestral force. With the click of my ultraviolet camera flash, we saw the Black body transformed into a vessel of cosmic life.

Now, after everything that has happened since George Floyd's murder and the collective mobilization that followed, this image has gained a new resonance for me. The spiritual dimension—evoked by *Amma's Womb*—reminds us that within Blackness lies a sacred space where we can imagine futures rooted in love and dignity.





André Ramos-Woodard

I had an intense urge to make what would become WEAPON in the middle of the night in June 2019. I went to my studio at around midnight to execute it, but to my surprise, the outside of the building was littered with cops. Now, even though I know I had done nothing wrong, I couldn't help but feel like the cops were going to bust up in my studio and arrest me for making a piece that calls them out on their racial wrongdoings. It took me over an hour to create the piece because

I kept stopping to look outside and make sure nothing crazy was happening.

For a moment in 2020 it seemed like there was some hope for progress, but now it seems like the need to stand up to cops and the prison industrial complex has dissipated. That's why work like this will always be important—we as working-class people should be standing together against [police], against ICE, and against the 1%.



Name: Jimmie Lee Jackson Place: Mack's Café, Marion, Ala.

Date: Feb. 18, 1965



Place: Sedgwick Houses, the Bronx

Date: Oct. 29, 1984



Name: Anthony Dwain Lee

Place: 9701 Yoakum Drive, Beverly Hills,

Date: Oct. 28, 2000



Name: Ronald Madison and James Brissette Place: Danziger Bridge (U.S. 90), New Orleans

Date: Sept. 4, 2005



Name: Oscar Grant III

Place: Fruitvale BART Station, Oakland, Calif.

Date: Jan. 1, 2009



Name: Aiyana Stanley-Jones Place: 4054 Lillibridge St., Detroit

Date: May 16, 2010



Name: Jordan West-Morson

Place: Eight Mile and Gratiot Avenue, Detroit

Date: May 1, 2013



Name: Eric Garner

Place: 202 Bay St., Staten Island, N.Y.

Date: July 17, 2014



Name: Christopher Anderson

Place: Highland Park Hospital, Highland Date: Nov. 3, 2014



Calif.

Name: Henry Glover

Place: Miss. River Levee (body found), New Orleans

Date: Sept. 2, 2005





Name: Ramarley Graham

Place: 749 East 229th St., the Bronx

Date: Feb. 2, 2012



Park, III. Place: Cudell Rec

Place: Cudell Recreation Center, Cleveland

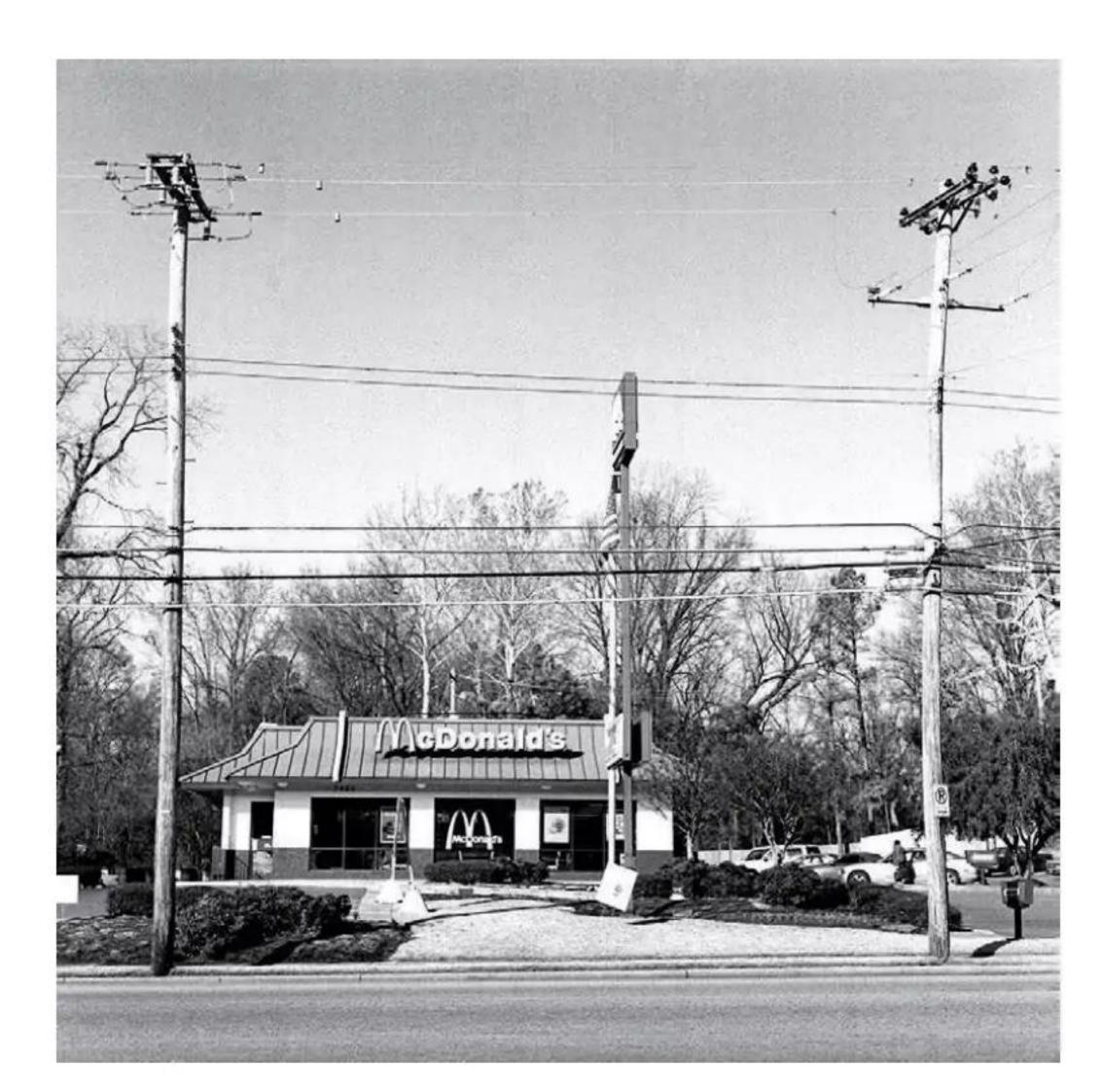
Date: Nov. 22, 2014



Name: Danny Brumfield Sr.

Place: Convention Center Boulevard, New Orleans

Date: Sept. 3, 2005



Name: Charles Livingston III

Place: 2062 Frayser Blvd., Memphis

Date: Dec. 27, 2012



Name: Meagan Hockaday

Place: 500 block West Vineyard Avenue, Oxnard, Calif.

Date: March 28, 2015



I began Where It Happened in 2014 to process the pain of Mike Brown's death and help others understand the history of violent policing in America by documenting where 58 people of color [16 shown here] were killed by law-enforcement officers. I knew the story of Jimmie Lee Jackson and decided to research murders of Black men by police officers. The scope of my project evolved to be inclusive of all people of color killed by police. While doing research for this project, I found a disparity between the many news articles and police reports—a testament to the lack of standards around disseminating information after fatal police encounters.

Looking back, I often think about why I expanded the project. I was terrified of betraying the victims by conflating their stories. I was just beginning to understand the intersectionality of oppression. Racial profiling, policing, and incarceration target Black people; but systems of white supremacy negatively impact us all.





ROMULUS AND REMUS ARE DOING WHAT PUPPIES DO:

chasing, tussling, nipping, nuzzling. But there's something very un-puppylike about the snowy white 6-month-olds—their size, for starters. They already measure nearly 4 ft. long, tip the scales at 80 lb., and could grow to 6 ft. and 150 lb. Then there's their behavior: the angelic exuberance puppies exhibit in the presence of humans—trotting up for belly rubs and kisses—is completely absent. They keep their distance, retreating if a person approaches. Even one of the handlers who raised them from birth can get only so close before Romulus and Remus flinch and retreat. This isn't domestic canine behavior, this is wild lupine behavior: the pups are wolves. Not only that, they're dire wolves—which means they have cause to be lonely.

The dire wolf once roamed an American range that extended as far south as Venezuela and as far north as Canada, but not a single one has been seen in over 10,000 years, since the species went extinct. Plenty of dire wolf remains have been discovered across the Americas, however, and that presented an opportunity for a company named Colossal Biosciences.

Relying on deft genetic engineering and ancient, preserved DNA, Colossal scientists deciphered the dire wolf genome, rewrote the genetic code of the common gray wolf to match it, and, using domestic dogs as surrogate mothers, brought Romulus, Remus, and their sister, 2-month-old Khaleesi, into the world in three separate births last fall and this winter—effectively for the first time de-extincting a line of beasts whose live gene pool long ago vanished. TIME met the males (Khaleesi was not present because of her young age) at a fenced field in a U.S. wildlife facility on March 24, on the condition that their location remain a secret to protect the animals.

The dire wolf isn't the only animal that Colossal, which was founded in 2021 and currently employs 130 scientists, wants to bring back. Also on its de-extinction wish list is the woolly mammoth, the dodo, and the thylacine, or Tasmanian tiger. Already, in March, the company surprised the science community with the news that it had copied mammoth DNA to create a woolly mouse, a chimeric critter with the long, golden coat and accelerated fat metabolism of the mammoth.

If all this seems to smack of P.T. Barnum, the company has a reply. Colossal claims that the same techniques it uses to summon back species from the dead could prevent existing but endangered animals from slipping into extinction themselves. What they learn restoring the mammoth, for example, they say, could help them engineer more robust elephants that can better survive the climatic ravages of a warming

world. Techniques learned restoring the dire wolf can similarly be used to support the endangered red wolf.

"We are an evolutionary force at this point," says Beth Shapiro, Colossal's chief science officer, speaking of humanity as a whole. "We are deciding what the future of these species will be." The Center for Biological Diversity suggests that 30% of the planet's genetic diversity will be lost by 2050, and Shapiro and Colossal CEO Ben Lamm insist that genetic engineering is a vital tool to reverse this. Company executives often frame the technology as a moral imperative—a way for humans, who have driven so many species to the brink of extinction, to get square with nature. "We should be giving ourselves the opportunity," says Shapiro, "to see what our big brains can do to reverse some of the bad things that we've done to the world."

But not everyone agrees. Scientific history is rife with examples of newly introduced species becoming invasive

species—the doctrine of unintended consequences biting humans when we played too cute with other animals. An exotic pet escapes and multiplies, decimating native species. A toad brought in to kill off beetles ends up killing off the marsupials that eat the toads. And genetic engineering is still a nascent field. Nearly 30 years after Dolly the sheep was cloned, the technology still produces problems in cloned animals, such as large birth size, organ defects, premature aging, and immune-system problems.

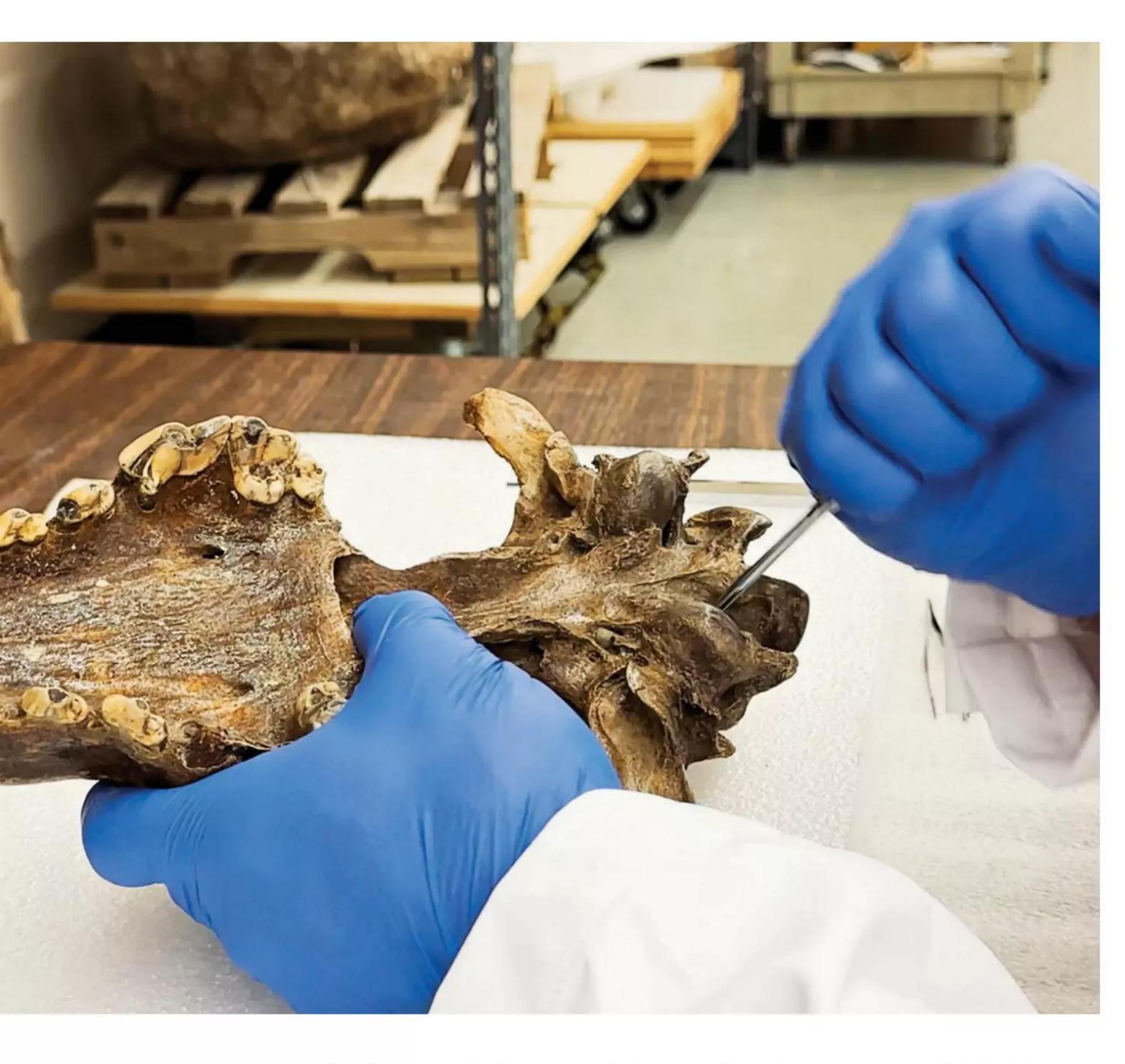
What's more, cloning can be hard on the surrogate mother that gestates the cloned embryo. "There's a risk of death. There's a risk of side effects that are severe," says Robert Klitzman, director of the bioethics master's program at Columbia University. "There's a lot of suffering involved in that. There are going to be miscarriages."

Still, Colossal's scientists believe they are on to something powerful. Matt James, the company's chief animal officer, felt the significance of the science when Romulus and Remus were just 5 or 6 weeks old. The staff was weighing the pups, and a veterinary tech began singing a song from *The Little Mermaid*. Romulus and Remus began howling in response.

"For me," James says, "it was sort of a shocking, chilling moment." These pups were the first to produce a howl that hadn't been heard on earth in over 10,000 years.

IT TAKES SURPRISINGLY FEW genetic changes to spell the difference between a living species and an extinct one. Like other canids, a wolf has about 19,000 genes. Creating the dire wolves called for making just 20 edits in 14 genes in the common gray wolf, but those tweaks gave rise to a host of differences, including Romulus' and Remus' white coat, larger size, more powerful shoulders, wider head, larger teeth and





SCIENTISTS
EXTRACT DNA
SAMPLES FROM AN
ANCIENT DIRE WOLF
PETROUS BONE

pups. In each mother, one embryo took hold and proceeded to a full-term pregnancy. (No dogs experienced a miscarriage or stillbirth.) On Oct. 1, 2024, the surrogates birthed Romulus and Remus. A few months later, Colossal repeated the procedure with another clutch of embryos and another surrogate mother. On Jan. 30, 2025, that dog gave birth to Khaleesi.

All three wolves were born by planned cesarean section to minimize the risk of birthing complications, and fed from the surrogate for a few days, after which the Colossal team removed them and bottle-fed them because the surrogate was actually becoming too attentive—disrupting the pups' regular sleeping and feeding schedules. They were weaned at eight weeks and have been living the lives of healthy young dire wolves since then.

"The idea that we could just take a vial of blood, isolate EPCs, culture them, and clone from them, and they have a pretty high cloning efficiency,

we think it's a game changer," says George Church, Colossal co-founder and professor of genetics at both Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The less invasive process will make the procedure easier on animals, and the fact that Colossal's methods worked on this early go-round boosts company confidence that it is on track for much broader de-extinction and rewilding.

Since their births, the dire wolves have lived on a 2,000-acre ecological preserve at a location in the U.S. that Colossal also keeps secret to protect the animals; the grounds are much larger than the relatively small enclosure TIME visited. The 2,000 acres are surrounded by a 10-ft. fence and include a smaller, six-acre site with a veterinary clinic, an extreme-weather shelter, and natural dens where the wolves can satisfy their innate desire for a secure retreat. A staff of veterinarians looks out for the animals around the clock. The wolves are fed a diet of beef, horse, and deer meat as well as liver and other offal, along with puppy chow to provide vital nutrients.

"I think they are the luckiest animals ever," says Shapiro. "They will live their entire life on this ecological reserve, where they have all sorts of space. These animals were hand reared. They're not capable of living in the wild, and we want to study them and understand how these edits might have modified things that we can't predict. They're not going to be able to get a splinter without us finding out." So far, nothing worrisome or unexpected has turned up in the wolves.

THE EFFORT TO PRODUCE a woolly mammoth is on something of a tight schedule. The woolly mice gestated fast, popping out into the world after a pregnancy of 20 days. The wolf pups took just 65 days to bake. Asian elephants—the extinct

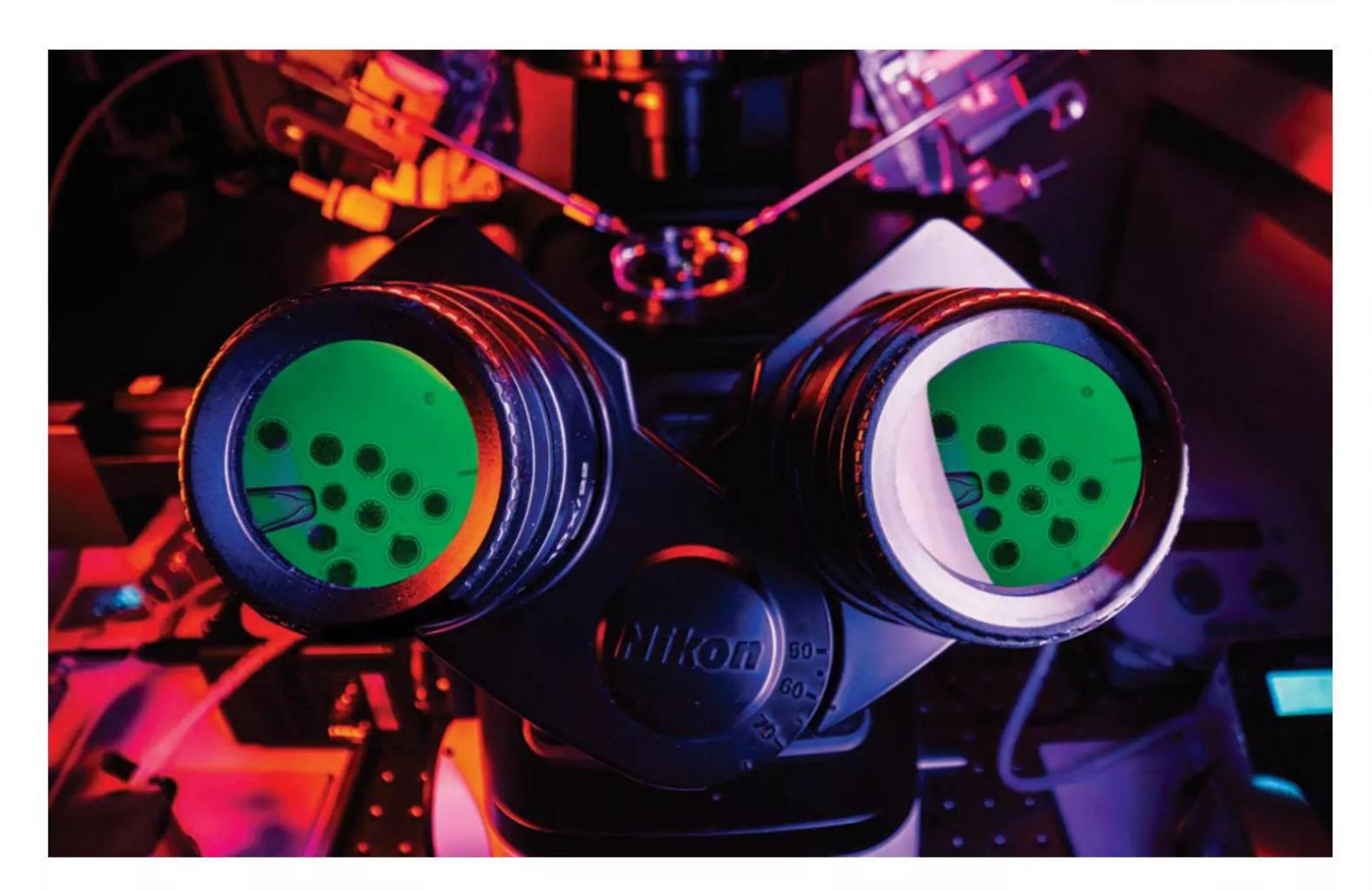
jaws, more muscular legs, and characteristic vocalizations, especially howling and whining.

The dire wolf genome analyzed to determine what those changes were was extracted from two ancient samples—one a 13,000-year-old tooth found in Sheridan Pit, Ohio, the other a 72,000-year-old ear bone unearthed in American Falls, Idaho. The samples were lent by the museums that house them. The lab work that followed was painstaking.

Cloning typically requires snipping a tissue sample from a donor animal and then isolating a single cell. The nucleus of that cell—which contains all of the animal's DNA—is then extracted and inserted into an ovum whose own nucleus has been removed. That ovum is allowed to develop into an embryo and then implanted in a surrogate mother's womb. The baby that results from that is an exact genetic duplicate of the original donor animal. This is the way the first cloned animal, Dolly, was created in 1996. Since then, pigs, cats, deer, horses, mice, goats, gray wolves, and more than 1,500 dogs have been cloned using the same technology.

Colossal's dire wolf work took a less invasive approach, isolating cells not from a tissue sample of a donor gray wolf, but from its blood. The cells they selected are known as endothelial progenitor cells (EPCs), which form the lining of blood vessels. The scientists then rewrote the 14 key genes in the cell's nucleus to match those of the dire wolf; no ancient dire wolf DNA was actually spliced into the gray wolf's genome. The edited nucleus was then transferred into a denucleated ovum. The scientists produced 45 engineered ova, which were allowed to develop into embryos in the lab. Those embryos were inserted into the wombs of two surrogate hound mixes, chosen mostly for their overall health and, not insignificantly, their size, since they'd be giving birth to large

COLOSSAL'S
LASER-ASSISTED
SOMATIC CELL
NUCLEAR
TRANSFER SYSTEM





woolly mammoth's closest surviving kin—require 22 months, the longest gestation period of any mammal.

And this genetic transformation will involve even more than the one that created the wolves. "We're now talking about 85 different genes, and some of those will have multiple [functions]," says Lamm. The company says it has so far edited 25 of those genes, and is "on track for our embryos to be ready for implantation by the end of 2026," to meet its goal of a calf being born in 2028.

No matter how the resulting woolly baby might look, Colossal admits that in some respects it will be a mammoth in name only. "They're elephant surrogates that have some mammoth DNA to make them re-create core characteristics belonging to mammoths," says Shapiro. But that might be a distinction without a difference. If it looks like a mammoth and behaves like a mammoth and, if given the opportunity to breed with another engineered elephant with mammoth-mimicking DNA, produces a baby mammoth, it's hard to say that the species hasn't been brought back from the dead. "Our mammoths and dire wolves are mammoths and dire wolves by that definition," says Shapiro. "They have the key traits that make that lineage of organisms distinct."

The question then becomes what to do with the mammoth you've made once it's at large in the world—a question that bedevils all of Colossal's work. Shapiro might not be wrong when she says Romulus, Remus, and Khaleesi are lucky, at least in terms of the care they will receive throughout their lives, but those lives will also be limited. Wolf packs can, on occasion, be as small as two members, but typically include 15 or more. The animals' hunting territory can range anywhere from 50 to 1,000 sq. mi. Against that, Colossal's three dire wolves spending their entire lives in a 2,000-acre preserve could be awfully lonely and claustrophobic—not at all the way wild dire wolves would live their lives.

Already, the wolves are exhibiting behaviors that would serve them well in the wild but do little for them in

semicaptivity. They began howling when they were just 2 weeks old, and early on began stalking—hunting leaves or anything that moved. "We have not seen them attempt to hunt any live prey, and we do not provide live prey," says Paige McNickle, Colossal's manager of animal husbandry. "But if I were a deer I would stay away from their preserve."

The pups also exhibited wolflike caution, running to hide in dark places if they were surprised or alarmed. "From day one they have always behaved like wolves and have rarely shown doglike behavior," says McNickle. So far, the wolves have never menaced any humans, but a risk does exist. "Our protocols ensure that people are never in a situation where the wolves might be frightened or become aggressive toward their caretakers," she says.

Whether later dire wolves Colossal might create can ever live beyond the preserve is open to question. Rick McIntyre, a retired wolf researcher with the U.S. National Park Service and a Colossal adviser, warns that dire wolves vanished in the first place because they were specialized hunters, preying on huge animals like the mammoth and the 3,500-lb. Ice Age bison. When those beasts died out, so did dire wolves.

"My guess is that they specialized in dealing with the very large megafauna of the Ice Age, whereas I would say that gray wolves are a bit more of a generalist," says McIntyre. "We see gray wolves catch voles, ground squirrels, marmots, all the way up to the 2,000-lb. bull bison. A general principle in wildlife is that it's good to be flexible. The more that you specialize, that can hurt you in the long run."

The mammoth creates even greater challenges. Elephants are exceedingly intelligent, exceedingly social creatures, gathering in herds of up to 25 individuals. In the wild, the animals will travel up to 40 to 125 miles in a day in search of food and water. No one knows if mammoths would exhibit the same social and exploratory needs, but if they do, confining one or even a few individuals to an enclosure like the dire wolves' would amount to a sort of near-solitary confinement.

ROMULUS AND REMUS
BEGAN EXHIBITING
THE UNIQUE DIRE
WOLF HOWL AT
ABOUT 2 WEEKS OLD





"I really feel that bringing back one or even five woolly mammoths is not a good idea," says Stephen Latham, director of the Interdisciplinary Center for Bioethics at Yale University. "A single woolly mammoth is not a woolly mammoth leading a mammoth life with a mammoth herd."

announced that it had cloned four red wolves. Once common across the U.S. Southeast, red wolves began dying out because of habitat loss and predator-control programs that targeted the animal for elimination. In the 1960s, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service introduced a captive-breeding program to save the species and preserve the role it plays in the larger ecosystem: keeping populations of deer in check,

been carrying what researchers refer to as "ghost alleles"—or red wolf gene variations that did not show up in the wolves' color, size, or shape. Recently, Bridgett vonHoldt, a Colossal scientific adviser and an associate professor of ecology and evolutionary biology at Princeton University, and Kristin Brzeski, an associate professor of wildlife science and conservation at Michigan Tech, discovered populations of canids along the coasts of Louisiana and Texas whose DNA included both coyote genes and red wolf ghost alleles. The four red wolves the Colossal scientists created used that natural genetic reservoir to produce what they call the first Ghost Wolf, with an eye to eventually fortifying the red wolf species with more such young carrying a variety of genes.

The cloned red wolves now live in a separate fenced area

'THESE EDITS MIGHT HAVE MODIFIED THINGS THAT WE CAN'T PREDICT.' -BETH SHAPIRO, COLOSSAL CHIEF SCIENCE OFFICER

which prevents them from overgrazing, as well as controlling populations of smaller prey like raccoons and opossums, which menace native birds. Ultimately, the program produced 250 individuals, released mainly in North Carolina, but today fewer than 20 survive, most of the others having been claimed by poaching and car strikes.

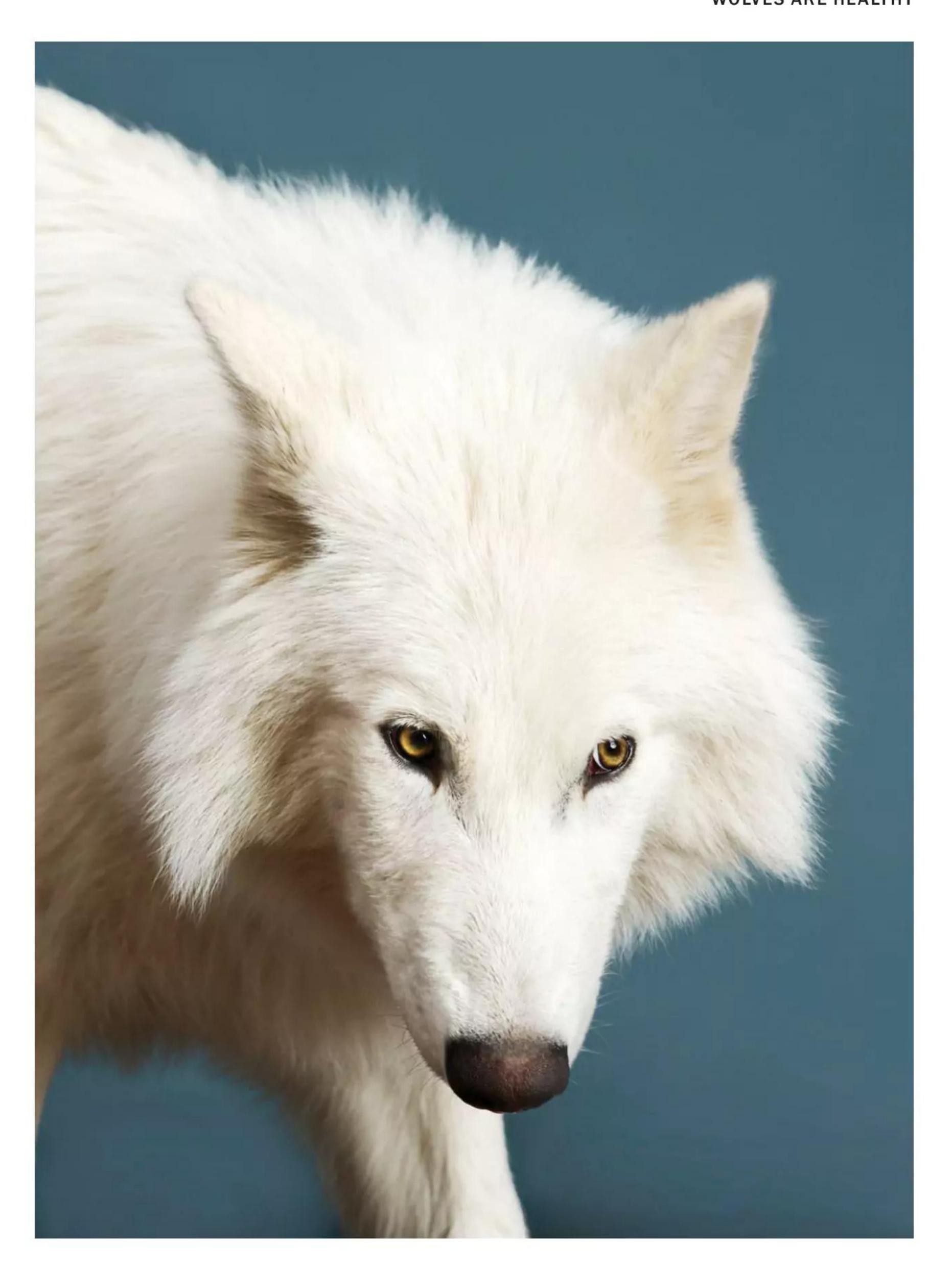
With so few individuals remaining, the species suffers from what is known as a "genetic bottleneck," a lack of diversity in the genome that can lead to infertility and inherited birth defects. What is needed is a way to refresh the gene line with new DNA.

In the days before advanced genomics, conservationists identified all species—including the red wolf—principally by their phenotype, or appearance. Plenty of wolves that did not fit the right size or color for the red wolf might have

within the same 2,000-acre preserve as the dire wolves. Like Romulus, Remus, and Khaleesi, they will spend their lives there and not be rewilded. But later red wolves might be, as Colossal learns more about the clones' health and fitness. The company says it's in advanced discussions with the state of North Carolina about "conservation tools that can be used to help rescue the red wolf and accelerate its recovery."

"It's the lost genetics of the world's most endangered wolf," says James. "And we now have the opportunity to use our cloning and genetic-engineering tools to be able to confer that genetic diversity back into the recovery of the species."

So far, Colossal has mostly successes on its tote board. No animals have yet been rewilded, and though the woolly mouse and dire wolves are the first edited animals that have come from the labs, both represent progress. Still, scientists



not affiliated with the company stress that genetic engineering is head-crackingly complex, and all manner of unintended downstream consequences can occur when you start mucking around in the engine room of the cells.

"There's a phenomenon called pleiotropy in which one gene has an effect on more than one trait," says Alison van Eenennaam, professor of animal biotechnology and genetics at the University of California, Davis. "That's true for many, many, many genes. There could be some genes they're targeting for specific traits that have effects that are not compatible with survival."

Even if Colossal gets the gene editing right, the business of gestating the desired young could present other obstacles. Cloning of livestock still results in more misses than hits. "You get high rates of perinatal and pregnancy loss," says van Eenennaam.

Colossal scientists are pressing ahead nonetheless, and the company is thriving in an adaptive niche of its own—not just

as a scientific enterprise, but as a formidable business. It has reached decacorn status, currently valued at \$10.2 billion, and Lamm sees plenty of commercial potential in the technologies his scientific team is developing.

The company does not have the field to itself—even if it is currently the most conspicuous player. Revive & Restore, a California-based conservation organization, provides funding for projects worldwide involving de-extinction, increasing biodiversity, and saving endangered species. Another group, Rewilding Europe, is providing support to scientists working to preserve and restore species across the European continent, including the bearded vulture, the Iberian lynx, the marbled polecat, the imperial eagle, and the auroch—the extinct ancestor of domestic cattle. But they are small compared with Colossal. In 2024, Rewilding Europe disbursed 20 million euros to support rewilding efforts across Europe. Revive & Restore, founded in 2012, has so far raised \$40 million to support similar conservation efforts. Lamm sees both groups as partners rather than competitors in the shared goal of conservation.

Romulus, Remus, and Khaleesi, of course, are going about their young lives unaware of the groundbreaking science behind their births and the promise they represent. During TIME's visit, Romulus and Remus gamboled about their enclosure, gnawing on bark they had found on the ground while keeping a discreet distance from the gawking humans.

Whether they or other dire wolves Colossal might produce will be allowed to mate and spawn a next generation of wolves naturally is not yet known. Handlers can monitor the female estrous cycles and separate the animals

at key times or employ contraceptive implants that keep the wolves from producing young until it is determined whether they have any abnormalities that could be passed on. The MHA Nation tribes (Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara) have expressed a desire to have dire wolves live on their lands in North Dakota, a possibility Colossal is studying.

If the company succeeds in its mission to save existing animals from extinction and restore ones that walked the world well before the rise of the humans, Romulus, Remus, and Khaleesi will be long remembered. One species, our own, is increasingly crowding out the millions of others that call the planet home, and Colossal is working to claim the power to reverse that—at least a little.

"I think of that famous Teddy Roosevelt quote," says James, paraphrasing the 26th President. "In the moment of any choice, the first thing to do is the right thing. The next thing to do is the wrong thing. The worst thing to do is nothing at all."

Time Off



These are not words typically associated with Tina Fey, whose humor has a reputation for being brutal. But they all apply to *The Four Seasons*, a new Netflix dramedy series co-created by and starring Fey that follows three apparently settled middle-aged couples through a year of upheaval. Absent are the absurd characters, rapid-fire jokes, and dryly pessimistic social commentary with which Fey made her name on *Saturday Night Live*, and that have defined her career, from *Mean Girls* to 30 *Rock*. In their place is a moving depiction of marriage and friendship among Gen X empty nesters.

A partial explanation for the shift in tone is that *The Four Seasons* wasn't entirely conceived by Fey and her collaborators, Lang Fisher (*Never Have I Ever*) and Tracey Wigfield (*Great News*). It's based on writer-director-star Alan Alda's 1981 film of the same name—an urbane boxoffice hit that has since been overshadowed by quintessentially '80s rom-coms like *When Harry Met Sally*. As in Alda's version, the title refers to four seasonal group vacations (two half-hour episodes apiece in the series), each set to the appropriate Vivaldi concerto. Alongside a cast stacked with fellow A-listers Steve Carell and Colman Domingo, Fey plays Kate, a responsible, high-strung pragmatist married to a passive, philosophical man, Jack (*SNL* alum Will Forte); Carol Burnett and Alda originated the roles.

Fey is well aware that this all represents a left turn for her. In a recent appearance on her old friend and sometimes comedy partner Amy Poehler's podcast, *Good Hang*, she described it as "a very, very gentle program" whose reception she's curious to observe. So compassionate is her approach, in fact, that it casts the nearly three decades' worth of work that preceded it in a new light. Beneath the veneer of misanthropy and the din of controversy her perspective has often incited lies a more generous sensibility that was always present but is only now coming to the fore.

"AUTHENTICITY IS DANGEROUS and expensive," Fey counseled Bowen Yang in a 2024 interview for *Las Culturistas*, the podcast that the current *SNL* star co-hosts. Yang had gotten too famous, she said, to keep broadcasting blunt opinions on people with whom he might someday have to work. "Are you having a problem with *Saltburn*?" Fey asked. "Keep it to yourself. Because what are you going to do when Emerald Fennell calls you about her next project, where you play Carey Mulligan's co-worker in the bridal section of Harrods and then Act 3 takes a sexually violent turn and you have to pretend to be surprised by that turn?"

Both the substance of Fey's playful excoriation—that when you're a celebrity, anything you say can be used against you—and the fact that it went viral are telling. For most of her career, and certainly since her portrayal of the harried, unglamorous sketch-show head writer Liz Lemon in 30 Rock coincided with the rise of pop feminism in the late aughts, her every plot and utterance has been widely scrutinized. Tina Fey superfans may be legion, but she's also absorbed more than her share of misogyny as well as criticism for her button-pushing approach to identity politics.



From left: Marco Calvani, Colman Domingo, Tina Fey, and Will Forte in The Four Seasons

Plenty of the latter pushback has been not only justified, but necessary. Before the Black Lives Matter movement forced a reckoning in Hollywood, Fey made the poor decision to show white performers in blackface on 30 Rock. While the joke was always at the expense of an ignorant white character or a racist entertainment industry, context couldn't outweigh the images' hurtful impact. In 2020, she apologized and had those episodes pulled from streaming services.

Yet the hair-trigger sensitivities of audiences predisposed to judge Fey harshly have also fueled ridiculous backlashes. Following 2017's whitesupremacist rally in Charlottesville, the UVa alum caught flak for an SNL "Weekend Update" bit in which she jokingly urged viewers to drown their rage in cake instead of getting into fistfights with Nazis. No one watching in good faith could've mistaken her for excusing the marchers. (She even sneaked in unusually progressive opinions for broadcast TV: "It's not our country. We stole it from the Native Americans. And when they have a peaceful protest, at Standing Rock, we shoot at them with rubber bullets. But we let you chinless turds march





through the streets with semiautomatic weapons.") Nor was it hard to see she was playing an exaggeratedly naive version of herself. Still, she was self-critical enough to judge the segment as a failure. "If I had a time machine," she said on David Letterman's Netflix show My Next Guest Needs No Introduction, "I would end the piece by saying ... 'Fight [the Nazis] in every way except the way that they want."

When Fey gets in trouble, whether for legitimate or specious reasons, it's usually because her darkest humor is built atop a layer of cynicism about society—and Hollywood as a mirror of it—that isn't always easy to unearth. Viewers got that her acclaimed SNL portrayal of an airheaded Sarah Palin reflected the then VP candidate's pandering to a demographic that wanted women in politics to be "Caribou Barbie." But they sometimes missed that the stars of 30 Rock's show-within-ashow, Jenna Maroney and Tracy Jordan, embody certain awful stereotypes about white women and Black men not because Fey was saying they truly represented those groups but because showbiz rewards performers who reflect audiences' prejudices.

It's not hard to imagine why—at

this point in her prolific career, but also at this toxic moment for the cultural conversation—Fey might want a break from satire. (She has long been rumored to be a top candidate to run SNL should her mentor Lorne Michaels ever retire, but her disinclination to keep wrestling the zeitgeist makes it seem doubtful she'd want the job.) Indeed, she appears to be making an effort to avoid stress in her professional life. Her current comedy tour with Poehler reportedly finds the duo bantering in pajamas. She spoke on Good Hang about making time, after years of overwork, to "just be a person in this world and maybe, like, watch a program." In the same episode, Fey explained her approach to making The Four Seasons. "I worked hard to build it to be a really healthy set and really, like, humane hours," she said. "I was also extremely purposeful about bringing together people who I believed were good people who would not make any trouble for me."

THE DISPROPORTIONATE SHARE

of criticism Fey attracts is, in a way, a testament to how effectively she's caricatured herself over the years—as a schoolmarmish killjoy, a mousy prude, a blithely self-righteous white feminist—for an audience prone to conflating comedy with reality. She's copped to having been a "caustic" judge of her peers as a teen, but the characters she usually inhabits, onscreen and as a public persona, are, to borrow words Fey frequently uses herself, "square" and "obedient." A recent talking point has been her Enneagram personality test type: the Achiever.

Fey's character in *The Four Seasons* is a more grounded, sympathetic version of this uptight woman. Kate can micromanage her friend group and her marriage, but when she errs toward officiousness, it's because that's her way

For most of her career, Fey's every plot and utterance has been widely scrutinized

of caring for people. "You've gotta always be the good guy," she complains to Jack. "And that only leaves one other part." The series is similarly generous with other characters. The revelation that Carell's Nick plans to leave his wife Anne (Kerri Kenney-Silver) after a gathering for their 25th anniversary drives the plot, throwing off both the other two couples and the overall group dynamic. But Nick comes off as less of a jerk than he is in Alda's movie and more of a man struggling with his mortality. While Anne fades into the background of the film post-split, Fey goes to great, sometimes a bit clumsy lengths to honor the perspective of the jilted wife.

Where was she hiding this humanism, after years of depicting characters at their vain, stupid, oblivious worst? In plain sight, actually. There is no better indicator of a writer's worldview than how they end their stories. In that regard, Fey has always been sneakily optimistic. Mean Girls is often likened to the pitch-black high school satire Heathers, but Heathers concludes, after multiple murders, with its villain's suicide, while Mean Girls leaves us with a reformed queen bee and a utopian teenage social order. Whereas Seinfeld, another deadpan NBC sitcom about self-absorbed New Yorkers, notoriously condemned its characters to prison, 30 Rock let Liz finally have it all: the career, the baby, the hot husband. Fey's next big project, the Netflix comedy Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt, wrung humor out of an abused, traumatized kidnapping victim's adventures in a cruel city plagued by economic inequality. But and here the clue is right there in the title—Kimmy's tenacity won out.

The Four Seasons is probably not destined to become a classic like 30 Rock and Mean Girls; it offers neither the many madcap highs nor the occasional tone-deaf lows of Fey's best work. Still, it's a thoroughly enjoyable watch, one that reflects the wisdom and patience of age rather than the merciless genius of youth. Best of all, it reveals a hidden, humanizing dimension of the most fascinating character Tina Fey ever created: Tina Fey.

MOVIES

A man who can't make friends, played for laughs

BY STEPHANIE ZACHAREK

TIM ROBINSON, THE FORMER SATURDAY NIGHT Live writer and performer who now co-stars with Paul Rudd in the prickly cringe comedy Friendship, is probably a genius. Both here and in his popular Netflix sketch series I Think You Should Leave, he specializes in a kind of auteurist awkwardness, playing the zonked-out but subliminally angry guy who has precisely the wrong quip for every occasion, whose facial expressions never quite match the sentiments coming from his mouth, whose rubbery body language seems to follow rhythms beamed from another planet. I Think You Should Leave is theater of the absurd broken into small bites of aggro-humor: Robinson as a guy who gets caught looking at a "nude egg" on his work computer, as a witless nerd who asks his barber for a Bryan Cranston haircut and gets a springer spaniel 'do instead, as a low-rent stage performer who specializes in gentle Charlie Chaplin-style comedy, only to blow his top when frat boys heckle him at his shows. It makes little sense on paper, but Robinson creates a believable, if bizarre, microworld for each character. He's like Zippy the Pinhead for the modern age, a naive weirdo traveler out of step with the world.

But how much Tim Robinson is too much? Maybe the exact amount you get in Friendship, the feature debut of writer-director Andrew De-Young. Robinson stars as Craig Waterman, a regular suburban guy with a boring job, a charming florist wife who's losing interest in him (Kate Mara), and a teenage son (Jack Dylan Grazer) whose indifference borders on hostility. Craig slouches through the world in schlumpy mud-colored gear. The guys at work tolerate his misfit ways, but just barely. There's a vacuum in Craig's life, and he doesn't even know it—until groovy TV weatherman Austin Carmichael (Paul Rudd) moves into a house down the street and sends clear signals that he'd like to be Craig's friend. They meet, and talk a little, when Craig trundles over to drop off a misdelivered package. Austin's jaunty send-off— "Stay curious, Craig Waterman!"—puts a tentative spring in Craig's step.

The friendship takes off, thanks to Austin's congenial bravado, which Craig envies and seeks to imitate. Austin plays guitar in a punk band—it's not even that punky, but Craig thinks it's the coolest thing he's ever seen. Austin leads Craig on a late-night adventure through a twisty-turny



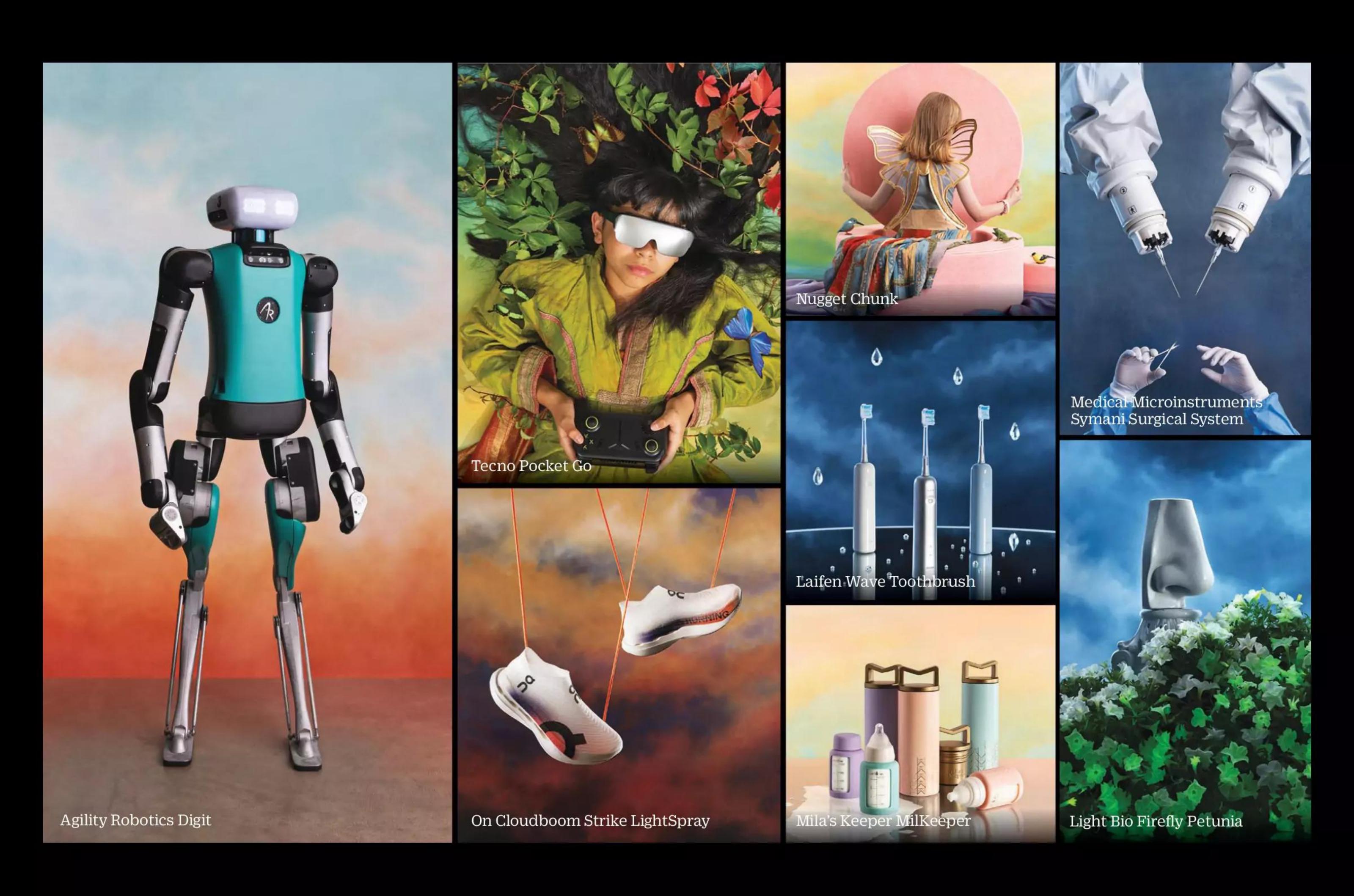
Robinson and Rudd, still riding the earlyfriendship high

Friendship
hinges on
the sad
truth that
it's hard
for men
to make
friends

aqueduct, ending up, illegally, in city hall afterhours. Austin doesn't even seem to register his witless neighbor's lack of social skills until Craig punches his lights out—supposedly in fun—during a guys' night get-together. That's the tipping point, and Austin breaks up the bromance, leaving Craig lost and angry and eager to prove himself as a cool dude worth hanging out with.

FRIENDSHIP HINGES on the sad truth that it's hard for men to make friends, which may be why the film's earliest scenes—in which Austin expresses genuine interest in hanging out with Craig, his social ineptitude more a curiosity than a liability—work best. At first, Austin either doesn't notice or doesn't care how maladroit Craig is, and that challenges us to see him in a similar light, as a sweet but goofy guy who just doesn't know how to buy pants that fit right. But as Craig's desperation escalates, Robinson becomes less funny and more wearying. Craig is axed from his job when he goes ballistic in a big client meeting. His wife leaves him. His sad-sack woes pile up. It's not that Robinson isn't subtle enough; there are moments when his inane, gaptoothed smile nearly breaks your heart, even though, in a small, uncomfortable way, it also invites your contempt. The problem, really, is that the Tim Robinson of the three- or four-minute sketches of I Think You Should Leave is just the right amount of Tim Robinson—at least in this particular mode. It's why we drink liqueurs, digestifs, espresso in tiny glasses or cups. The more intense the elixir, the less we can handle at once. Sometimes that goes for comic genius too.

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Dr. Peter Marks The longtime head of vaccine and drug approvals at the FDA on measles, missed opportunities, and resigning

Marks served in the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for 13 years, most of them as director of the Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research, overseeing the review and approval of vaccines (including the COVID-19 shots) and biologic therapies. The FDA is under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), headed by vaccine skeptic Robert F. Kennedy Jr. On March 28, Marks resigned after he says he was pressed by officials at HHS to come in line with skepticism about the safety and effectiveness of vaccines or be fired.

You worked under both Democratic and Republican administrations, including during Donald Trump's first term. Why is this term different? Following the transition to the current Administration, an increasingly antivaccine tone became apparent. This became obvious in a variety of different ways, including from discussions of Administration concerns regarding adverse event reporting, the desire to reanalyze safety data that had already been well adjudicated and published, and the tepid federal response to the ongoing serious outbreak of measles.

I tried diligently to meet the new Administration halfway, and was hoping that we could engage in scientific dialogue and work through the issues, but it was clear that new leadership at FDA and HHS did not want to engage. Then, over the two weeks prior to the time that I was essentially forced to resign from my position, there were an increasing number of actions taken based on incorrect or frankly false assumptions that were clearly antivaccine in nature. These were inconsistent with both the best available science and truly advancing public health. Nothing like this ever transpired during the first Trump Administration.

How concerned are you about the current measles outbreak in the U.S.?

I was so disturbed when
I heard about the second
measles death in a child
that I used profanity with a
reporter without realizing
it. I was so disturbed, and
remain disturbed, because
this is absolutely needless.



How did you try to work with the new Administration on vaccines?

I was hopeful and tried to put together a package of things we could do to hopefully try to address issues related to vaccines, with a proposal that ended up with four points. One, we would hold listening meetings to hear from individuals about their concerns regarding vaccine components and the safety and efficacy of vaccines and how they are labeled.

Second, we would ask the National Academy of Medicine to study any appropriate issues, such as if people are worried about vaccine adjuvants [which help to boost the immune response].

No. 3, we proposed to revise how we report on vaccine adverse events so it is more transparent.

The fourth thing was that we could go back to revisit vaccine labels. Vaccine labeling over the course of several decades has gotten very messy, and the information for patients is not as clear as it could be. That is a legitimate criticism.

Did you receive any response or feedback to the proposal? No, I didn't get anything back.

What's your reaction to the new investigation into the link between the measles vaccine (MMR) and autism? Measles vaccine is one of the safest, most effective vaccines we have. Unlike other vaccines—which you might be able to argue about whether people should take them or not—the measles vaccine that has been given to children saves lives. One in 1,000 children who get measles dies up front. Another 1 in 10,000 to 20,000 children dies a few years later from persistent measles infection in the brain. So it saves lives. The measles vaccine is not associated with death, encephalitis, autism, or longterm adverse effects. —ALICE PARK





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