

TIME

THE PLAGUE ELECTION

By MOLLY BALL

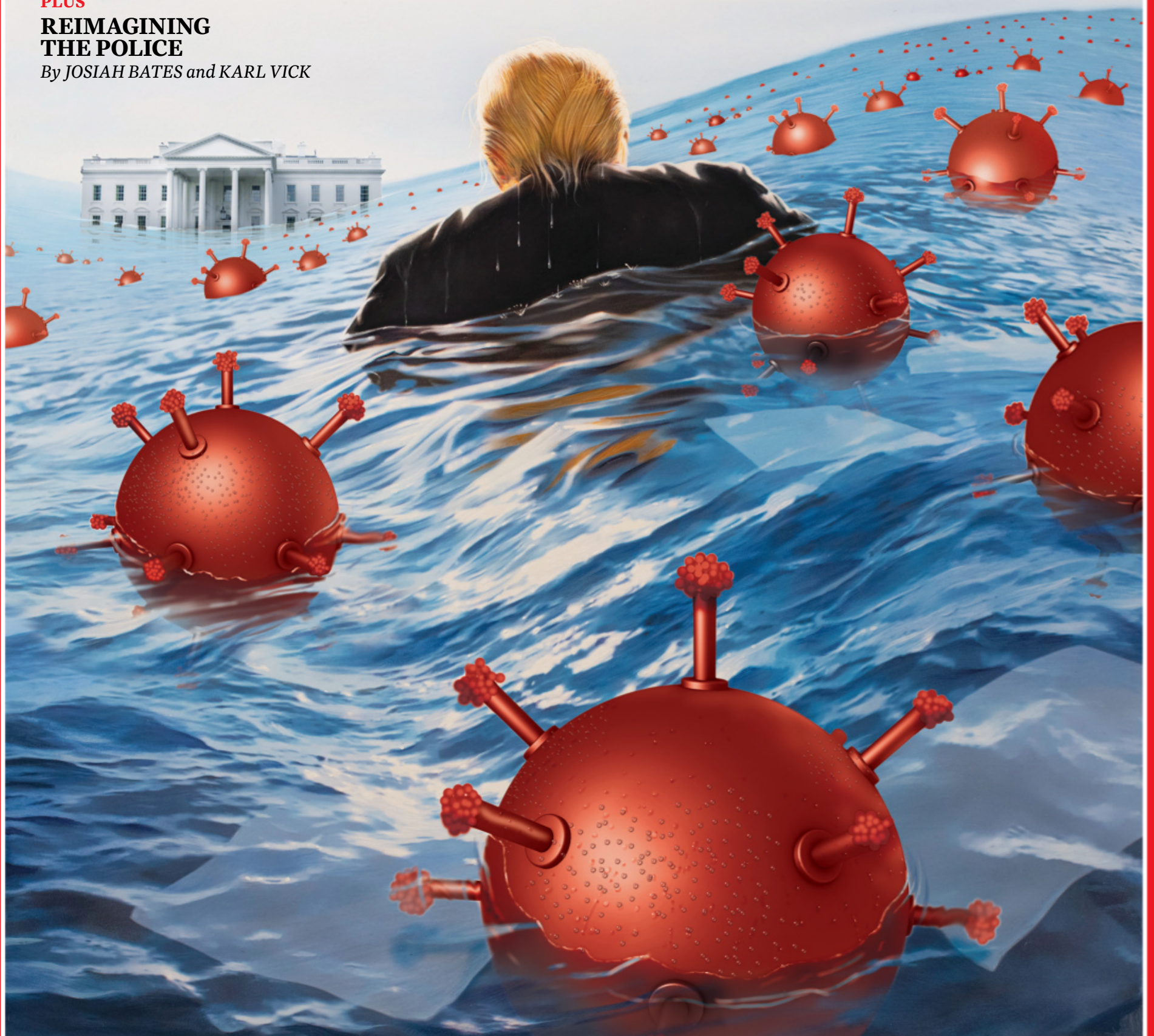
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By CHARLOTTE ALTER

PLUS

REIMAGINING THE POLICE

By JOSIAH BATES and KARL VICK



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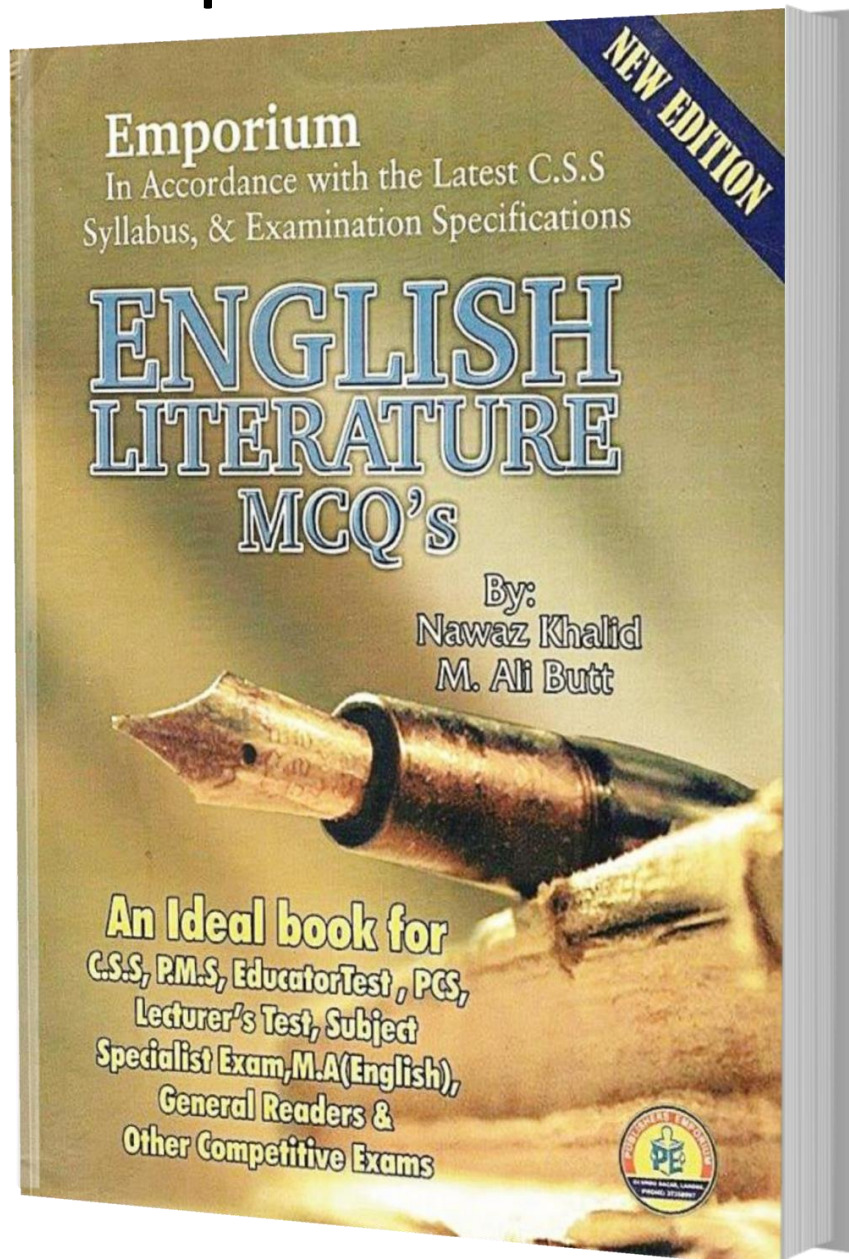
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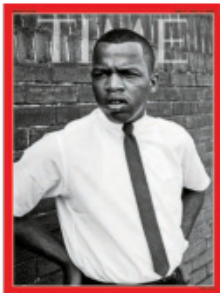
Bouncing Boys (1981). "The yard becomes an extension of the house when it's hot," says Hudnall. "In the inner city, people learn to improvise to live and survive."

Photograph by Earlie Hudnall Jr.

ON THE COVER: Illustration by Tim O'Brien for TIME

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Conversation



WHAT YOU SAID ABOUT ...

JOHN LEWIS (1940–2020) The Aug. 3/Aug. 10 tribute to late Georgia Congressman John Lewis was an education for readers on the civil rights movement—and its legacy. John A. Gover in Rio Rancho, N.M., wrote that Brittany Packnett Cunningham's essay was an “exceptional” lesson on how Lewis influenced today's activists. Judy Richardson of Silver Spring, Md., one of Lewis' Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) colleagues, said the remembrances by fellow SNCC activists “clearly reflected the spirit and organizing philosophy that energized our work.” And James P. McGill of Reno, Nev., wrote that Lewis was a model of resilience, “born into times of despicable imperfections and injustice” who “found the courage to dedicate a lifetime to staring that evil in the face.”

‘John Lewis was the conscience of a nation in need of one.’

ENRIQUE PUERTOS, Cleveland, Ga.

NO PLACE TO SHELTER After reading Belinda Luscombe's profile of homeless New Yorker Constance Woodson, in that same issue, several readers were moved to offer Woodson a place to stay and ask how to

send her money. Bonnie Corcoran in West End, N.C., said she has an extra room and would help Woodson find a job there, while Ruby Lynn Trotter offered to fly her out to Missouri to stay in her house. J.M. Vaughn

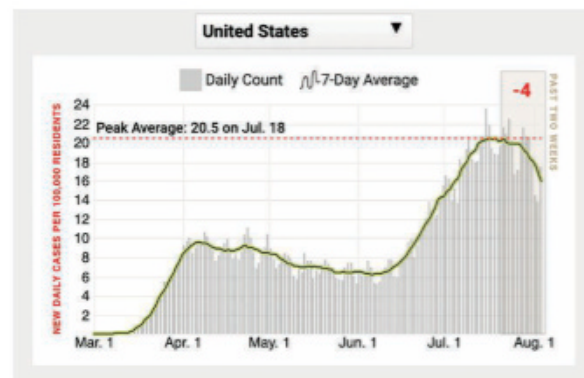
‘What a strong woman. Respect.’

@FORUMGRONINGEN, on Twitter

in Greenville, S.C., hopes the profile “helps awaken some cold hearts.” Woodson “is a brave soul,” Irene Stundel of Brooklyn wrote. “I hope her future is brighter.”

Afterimage

On TIME.com, take a look inside the new book *Gordon Parks: The Atmosphere of Crime, 1957*, featuring never-before-seen photos from the LIFE magazine photographer's series documenting police and prison systems in 1950s America. Parks once described “the camera and the pen” as “weapons” to “fight off the oppression of my adolescence.” Read about Parks' career and see more great photography at time.com/lightbox



BY THE NUMBERS To follow the global spread of COVID-19, bookmark TIME's new COVID-19 tracker. Maps and charts that put the pandemic in perspective are updated daily at time.com/coronavirus-dashboard



TIME's politics newsletter, the D.C. Brief, from correspondent Philip Elliott, **makes sense of what matters in Washington.** Subscribe at time.com/thedcbrief

PROGRAMMING NOTE ▶ This is a special double issue that will be on sale for two weeks. The next issue of TIME will be published on Aug. 20 and available on newsstands Aug. 21.

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT ▶ In “The uncertain future of places that preserve America's past” (Aug. 3/Aug. 10), we mistakenly included a photograph of a replica of the House of the Seven Gables, not the original.

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Introducing ATEM Mini

The compact television studio that lets you create presentation videos and live streams!

Blackmagic Design is a leader in video for the television industry, and now you can create your own streaming videos with ATEM Mini. Simply connect HDMI cameras, computers or even microphones. Then push the buttons on the panel to switch video sources just like a professional broadcaster! You can even add titles, picture in picture overlays and mix audio! Then live stream to Zoom, Skype or YouTube!

Create Training and Educational Videos

ATEM Mini's includes everything you need. All the buttons are positioned on the front panel so it's very easy to learn. There are 4 HDMI video inputs for connecting cameras and computers, plus a USB output that looks like a webcam so you can connect to Zoom or Skype. ATEM Software Control for Mac and PC is also included, which allows access to more advanced "broadcast" features!

Use Professional Video Effects

ATEM Mini is really a professional broadcast switcher used by television stations. This means it has professional effects such as a DVE for picture in picture effects commonly used for commenting over a computer slide show. There are titles for presenter names, wipe effects for transitioning between sources and a green screen keyer for replacing backgrounds with graphics.

Live Stream Training and Conferences

The ATEM Mini Pro model has a built in hardware streaming engine for live streaming via its ethernet connection. This means you can live stream to YouTube, Facebook and Teams in much better quality and with perfectly smooth motion. You can even connect a hard disk or flash storage to the USB connection and record your stream for upload later!

Monitor all Video Inputs!

With so many cameras, computers and effects, things can get busy fast! The ATEM Mini Pro model features a "multiview" that lets you see all cameras, titles and program, plus streaming and recording status all on a single TV or monitor. There are even tally indicators to show when a camera is on air! Only ATEM Mini is a true professional television studio in a small compact design!

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‘He believed that in all of us, there exists the capacity for great courage.’

BARACK OBAMA,
former U.S. President, in a July 30 eulogy for Congressman John Lewis

‘Even the very worst among us deserves to be fairly tried and lawfully punished.’

O. ROGERIEE THOMPSON,
federal appeals-court judge, in a July 31 ruling that tossed out the death sentence facing Boston Marathon bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev and sent the case back to a lower court for resentencing



126

Number of items of Fyre Festival merchandise and other “minor assets” up for auction by the U.S. Marshals Service, according to a July 30 news release, three years after the music event stranded hundreds in the Bahamas; proceeds will go to victims of convicted ringleader Billy McFarland

‘WE FACE A GENERATIONAL CATASTROPHE.’

ANTÓNIO GUTERRES,
U.N. Secretary-General, in an Aug. 4 video address on the “untold human potential” that could be lost because of coronavirus-related school closures around the world

2,450

Age in years of a shipwreck that opened on Aug. 3 as Greece’s first underwater museum



‘I do think it was a lot of negligence from our leaders that led to the shooting, and I have not forgiven that.’

KIKO RODRIGUEZ GLENN,
whose father survived the Aug. 3, 2019, mass shooting at an El Paso Walmart, a year after the event that left 23 dead



GOOD NEWS
of the week

Three men missing for almost three days in the Pacific’s Micronesia archipelago were found on a small island Aug. 2 after authorities spotted their SOS written in the sand

‘What we cannot accept is when we are forced to live in fear.’

ESTHER SALAS,
federal judge, in an Aug. 3 video statement calling for increased privacy protections for judges; her son was killed and her husband wounded in an attack at her home in July

The Brief



KEEP WATCHING
A dispute over the social-media platform TikTok is just the latest sore spot in worsening U.S.-China relations

INSIDE

NEWCOMER TAKES ON EUROPE'S LONGEST-SERVING LEADER

THE RED PLANET IS 2020'S HOTTEST SUMMER DESTINATION

SOCIAL DISTANCING PUTS DRIVE-IN THEATERS OUT FRONT

PHOTOGRAPH BY MANJUNATH KIRAN

The Brief is reported by Leslie Dickstein, Alejandro de la Garza, Mélissa Godin, Suyin Haynes, Billy Perrigo, Madeline Roache, Josh Rosenberg and Olivia B. Waxman

WORLD

TikTok on the chopping block

By Charlie Campbell/Shanghai

FIRST THEY WENT AFTER HUAWEI. THEN IT WAS gummy bears singing Adele. TikTok—the social-media platform where primarily Gen Z users share dance routines and zany memes involving crooning fruit candies and the like—has become the latest flash point in the escalating tech war between the U.S. and China, with President Donald Trump threatening on July 31 to ban the app on national-security grounds.

U.S. government experts warn that TikTok—the U.S. subsidiary of Beijing-based ByteDance—could be used to spread misinformation and funnel user data to the Chinese state. In response, ByteDance CEO Zhang Yiming insisted his firm fully respected “user data security, platform neutrality and transparency.”

But, seeing the writing on the wall, ByteDance has moved to sell TikTok to Microsoft, after the latter’s CEO Satya Nadella received assurances from Trump. A deal for the estimated \$50 billion app would have to be completed by Sept. 15 but has sparked a backlash in Beijing after Trump said the U.S. Treasury should receive a “substantial portion” of any agreed fee “because we’re making it possible.” Hu Xijin, the outspoken editor of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) mouthpiece the *Global Times*, decried the prospective sale as “open robbery.”

It’s just the latest salvo between the world’s two biggest economies as relations disintegrate. Beyond tech supremacy, Beijing and Washington are feuding over trade tariffs, the detention of 1 million ethnic Uighur Muslims in China’s Xinjiang region, the erosion of freedoms in semiautonomous Hong Kong and the militarization of the South China Sea—not to mention the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“This Administration fundamentally believes that the Xi Jinping government poses an existential threat to U.S. national security,” says Samm Sacks, cybersecurity policy and China digital economy fellow at the New America think tank. “Large Chinese companies are in the crosshairs, and then it’s a moving target what the specific risk is.”

THE RISK WITH TIKTOK is very different from that presented by the telecom giant Huawei, which the Trump Administration has targeted with sanctions and encouraged allies to blacklist. Huawei is a market leader in building 5G infrastructure, and security concerns on communications networks are self-evident (though, in Huawei’s case, unproved). The fear with TikTok

appears to be that Beijing could pair data gleaned from the app with information with information already harvested in hacking on U.S. citizens, allegedly sponsored by China. As a national-security argument it’s “pretty weak,” says Adam Segal, a cybersecurity expert at the Council on Foreign Relations. The reality is that the Trump Administration is acting primarily on commercial concerns, he says: “TikTok is the first social-media platform out of China that became truly global.”

Banning TikTok would be an escalation, but in keeping with a broader trend of economic disengagement between the rival superpowers. In recent years, the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States has ramped up blocking Chinese acquisitions of U.S. strategic assets. The Trump Administration is also threatening to delist Chinese firms trading on U.S. bourses that fail to properly disclose financial information. For Orit Frenkel, a former official at the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative who has worked on Asia trade policy for more than three decades, it’s a marked change of attitude. “Twenty years ago, no one foresaw things moving in this direction,” she says. “To descend into a full-fledged Cold War would be extremely unfortunate.”

Responsibility also lies with Beijing, which on top of compelling private firms to aid national security matters, shrouds its economy in red tape and still denies access to Facebook, Twitter, Google and many other U.S. firms. The question is now not whether decoupling of the two economies will happen, but how far it will go—and who will be targeted next. Chinese tech giant Tencent is a major investor in Reddit, for one. Wanda Group owns AMC Cinemas and Hollywood studio Legendary Entertainment. PR representatives of Chinese companies are terrified of courting American markets lest, as one recently told TIME, “we become the next Huawei.”

Or TikTok, it seems. Analysts are now watching to see if Beijing retaliates against U.S. firms with a strong China presence, such as Apple, Microsoft or Intel. “That danger is real,” says Frenkel. “We’ve seen this kind of tit for tat over past years in the U.S.-China relationship.”

The relationship hasn’t looked so rocky in decades. Each side has closed a consulate belonging to the other and expelled journalists. The U.S. has banned Chinese graduate students with ties to the military, and piled sanctions on officials over human-rights abuses in Xinjiang. A proposal to ban all 92 million CCP members and their families from entering the U.S. is gaining traction.

So what does the U.S. gain from this multifront blitzkrieg? Some suspect China hawks are punishing Beijing before November, mindful of Trump’s plummeting polls and the prospect of a Biden White House seeking to build bridges. “Some in the Administration want to burn as much down as possible,” Segal says, “so that it’s very hard to reset the relationship.” □

‘We’re making it possible for this deal to happen.’

DONALD TRUMP, U.S. President, arguing Aug. 3 that the U.S. Treasury should get “a substantial portion” of the money if TikTok is sold to a U.S. company





RISING TOLL Cemetery workers carry the coffin of a person who died of COVID-19 for burial at a cemetery on the outskirts of Lima on July 8. Peru's Health Minister announced an investigation on July 30 into whether Peru had failed to properly classify more than 27,000 deaths as having been caused by the novel coronavirus. Already among the world's highest, the country's official death toll from the disease could more than double with the new figure.

THE BULLETIN

'Europe's last dictatorship' faces challenge from a novice

EUROPE'S LONGEST-SERVING LEADER, Alexander Lukashenko, is facing an unprecedented challenge as he runs for a sixth term as President of Belarus in elections on Aug. 9. A former teacher with no political experience, Svetlana Tikhanovskaya has emerged as his main rival, pledging to restore democracy. "For the first time in his 26-year rule, Lukashenko knows the majority don't support him," says Aleksandr Feduta, a former aide to the incumbent.

BELORUSSIAN BULLY Lukashenko has ruled the former Soviet republic of 9.5 million people since 1994. His regime was dubbed "Europe's last dictatorship" by President George W. Bush in 2005. He has jailed opposition leaders, repressed independent opinion polls and held elections deemed "severely flawed" by the European Parliament. Now, anger has mounted over his mishandling of the COVID-19 pandemic (he dubbed it a "psychosis" that could be cured by vodka), a decade of economic stagnation and financial dependence on neighboring Russia, which many citizens see as a threat to sovereignty.

ROOKIE'S ROAD Tikhanovskaya entered the race when her husband Sergei Tikhanovski, a popular YouTuber who led rallies against the regime, was jailed in May. Backed by opposition figures, Tikhanovskaya has brought record crowds to rally in support of her three pledges: to free political prisoners; reverse authoritarianism; and run new, free elections within six months. Police have responded with heavy-handed tactics, arresting more than 1,000 protesters, according to the Minsk-based human-rights group Viasna.

NO CONTEST The incumbent will almost certainly claim victory through a fraudulent election with vote rigging and ballot stuffing, analysts say. But his battles won't end there. Protesters have no intention of backing down, says Matthew Frear, an expert on Belarus at Leiden University, and a weakened Lukashenko will find it far more difficult to resist the Kremlin's influence: "If he cracks down on dissent he will lose the chance of turning to the West, leaving him with no choice but to work with Moscow."

—MADELINE ROACHE

NEWS TICKER

Census count will be cut short

The U.S. Census Bureau announced Aug. 3 it will end field data collection by the end of September, **one month earlier than previously stated**. The bureau said the change should not affect the results, but civil rights groups argue it will make underserved populations harder to accurately tally.

Work begins on disputed Indian temple

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed the "dawn of a new era" Aug. 5, as **workers laid the foundation stone for a controversial temple** on the site of a demolished mosque. Erecting a temple on the spot, said to be the birthplace of the deity Ram, has been a long-term goal of Modi's Hindu nationalist party.

Trump skirts Congress on DOD appointee

President Donald Trump appointed controversial retired brigadier general Anthony Tata to a Pentagon position on Aug. 2 after Tata **withdrew his congressional nomination for a more senior post**. Although the new role does not require Congress's approval, it could allow Tata to take on higher-profile jobs.

NEWS TICKER

Hong Kong elections postponed

Hong Kong's chief executive Carrie Lam, an ally of Beijing, **said legislative elections scheduled for September would be postponed by a year**, citing a recent surge in coronavirus cases in the city. Pro-democracy activists said it was an attempt to slow their momentum after the imposition of a harsh national-security law.

DHS tracked protesters, press

Amid demonstrations in Portland, Ore., the Department of Homeland Security created **"intelligence reports" on protesters and journalists**, the *Washington Post* reported July 30. After the news broke, Brian Murphy, acting DHS undersecretary for intelligence and analysis, was reassigned.

Former Spanish king flees country

Spain's former king Juan Carlos reportedly **left the country for a luxury resort in the Dominican Republic** on Aug. 3, amid a corruption scandal over his financial dealings while monarch. In a letter published on the royal website, Juan Carlos said he had left Spain because of "public repercussions."

GOOD QUESTION

Why are so many nations going to Mars this summer?

TRAVELING TO MARS IS USUALLY A LONELY business—with a single spacecraft taking off from a single launchpad for the seven-month trip to the Red Planet. That appeared to be the case again on July 30, when NASA's Perseverance rover roared off the pad at Cape Canaveral atop an Atlas V rocket. But this time the ship will have plenty of company.

On July 19, the United Arab Emirates made its first bid to join the Mars game, launching the 3,000-lb., 10-ft.-tall Amal, or "Hope," spacecraft on a mission to orbit Mars for at least two years while studying its atmosphere. Four days later, China launched its Tianwen-1, or "Questions to Heaven," spacecraft, a three-part ship with an orbiter, a lander and a six-wheel, 529-lb. rover. And a fourth mission, a joint Russian-European project, ExoMars, carrying a rover of its own, was also planned for this summer, though it has been postponed to 2022 because of engineering problems with its parachute and avionics.

So why all the interest in Mars—and why right now? The timing issue has everything to do with planetary mechanics. As they fly their differing solar orbits—Earth on the inner track, Mars on the outer—the distance between the two worlds is forever changing. At their greatest remove, when they are on opposite sides of the sun, they are up to 250 million miles apart. But once every two years, they

line up on the same side of the sun, with just 35 million miles separating them. This summer just such an alignment is taking place, dramatically slashing interplanetary travel time to the current seven-month itinerary. So that explains the *when* question.

The *why* part is because of Mars' tantalizing, potentially biological history. The surface of the planet is etched with dry riverbeds, stamped with ancient sea basins, marked by deep depressions that could only indicate long-vanished water.

Perseverance is landing in one such place: the Jezero Crater, north of the Martian equator, which is lined with both inflow and outflow channels indicating it was once a vibrant sea. Previous rover analyses in similar locations have discovered chemicals and compounds that form only in the presence of water, proving that Mars was once, like Earth, exceedingly wet.

Now the mission is to look for actual fossilized organisms or even signs of extant microbial life. To that end, Perseverance is the most ambitious of the new spacecraft and is actually just the first part of a multipart mission. During its explorations, it will collect Martian soil samples in sterile titanium tubes and set them neatly on the ground awaiting another spacecraft that could leave Earth as early as the 2026 alignment, collect the samples and fly them home for analysis.

Finding life on Mars would be an epochal discovery. The bragging rights that go with being first to make the find is part of what makes the planet the hot new destination it's become. —JEFFREY KLUGER



WILDLIFE

Invasive interventions

As of July 28, Florida authorities have removed **5,000 invasive Burmese pythons**, which prey on native species, from the Everglades. Here, other eradication efforts. —Alejandro de la Garza

HELICOPTER HOGS

Authorities in Arkansas killed nearly 700 feral hogs during a 68-hour helicopter operation, according to a March press release. Wild swine cost the state millions of dollars in crop damage every year.

FISH FENCE

Kentucky officials commissioned a bioacoustic "fish fence" to control the spread of invasive Asian carp in 2019. The system, which is in a \$7 million, three-year field trial, emits noise within a wall of strobe-lit bubbles.

BUG BATTLE

To combat the invasive emerald ash borer beetle, the U.S. Department of Agriculture released parasitoid wasps that target the bug, starting in 2007. As of 2018, the wasps have been released in 26 states.

Milestones

DIED

John Hume, Northern Irish politician and Nobel laureate who helped end decades of sectarian violence, on Aug. 2, at 83.

> **Connie Culp**, who became the first U.S. face-transplant recipient in 2008, on July 29, at 57.

> NYC journalist and novelist **Pete Hamill**, on Aug. 5 at 85.

COMPLETED

China's **BeiDou Navigation Satellite System**, which could compete with U.S. GPS, on July 31.

BATTERED

The U.S. East Coast, by **Tropical Storm Isaias**, which made landfall in North Carolina on Aug. 3 as a hurricane. The storm killed at least five people and knocked out power for more than 2.8 million.

BURNED

More than 42 sq. mi., by the **Apple Fire** in Southern California, as of Aug. 5.

ORDERED

A **curfew in Melbourne**, for six weeks, as part of tough social-distancing rules announced Aug. 2, after a spike in COVID-19 cases.

DETECTED

Dozens of COVID-19 cases, on **two cruise ships**, one in Norway and one in Tahiti, just weeks after cruises restarted.

SPLASHED DOWN

NASA astronauts **Robert Behnken** and **Douglas Hurley**, in a SpaceX capsule, on Aug. 2, after the first manned trip to the International Space Station by a private company.



In the 2012 Republican presidential-nomination contest, Cain's "9-9-9" tax plan drew eye rolls from economists but curiosity from voters

DIED

Herman Cain

Conservative original

AT A 1996 POLITICAL EVENT AT SYLVIA'S SOUL-FOOD RESTAURANT in Harlem, a man in the crowd shouted out something that changed Herman Cain's life: "Black Republicans? There's no such thing." The remark so angered Cain, then an independent, that he switched his registration—and over the next quarter-century, the child of the segregated South and former head of the National Restaurant Association became one of the country's best-known Black Republicans, even running for President in 2012.

So committed to his party was Cain that he flew to Tulsa, Okla., for President Donald Trump's June 20 return to the campaign trail, despite health warnings. As candidates, Cain and Trump were, in many ways, cut from the same cloth. Neither was elected to any political post before running for the White House. They shot from the hip and campaigned in slogans. Both faced allegations of sexual harassment and other inappropriate behavior; both denied the claims, though they proved disqualifying for Cain. Both were savvy exploiters of media, often saying things they knew would draw outrage and thus attention. Indifference—if not hostility—toward precedent and fact was a cornerstone of their strategies, not a flaw.

At that indoor rally in Tulsa, Cain, a cancer survivor, posed for pictures without wearing a mask and sat in the packed stands. On June 29, he tested positive for COVID-19; he was hospitalized July 1. On July 30, his aides announced that Cain had died at age 74.

—PHILIP ELLIOTT

CHARGED

Author in revolt in Zimbabwe

ON JULY 27, TSITSI DANGAREMBGA's novel *This Mournable Body* was long-listed for the Booker Prize. Four days later, the Zimbabwean author was behind bars, charged with incitement to commit violence and breaching coronavirus restrictions during antigovernment protests.

Tensions are rising in Zimbabwe over soaring inflation, massive unemployment and allegations of government corruption. Dangarembga, who has been freed on bail, was arrested carrying placards calling for reform and for the release of a prominent journalist arrested earlier in the week. "If you want your suffering to end, you have to act," the 61-year-old tweeted, before being detained. "Action comes from hope. This is the principle of faith and action."

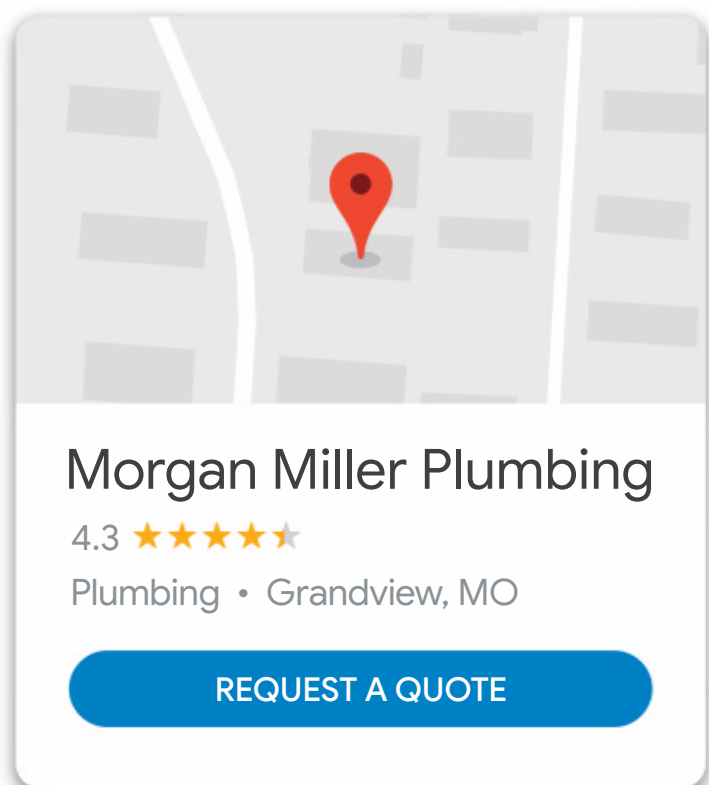
Dangarembga, whose work explores themes of race, gender and colonialism, is considered one of Africa's finest novelists. On Sept. 15, she's set to learn whether her novel is on the Booker short list. Three days later, she's due to return to court.

—ARYN BAKER



Dangarembga after being freed on bail on Aug. 1

Helping local businesses adapt to a new way of working





The employees of Morgan Miller Plumbing pride themselves on being a small, tight-knit family, and they treat their customers the same way.

With a free Business Profile on Google, Morgan Miller Plumbing has been able to reach more customers. And while COVID-19 has presented new challenges, they've been able to adapt. More people are contacting them every week, and they're actively looking to hire additional technicians to help meet demand.

Find free resources for your small business at [g.co/smallbusiness](https://www.google.com/business)

Now playing at the drive-in: bands, weddings, anything

By Andrew R. Chow

BRI AND LINDSEY LEAVERTON HAD THEIR DREAM WEDDING all planned out. In April, they were going to get married at a century-old mansion in downtown Austin, with their guests sipping cocktails on a veranda by the pool.

Instead, they found themselves 20 miles south of town, tying the knot at a drive-in on a dirt road surrounded by cows. A formation of cars blasted their horns in delight. “When our wedding planner asked us about getting married at a drive-in, we looked at each other and said, ‘That sounds insane,’” Lindsey says.

The coronavirus has upended countless minor and major life events over the past few months. While many of these plans were canceled, a surprising share migrated to the drive-in movie theater, where social distancing, via cars and pickup trucks, is the norm. These theaters have scrambled to pivot their entire business model in the face of disappearing film releases—and have unwittingly become catchall communal hubs across the country. “Drive-ins are being contacted like they used to be, for everything in the community,” says filmmaker April Wright, who directed the documentary *Going Attractions: The Definitive Story of the Movie Palace*. “They’re hosting church services, weddings, graduations, dance recitals, concerts, stand-up comedy.”

Shifts to events like outdoor weddings and smaller-scale concerts serve as creative ways to stay afloat in an industry that was unforgiving before the pandemic: the number of drive-ins in the U.S. has continuously dwindled, especially as home and handheld entertainment command more and more attention. Now, increased costs, a delayed film slate and potential competition from pop-ups—the Tribeca Film Festival, for example, is programming drive-in experiences at beaches, sports stadiums and even Walmart parking lots—are making some theaters skeptical they can last through the crisis. “A lot of us are really struggling,” says Nathan McDonald, the owner of the 66 Drive-In in southwestern Missouri. “If [movies] continue to be pushed, I’ll probably close in late August.”

SOME 300 INDEPENDENT DRIVE-INS operate across the U.S. They typically make most of their money during the summer, when students are on break and blockbusters roll in every weekend. But this year’s tentpole films, from *Mulan* to *Wonder Woman 1984*, have been repeatedly delayed, thanks to the continued closure of major indoor-theater chains like AMC and Cinemark. As drive-ins opened for the season, they first turned to throwback classics like *E.T.* and *Jaws*, hoping to capitalize on nostalgia.

Such films have produced mixed results for theaters. At the 66 Drive-In, the average number of cars on a given night has



‘It’s a bit of Americana I’d hate to see lost.’

DAVID FOWLER, pastor of the First United Methodist Church in Carthage, Mo., on drive-ins

dropped from 225 to 120. “You can easily sit from the comfort of your couch and watch these films,” McDonald says.

Instead of waiting for new blockbusters to salvage their businesses, many theater owners have taken advantage of other event-space closures. “We’re trying to substitute those new films for concerts or comedy shows so we can bring in relatively similar revenue,” says Joe Calabro, president of the Circle Drive-In near Scranton, Pa. The stream of a Garth Brooks show, aired at hundreds of drive-ins across the country, sold out. So the Circle turned to local musicians, whose normal gigs have been stripped away. Chris Shrive, a singer-songwriter from Old Forge, Pa., opened his band’s show from the concession-stand roof. “To overlook 450 cars; to see people barbecuing on the tailgates of their trucks, laughing, meeting people parked 18 ft. away—it was awe-inspiring,” Shrive says. “This just might be the new normal.”

Basking in the crowd was Sherry Sakosky, who was seeing her first live concert since the start of the pandemic. “There’s been a lot of built-up frustration and animosity,” says Sakosky, who estimates that some 95% of the concertgoers followed proper

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social-distancing protocols. “To be out amongst friends in a safe manner and to be able to experience the same show with them totally brings the community together.”

In Kings Mountain, N.C., the Hounds Drive-In has also thrived in its newfound role as a concert venue, especially because artists pay up front to use the space. “They set up everything, we get our money, we get to keep all the concessions,” owner Preston Brown says. “I love it.”

His financial success has enabled him to turn his drive-in into a sort of commons. The Hounds has hosted dance recitals and pet organizations; it’s welcomed more than a dozen graduating high school classes free of charge. Students received their diplomas on the big screen as their families watched from their cars. According to Scott Neisler, the mayor of Kings Mountain, the Hounds’ active presence has resulted in a local economic boost. He also staged the city’s Fourth of July fireworks show there, in order to celebrate the holiday safely.

BUT A STORYBOOK ENDING for drive-ins might prove elusive. Their new, outsize role in public life has not always ensured their financial health. The Bengies Drive-In Theatre, in Middle River, Md., has opened every day of some weeks, with concerts, church services and more. But the theater is operating at less than half capacity to promote social distancing, and has taken on a much bigger staff to control safety and crowding. “The public thinks we’re a cash cow,” says Bengies owner D. Edward Vogel. “But it’s been very hard on us.”

Pop-up theaters emerging since the start of the pandemic, says Vogel, are “breaking my heart.” He is particularly worried about the 160 temporary drive-ins arriving in Walmart parking lots—featuring films chosen by Tribeca Enterprises—in August. These spaces could further squeeze the independent operators.

(A representative for Walmart did not respond to a request for comment.)

At the 66 Drive-In in Missouri, McDonald doubts he can make it to the fall, because of decreased capacity, a blank movie slate and people bringing their own food instead of buying from the concession stand. His financial plight is worrisome to David Fowler, pastor of the First United Methodist Church of Carthage, Mo., who has been holding services from the snack-bar roof every Sunday, to growing crowds. His congregation appreciates seeing fellow worshippers in person, as opposed to sitting at home alone. “It’s a bit of Americana I’d hate to see lost,” says Fowler.

In face of such hardships, drive-ins fight on for survival. In Buda, Texas, Doc’s Drive-In has housed graduations, soccer watch parties and two weddings, including the Leavertons’. In April, 45 cars rolled up on each side of a dirt-road aisle. The couple, who paid \$4,000 to book Doc’s, swapped heels for boots and stood on a rickety stage, swatting away June bugs as an officiant married them from 6 ft. away. “It turned out the wedding we had was way, way better than anything we could have dreamed of,” Lindsey says. After the ceremony, *Airplane!* played on the big screen. □

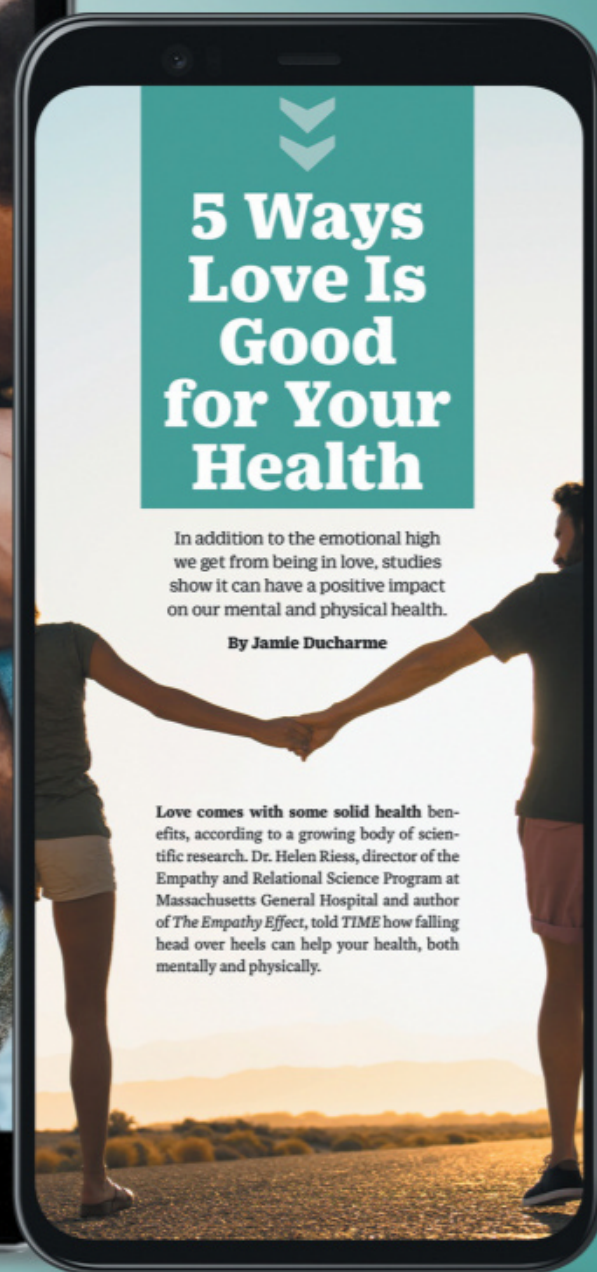
GRADUATIONS

Cameron Curtindale, left, at a ceremony with Weston-McEwen High School classmates at the M-F Drive-In Theater in northern Oregon

CONCERTS

The Hounds Drive-In in Kings Mountain, N.C., has hosted more than 18 concerts, and included bands and DJs

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How Maine and its lobsters got caught in America's crises

By John Walcott/Spruce Head, Maine

STANDING ON THE DECK OF THE *CAPTAIN CARL*, his 34-ft. lobster boat, Jeff Woodman reflects on how the rocky shores of Spruce Head, Maine, have become an unlikely front line in two very different fights: President Donald Trump's global tariff wars and America's battle against the coronavirus. "Lobstering has been a family business. I'm third-generation," says Woodman. "But it's changing."

Maine's lobster sales are sinking fast. China was the industry's best customer until 2018, when Beijing retaliated for U.S. tariffs on Chinese goods by slapping a 25% levy on the elite treat, while reducing its tariff on Canadian catches. As the Trump Administration has faced off with the E.U., Europe also has been buying more lobster from Canada. By early this year, Maine's year-on-year lobster exports to China and Europe had both dropped by about 50%.

The market for *Homarus americanus* had shrunk to little more than domestic consumers and a limited number of wealthy epicures in Asia and the Middle East, says Annie Tselikis, executive director of the Maine Lobster Dealers' Association. "Then comes COVID," Tselikis says.

The major U.S. buyers of Maine lobster, from casinos to cruise ships, all shut down. The state's lobstermen and women are still venturing out, but about a third have received nearly \$15 million in federal Paycheck Protection Program loans to help them cope with COVID-19-related losses.

MAINERS AREN'T USED to being caught in national crises. Despite the long tradition of Beltway residents flocking to the state each summer, America's Vacationland has an ambivalent relationship with the federal government. Policies devised with good intentions in the Capitol haven't always survived the voyage Down East as well as a plane full of live lobster can travel in a "cloud pack"—tails

down, claws up—from Spruce Head to Europe.

But this year national politics has come to Maine, where one of Congress's toughest races is playing out ahead of Nov. 3. Republican Senator Susan Collins is locked in a tight contest with her opponent, Democrat Sara Gideon. With control of the Senate at stake, one of the nation's least populous states has assumed outsize political importance—and so have its lobsters. On June 5, Trump visited the city of Bangor and threatened to slap a new tariff on European cars if the Europeans didn't immediately eliminate theirs on U.S. lobsters. On June 24, he ordered the Agriculture

Department to offer the lobster industry a bailout like those given to farmers caught in his trade war with China.

So far, those efforts only appear to have validated decades of local skepticism about Washington. The state's politicians have found themselves tutoring government bureaucrats more familiar with corn than crustaceans, while they try to understand why they're trapped in a battle over China's poaching of American technology. Not only have Maine's lobster sales plummeted, keeping a lobster business running has become harder as Trump's tariff wars have escalated, says Woodman. Bait and fuel have become more expensive, he says, as have digital water thermometers and satellite technology. Lobster pots, now made of steel instead of wood, cost \$70 to \$90 each, thanks in part to Trump's tariffs on Canadian steel, he says.

The influx of PPP loans has helped some. According to the Small Business Administration,

about 1,360 Maine lobstermen—about 1 in 3—have received loans of less than \$150,000. But as in other industries, the biggest players got more from the federal trough. Four of the state's largest lobster companies hauled in \$350,000 to \$1 million, according to the SBA.

Everyone else, including Woodman, is learning to adapt. He now ships his catch over the border to Canada, which then sells them, tariff-free, to China and Europe. He is also capitalizing on the market for frozen lobster, usually tail and claw meat, but now also entire crustaceans. "Everybody," Woodman says, "is trying to think outside the box." □



▲
Mike Hutchings, who has fished off Maine's coast for over 50 years, harvests lobsters near Lincolnville on June 27

Armed with a whiteboard, rising freshman **Katie Porter** schools Congress

By Abby Vesoulis

ABOUT A DECADE AGO, KAMALA HARRIS CALLED up Elizabeth Warren to ask for a tip. It was the messy aftermath of the Great Recession, and Harris, then California's attorney general, needed a recommendation for someone who could handle the complicated job of overseeing the settlement money that big banks had paid for creating and bursting the infamous mortgage-backed-securities bubble.

"I said, 'Talk to Katie Porter,'" Warren recalls telling Harris. Porter, who was then a University of California, Irvine, law professor, had been a student of Warren's at Harvard Law School. Warren remembered her as "Fully prepared. Ready to go. Leaning forward. All systems go."

Harris listened. In 2012, she appointed Porter to the role of California's independent bank monitor, where the professor spent about two years overseeing more than \$18 billion in debt and mortgage relief, responding to more than 5,000 consumer complaints and authoring half a dozen reports on bank compliance. And she did it all on a shoestring. When Porter was finally given funds to hire an assistant—but not enough to hire another attorney—she got creative, Warren recalls. Porter asked her assistant to "dress up to look more like a lawyer" so the two of them could appear formidable at meetings.

Today, as Porter's first term as a Congresswoman for California's 45th District draws to a close, her reputation for being a tough—and sometimes theatrical—leader remains intact. In a March 2019 House Committee on Financial Services hearing, Porter stumped Consumer Financial Protection Bureau director Kathy Kraninger on the difference between an interest rate and an annual percentage rate. Unsatisfied with Kraninger's answer, Porter pulled out a textbook she'd authored, *Modern Consumer Law*. "I'll be happy to send you a copy of the textbook that I wrote," the Congresswoman said.

At a hearing the next month, Porter pushed JPMorgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon to explain why his employees' wages are so low. She calculated that a single mom working full time as a Chase bank teller in Irvine would end up \$567 in the red each month after paying for necessities, like rent on a one-bedroom apartment and day care. "How should she manage this budget shortfall while she's working full time at your bank?" she asked Dimon, who didn't have a solution. At yet another hearing in May 2019, she flummoxed Housing and Urban De-

PORTER QUICK FACTS

Unplugged

In lieu of listening to podcasts, Porter celebrates rare quiet time: "If I can get a moment's silence, I am so grateful."

35

Number of years Republicans had held Porter's seat before she was elected in 2018

Don't Think of an Elephant!

Porter's staff read George Lakoff's book in June for its newly formed book club.

velopment Secretary Ben Carson by quizzing him on the foreclosure-related term *real estate owned*. Carson suggested that its acronym, REO, sounded like an Oreo cookie. (Porter threw away the Oreos Carson sent her after the hearing, she says.)

Porter's commitment to holding power to account has culminated in her near meteoric rise on the Hill and—according to the Cook Political Report—great odds at re-election in her historically red district this November. In a moment where the nation's President is broadcasting scientifically disproved and potentially deadly lies in service to a political agenda, Porter emerges as an avatar of what fact-based politics could look like: nerdy, data-driven and serious about improving the lives of working-class Americans.

This year, Porter again applied her wonky approach to the Capitol as her colleagues grappled with the deadliest pandemic in a century, combined with the worst economy since at least 2008. During a March 12 House Oversight and Reform Committee hearing, Porter whipped out a whiteboard to illustrate what it would cost an uninsured American to undergo coronavirus diagnostics. The figure was \$1,331. "Fear of these costs [is] going to keep people from being tested, from getting the care they need and from keeping their communities safe," she told the room, which included Dr. Robert Redfield, the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Citing an existing law that grants Redfield the power to make testing widely available during a public-health emergency, she used her remaining moments to ask Redfield whether he would commit to invoking it. She asked him some variant of the same question three times, upping her gusto with each iteration until Redfield, visibly beleaguered, finally folded: "I think you're an excellent questioner," he said. "So my answer is yes."

Congressman Mike Levin, a fellow freshman Democrat, jokes about her tenacity. "Fortunately," he says of their time together on the campaign trail, "I never was subject to the whiteboard."

IN A RECENT ZOOM INTERVIEW from her California kitchen, Porter answers my questions while folding a heap of laundry for her three kids, ages 8, 12 and 14. What goes through her mind when an expert witness skirts her relentless inquiries? In the case of the exchange with Redfield, she was irate. She had told the CDC before the hearing that she would be asking that exact question and that Redfield should be prepared to answer it. "Never in all my years as a teacher have I given the answer out in advance, and yet he resisted," she says. "He knew the law, he knew what answer was the correct answer, he just didn't want to be accountable for using the law to better Americans' lives."

Porter's commitment to fighting for the little guy



is born, perhaps, of her own modest roots. She grew up on a farm in Iowa, where her father was a farmer turned banker and her mother founded a magazine and a public-television show about quilting. With the help of scholarships and student loans, Porter attended Yale as an undergraduate and Harvard for law school. Between the two endeavors, she taught eighth-grade math. That's when she discovered what she calls the "performative art to teaching"—a skill she employs today, whiteboard in tow, at House Financial Services Committee hearings. As a single mom and a domestic-abuse survivor, she has seen firsthand the value of government-funded benefits. She says she wouldn't have made it to Washington without access to free public education for her children. "There is no room in my budget to pay for private school," she says. "Knowing that my kids are safe, that they're learning and building good life skills in public school, makes this job possible."

Like many single moms, she is adept at multitasking. Shortly into our conversation, still folding clothes, the Congresswoman jumps onto a virtual briefing on racial justice and policing. When a GOP colleague mentions "the gentleman who died in

'Fully prepared. Ready to go. Leaning forward.'

SENATOR ELIZABETH WARREN, describing Porter, her former student at Harvard Law School

Minnesota," she holds up a handmade sign scrawled on a wrinkled piece of paper: SAY HIS NAME. GEORGE FLOYD. It's a hallmark Porter move. She's unwilling to let a teachable moment pass, says Josh Mandelbaum, one of Porter's former law students. "She didn't treat her students any differently than she treated a CEO in front of Congress," he recalls. "She expected you to be prepared."

As a progressive Democrat who supports more accessible health care and fewer accessible guns, she's not necessarily a natural fit for her California district, which has elected Republicans to the House since it was created in 1983. In 2018, her narrow, 4-point victory was partially the result of a recent influx of new Latino and Asian voters, who tend to vote Democratic. But Porter suggests her appeal is also the result of her style. As a natural teacher, she's driven by facts, fairness and, she says, "calling people out for what they're saying when it doesn't make any sense." It's a message of accountability that she's willing to deliver to even the most formidable power brokers in Washington. "I'm not letting them off the hook, because I believe in democracy," she says, "because I believe in government." □

LightBox





WORLD

A vast explosion in Beirut piles tragedy on economic misery

DOWNTOWN BEIRUT WAS A MESS of rubble, glass and twisted rebar after a colossal explosion tore through the Lebanese capital on Aug. 4. The apparent accident left at least 135 people dead, wounded some 5,000 others, and damaged so many buildings in the city that hundreds of thousands were left homeless.

Lebanese authorities blamed the blast—so powerful it was felt 150 miles away in Cyprus—on the detonation of 2,750 metric tons of ammonium nitrate at Beirut’s port. Throughout the night of Aug. 4, radio presenters read out names of the wounded and missing as relatives scrambled to locate loved ones. Dozens were still missing at press time.

The disaster added to the agony of a nation in its worst financial crisis since its 15-year-long civil war ended in 1990. One in three Lebanese people is unemployed, the Lebanese pound has lost 80% of its value against the dollar since October, and prior to the blast grid electricity was only available for a few hours per day. “We will start seeing children dying from hunger before the end of the year,” said Save the Children in a recent report.

As details of negligence in the run-up to the blast emerged, so did public anger at a government widely perceived as corrupt and incompetent. “People are promising that today we mourn our martyrs and tomorrow we go back to the streets,” said Fatima Al Mahmoud, a 22-year-old journalist. “I hope that’s true.” —JOSEPH HINCKS

PHOTOGRAPH BY HASSAN AMMAR—AP

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HEALTH

A BETTER WAY TO TEST

By Dr. Ashish K. Jha

Imagine spitting on a special strip of paper every morning and being told two minutes later whether you were positive for COVID-19. If everyone in the U.S. did this daily, we would dramatically drop our transmission rates and bring the pandemic under control. Schools and businesses could reopen with the peace of mind that infectious individuals had been identified. ▶

INSIDE

ESSENTIAL REFORMS
TO STOP BIG TECH

WHAT HAPPENED IN PORTLAND
WHEN WE STOOD STRONG

WE NEED A NEW
DEFINITION OF MOTHERHOOD

TheView Opener

Michael Mina of the Harvard School of Public Health has been a major proponent of this idea, and has pushed the idea of a test that costs as little as \$1, which the government could mass-produce and provide free of charge to everyone. In fact, these technologies exist today. Antigen tests are significantly cheaper and faster than the RT-PCR tests that are at the heart of America's current testing infrastructure, which is collapsing.

As coronavirus cases surge around the country, laboratories are facing crippling shortages of key supplies and growing backlogs of samples. In many states, it can take 10 to 15 days to get test results—rendering these tests useless as a tool to prevent transmission and bring the pandemic under control. For most people, the peak period of infectiousness lasts about a week. And in the middle of this testing collapse, cities and towns are preparing to return millions of children to school this fall with neither the intention nor the capability to test them.

At this critical moment in our nation's fight against COVID-19, it is time to radically rethink our approach to testing. The way forward is not a perfect test, but one offering rapid results. Over the past months, much of the conversation around testing has focused on accuracy. Tests have been touted for their high sensitivity, and the FDA requires diagnostic tests to correctly identify 95% of positive cases. The intuition behind this is clear: we want a test that won't miss positive cases and send infected individuals back into the world to spread the virus. These RT-PCR tests have become the backbone of our testing infrastructure, yet their high cost and slow rate of analysis have undermined any attempt to put their high sensitivity to good use. CDC analyses suggest that we are identifying only about 1 in 10 cases of COVID-19, mostly because we are testing so few people. By putting a premium on the accuracy of tests, we fail to test a majority of people with COVID-19, and these built-in delays actually undermine our ability to identify cases in a timely manner.

The Quidel company has already received FDA approval for its antigen-based test on

a strip of paper. Researchers are testing another \$1 antigen test for widespread use in Senegal. Why, then, have these cheap and rapid tests not become the foundation of our national testing strategy? The answer lies in test sensitivity. Antigen tests require higher levels of virus than RT-PCR to return a positive result. There has been significant push-back from those who believe it would be irresponsible to widely use a test that might miss many positive cases.

But the frequency of testing and the speed of results counter that concern. The RT-PCR tests are currently slowing laboratories to a crawl. If everyone took an antigen test today, even identifying only 50% of the positives, we would still identify 50% of all current infections in the country—five times the 10% of cases we are likely identifying now because we are testing so few people. Accuracy



Health care workers in Kolkata check rapid antigen test kits that the U.S. could be using to reduce delays

could be increased through repeated testing and through the recognition that quicker test results would identify viral loads during the most infectious period, meaning those cases we care most about identifying would be less likely to be missed.

Even better, we would be identifying these cases while they were still infectious rather than 10 days later, when the virus might have already been transmitted repeatedly. Speed matters much more than test sensitivity in controlling a pandemic. The evidence makes clear it is time for a paradigm shift on testing. Cheap and rapid antigen testing can identify and prevent every cluster of COVID-19.

It is time for the federal government to take strong leadership on directing our resources toward this new strategy. The U.S. has the ability to print paper-strip antigen tests in massive numbers and to distribute them all over the country. If we do these things, we can move past 10-day delays, quash the current outbreaks and ensure that we can safely go to work, do our shopping and send our kids to school.

Jha is the K.T. Li Professor of Global Health at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. In September he will become dean of the Brown University School of Public Health

SHORT READS

► Highlights from stories on time.com/ideas

Haunting memories

For her book *Wandering in Strange Lands*, Morgan Jerkins spoke to a woman who played a key role in the police response to the Watts riots. **"She was traumatized," Jerkins writes. "There were things that she chose to forget, or that her body made her forget, in order to protect herself and stay alive."**

A better Internet

As hate speech, disinformation and conspiracy theories continue to spread on Internet platforms, it's time to get serious about regulating Big Tech companies, writes *Zucked* author Roger McNamee: **"Their stonewalling over the past four years has cost them the moral high ground."**

Blurred lines

As federal agents recently deployed to cities across the U.S., former U.S. Attorney Joyce White Vance issued a warning: **"The use of federal law enforcement capabilities against citizens exercising their rights, whether in Washington, D.C., Portland or elsewhere, should not be equated with normal law enforcement activity."**



Members of Moms United for Black Lives, on July 29 in Portland, Ore.

FIRST PERSON

I was shot by federal agents while protesting in Portland

By Ellen Urbani

OUR PRESIDENT WANTS YOU TO BELIEVE I AM A TERRORIST, a professional agitator stalking the Pacific Northwest.

Four days before federal agents shoot me in Portland, Ore., I riffle through the garage, shooing spiders from my son's snowboarding helmet. Will it buckle beneath a steel baton? I press my daughter's swim goggles to my face, testing the fit. Can they repel tear gas? I run my hands over my husband's life jacket. Can it stop a bullet?

I don't yet realize how many other moms are slipping oven mitts into backpacks (to minimize burns when tossing aside flaming grenades and tear-gas canisters), how many dads are hoisting leaf blowers from sheds (to clear tear gas), how many teens are gathering plastic toboggans to shield themselves from officers in combat fatigues aiming stun-grenade launchers through temporary fencing around the federal courthouse. This is what happens when you rattle the barricade that policymakers hide behind, screaming "Black lives matter," protesting for 60-plus nights the brutal tactics officers use to kill Black men on camera and Black women in beds.

The night I am shot, the sky shimmers with a leftover Fourth of July firework lit by a privileged son whose college closed in the spring. He is here because Black lives matter to him but also because he senses the video game he now plays nightly has sprung to life and he won't be left out. That boy is pretext, he and his friends tossing plastic water bottles at stone walls, justification for an elite force to quell a gathering of Black people and their allies at the door of the same courthouse where four years earlier the white militiamen who led an armed takeover of another federal building in Oregon were acquitted of any wrongdoing in a 41-day siege.

I LISTEN TO a Black man on the Justice Center steps invoke the memory of John Lewis while thousands of doctors, veterans, teachers, attorneys stand peacefully, our hands in the air. It is Lewis' words—"Freedom is the continuous action we all must take, and each generation must do its part to create an even

more fair, more just society"—that echo as the gas swallows me. I feel men crashing into me as they flee pepper bullets and fires from flash-bang grenades, dragging choking, bleeding bodies away, but I hold my ground because I know the law: a federal injunction prohibits the use of gas unless the lives or safety of the public or the police are at risk, and that is obviously not the case here. I listen and am prepared to obey dispersal orders from authorities, but they never come.

But I am also naively stunned by the suspension of my lifelong privilege. Those federal agents are the brothers-in-arms of men I love—my father the Navy submariner, my former father-in-law the disabled Marine, the police officer I swooned over in my youth—and I am a white woman, the high school cheerleader those feds once fell for, the sorority girl they courted, the one person those officers truly referred to when they swore an oath to serve and protect. If they are willing to turn on me, to fire on me, for finally breaking my silent complicity and standing with and for my Black neighbors, what havoc will be wreaked on the Black bodies left behind if I vacate this street?

For a second the gas lifts, and it seems there are only a few women left, standing arm in arm in the yellow shirts those agents know mark us as mothers, just empty asphalt between us and the men some other mothers raised.

And that is when they shoot us, point blank, with impact munitions. The woman on my right falls forward; the woman on my left is struck in the head; I feel my bone break. My right ankle is encased in a bulky cast after a fall the previous week, and those American sons shoot my other foot out from under me.

Today, now that federal agents have withdrawn, our protests go on peacefully. But America, be wary. Forget Portland at your peril. Everyone thinks they'd have joined the Resistance if they lived in 1940s Europe, when we know that most stayed inside, served supper, tucked the children into bed with a kiss and a lie: "All is well, close your eyes."

Don't wait to be knocked off your feet. It may be you they aim for next.

If they are willing to fire on me for standing with my Black neighbors, what havoc will be wreaked on the Black bodies left behind if I vacate this street?

Urbani is the author of Landfall and When I Was Elena

TheView Essay

SOCIETY

America is failing moms. Let's start over

By Lyz Lenz

IN 1974, HUMORIST ERMA BOMBECK PUBLISHED A syndicated newspaper column that looms over the lives of American mothers whether they've read it or not. In "When God Created Mothers," Bombeck describes God making a mother with the help of an angel. "She has to be completely washable, but not plastic. Have 180 movable parts ... all replaceable," God tells the angel. "Run on black coffee and leftovers. Have a lap that disappears when she stands up. A kiss that can cure anything from a broken leg to a disappointed love affair. And six pairs of hands."

My mother, who homeschooled eight children, saw that column as a mark of her valor. Not only did it hang on our wall at home, I grew up hearing it quoted in church sermons on Mother's Day.

But once I became a mother, I came to hate that column. I think Erma Bombeck did us dirty.

As the pandemic forces us to rethink almost every aspect of our society, from why we go into an office to how we set up a kindergarten classroom, allow me to suggest that we reassess the very foundation of our society: motherhood.

Motherhood is valorized in American culture because we don't want to admit the truth: we have built an entire economy on the backs of unpaid and poorly paid women. Even as gender roles have shifted in the U.S., the expectation that the mother will be the parent primarily responsible for maintaining the household and taking care of the children, no matter what else she has on her plate, is still as true today as when Bombeck wrote her column. Never has this been clearer than during the pandemic.

ALTHOUGH IN 2017, 41% of mothers were the sole or primary breadwinner for their family and an additional 23.2% brought home at least a quarter of their total household earnings, the loss of most outside support—from school, from camp, from day care—has meant that mothers are the ones picking up the slack. A recent study of about 60,000 U.S. households published in the academic journal *Gender, Work & Organization* showed that in heterosexual couples where both partners were employed, mothers "have reduced their work hours four to five times more than fathers." There's no reason to believe this will get better—and plenty of reasons to suspect it will get worse—as school districts announce back-to-school plans that are all remote or a hybrid of online and in person. The drive to reopen the economy without adequate childcare will force women from the workforce in record numbers.

Society will call it a choice, when in reality, it's a failure of the system.

This is not a new problem, nor are the solutions a mystery. We've just chosen until now not to listen. It's time to abolish our conception of what it means to be a mother in America and rebuild it on a policy level.



When women leave the workforce, society will call it a choice. In reality, it's a failure of the system

First, we need to normalize women receiving help with childcare. We are the only industrialized nation without guaranteed paid parental leave, and for half of Americans, full-time day care costs more than in-state college tuition. Additionally, other industrialized nations offer income supplements to help raise children or subsidies for childcare costs. We do not. This disregard has continued even in these unprecedented times. As economist Betsey Stevenson pointed out to Politico, "We gave less money to the entire childcare sector than we gave to one single airline, Delta." The U.S. also ranks 26th in the world for access to preschool for 4-year-olds, and 24th for 3-year-olds. But access to early-childhood education rarely becomes a top policy priority. The implication is clear: Mom will take care of it.

We also need to recognize the hypocrisy in giving mothers so little support when we make it difficult for women to choose when and whether to have children in the first place. Recently the Supreme Court ruled 7 to 2 to allow employers the right to deny insurance coverage for birth control. In addition to preventing some women from getting pain relief from endometriosis and heavy periods,

ILLUSTRATION BY VANESSA BRANCHI FOR TIME



this decision takes away a measure of control that can alter the entire trajectory of a woman's life. Meanwhile, states like Texas and Iowa, which had already put up barriers for women seeking abortions, tried to use the pandemic as a cover to further erode health care access for women by claiming the procedure was nonessential, a determination contradicted by leading health organizations.

America has the highest maternal mortality rate in the developed world (a number that rises significantly for people of color), and in addition to taking steps to combat this disgraceful problem, we should actually take into account the considerable risk that comes with pregnancy and childbirth and the long-term implications for those who are forced to become moms when they're not ready. A study by the research group ANSIRH (Advancing New Standards in Reproductive Health) at the University of California, San Francisco's Bixby Center for Global Reproductive Health found that women who sought an abortion and were denied one were more likely to live below the federal poverty line, more likely to stay with abusive partners, and more likely to suffer life-threatening complications during pregnancy and birth.

64.2%

Percentage of mothers in the U.S. who brought home at least a quarter of household earnings in 2017

0 WEEKS

Amount of federally mandated paid parental leave in the U.S.

70¢

Amount moms earned on average for every dollar dads earned in 2018

Beyond letting women decide whether to have a baby, our government needs to pass legislation that would ensure that those who do become moms are paid the same as dads. According to the National Women's Law Center, for every dollar white dads made in 2018, Asian American and Pacific Islander moms made 89¢, white moms made 69¢, Black moms made 50¢, Native moms made 47¢ and Latina moms made 45¢. In 2017, Michelle J. Budig, a professor of sociology at the University of Massachusetts, published a report, "The Fatherhood Bonus and the Motherhood Penalty," in which she explained women's wages tend to decrease after they have kids while men's tend to increase, though these shifts are not equal across income distributions. "First, there is a wage penalty for motherhood of 4% per child that cannot be explained by human capital, family structure, family-friendly job characteristics, or differences among women that are stable over time," she wrote. "Second, this motherhood penalty is larger among low-wage workers while the top 10% of female workers incur no motherhood wage penalty."

Part of the disparity between fathers and mothers may be due to employer discrimination, Budig explained, citing research suggesting that companies view dads as more competent and worthy of promotion than moms. "Ideas of what make a 'good mother,' a 'good father,' and an 'ideal worker' matter," she writes. "If mothers are supposed to focus on caring for children over career ambitions, they will be suspect on the job and even criticized if viewed as overly focusing on work."

But modern motherhood is also relentless. Not only do mothers in America today continue to spend more time on both childcare and household chores than fathers do, despite men's increased involvement at home, they also spend more time with their children than they did in the 1970s, when Bombeck wrote that mothers had to have six pairs of hands, even as they worked full-time jobs. Unable to justify the cost of childcare compared with their wages or, in the case of a global health crisis, faced with no childcare at all, women end up being the ones to walk away from work.

PREVIOUS ECONOMIC CRISES in the U.S. have put men out of work, and we've bemoaned the hit to masculinity. This pandemic has hit women, specifically mothers, particularly hard, but instead of contemplating the creativity, discovery and productivity that are lost when women are forced from the workforce, we expect them to lean in so far, they fall off a cliff.

In the Bombeck column, the angel comments that the mother is too soft. "But tough!" God replies. "You can imagine what this mother can do or endure."

How much longer will fables of valor be held up as an excuse for using mothers to prop up a failing system? Even if women *can* handle it, or at least appear outwardly to be handling it, does it really have to be this hard? How many fathers would find "enduring" to be a satisfying existence?

American mothers have been the undersupported cog in the wheel of American capitalism for too long. We must now completely reimagine their role and start over.

Lenz is the author of Belabored: A Vindication of the Rights of Pregnant Women





The Plague Election

**THE PANDEMIC HAS
CHANGED THE WAY
WE CAMPAIGN,
HOW WE VOTE
AND WHAT WE VALUE**

BY MOLLY BALL

**ILLUSTRATION
BY JOAN WONG
FOR TIME**





IN THE 2020 THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN, NOBODY IS SICK AND POLITICS is the center of the universe.

The Democratic Party has just nominated Joe Biden and his running mate at its mid-July convention in Milwaukee, while Republicans are gearing up to renominate Donald Trump in Charlotte, N.C. At his usual rallies, Trump is pointing to the roaring economy to make his case for re-election, while Biden struggles to stir up crowds with his plea for a return to normalcy. Trump's allies continue to promote conspiracy theories about the Biden family's entanglements in Ukraine, leading increasingly desperate Democrats to push for a second impeachment in the House. Both parties are campaigning furiously across the country, knocking on millions of doors to turn out voters in November.

But in the 2020 that's actually happening, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed everything—from how the campaign is conducted to how we vote to what we value. It has canceled conventions, relegated fundraising and campaigning to the digital realm, and forced many states to rapidly change how people get and submit their ballots, with unpredictable and potentially disastrous results. The acute crises have refocused the nation's attention, bringing issues like public health and economic and racial inequality to the fore and prompting the public to revisit what characteristics it wants in its leaders.

For four years, Trump has been the dominant force and inescapable fact not only of national politics but also of American life. Now he finds himself displaced as the central character in his own campaign by a plague that answers to no calendar, ideology or political objective. Just as the virus has changed the way adults report to offices and children go to school, upending whole industries in the process, it has spurred a massive shift in the fundamental act of American democracy: how we select the President who will be charged with ending the pandemic's reign of destruction, dealing with its aftermath and shaping the nation that rises from its ashes. And as with so many other changes wrought by the coronavirus, the practice of American politics may never be quite the same again.

This was always going to be an unusual contest—the high-stakes re-election campaign of a historically divisive President at a pivotal moment for the nation, a referendum on his norm-shattering style and disruptive vision, a test for his scattered opposition to prove which side of a polarized political spectrum represents the mainstream. As the campaign enters its final three-month stretch, Trump trails badly in national and battleground-state polls as Americans give his dismal handling of the pandemic a failing grade. But the end of Trump's turbulent term will be written by the virus. It startled us with its rise and spread

TRUMP FINDS HIMSELF DISPLACED AS THE CENTRAL CHARACTER IN HIS OWN CAMPAIGN



in January and February, suspended normal life in March and April, and lulled many into complacency before whipsawing us again with its resurgence in June and July. Who knows what kind of October surprise it may have in store?

LIKE MOST THINGS these days, presidential politics has adapted in ways that can get a little weird. For example, on Facebook one recent Thursday evening, Donald Trump Jr. is rhapsodizing with the aging former Chicago Bears coach Mike Ditka about childhood physical abuse. “Maybe a few more kids in this country need a little bit more ass whoopin’ than participation medals!” says Trump Jr., who wears an open-necked purple polo shirt and AirPods. Ditka, whose phone is tilted upward toward his bottle-brush mustache, looks confused. “How can you say that?” he replies. “These poor kids.”

The broadcast, an installment of Trump Jr.'s *Triggered* podcast, epitomizes the content the Trump campaign is feeding hungry supporters online. On another recent evening, it hosted “The Right View,” in which Trump Jr.'s girlfriend Kimberly Guilfoyle, Eric Trump's wife Lara, and Trump campaign aides Mercedes Schlapp and Katrina Pierson laud the debunked virtues of hydroxychloroquine as a COVID treatment in a segment that will eventually rack up more than half a million views on Facebook.



The campaign was already creating such online content, but it's newly central in a world where rallies risk becoming superspreader events.

The Biden campaign has also moved online, where its presence, like its candidate, is more sedate and traditional. “Events” are advertised to local supporters and organized around constituency groups or issues, just as they would be in a normal campaign. Biden’s wife Jill appears, via Zoom, at a “virtual campaign stop” with the mayor of West Palm Beach, Fla., to talk about his plans for seniors; former Georgia gubernatorial candidate Stacey Abrams hosts an online “racial and economic justice roundtable” with business owners in Detroit; Biden himself joins his former running mate, Barack Obama, for a stagey 15-minute “conversation” about the Trump Administration’s failures.

Despite the pandemic, Trump had hoped to keep up the rallies central to his political mythology. But an attempted return to the stage in Tulsa, Okla., on June 20 turned into a debacle, with a sparse, mostly maskless crowd that barely filled the bottom deck of the indoor arena. Lately he’s settled for online “tele-rallies,” glorified conference calls that Trump supporters in key states are invited to tune in to a couple of times a week. At a recent one targeting voters in Maine and New Hampshire, Trump dutifully shouts out the local Republican candidates,

▲
Campaign volunteers watch as an election official displays a mail-in ballot in Manhattan

extols lobster fishermen and vows to get tough on Canadian currency manipulation. Almost 13,000 people are listening live, and hundreds of thousands more will eventually “view” the half-hour audio stream. “The future of our nation will be defined by patriots who love our country and want to build it up and make it bigger and better and stronger—or it will be defined by the radical left. And usually radical left Democrats are left-wing extremists who hate our country,” he intones.

In person, this kind of line would draw a roar from Trump’s throngs of admirers, but online, the only feedback is the silent scroll of Facebook comments. Trump’s political adviser Jason Miller says the tele-rallies have been a hit. “The genius of Donald Trump is that he knows how to foster and build one-on-one relationships with his voters,” he says. But it’s clear the virtual gatherings are no substitute for the real thing. Lacking his usual source of mass adulation, the President has taken to touting the crowds that line the streets when he visits various states on official business.

Some local candidates—mainly Republicans—are still holding in-person events despite the risks. But the pandemic has become a vector for partisan attacks. When a GOP Senate candidate in Virginia posted a video of himself attending an indoor political event without a mask, the state Democratic Party seized on the image to call him “dangerously irresponsible.” Many state Democratic parties have chosen to hold all-virtual conventions, but several of their GOP counterparts have tried to blaze ahead. The Republican Party of Texas took its case all the way to the state Supreme Court, which sided with the Houston mayor who had canceled its in-person convention. The hastily assembled virtual confab that ensued featured extensive technical difficulties—at one point, *Texas Monthly* reported, pranksters invaded an online planning document and added “Peepeepoopoo” to the schedule—and by the end angry delegates ousted the state chairman.

It’s been a similar story at the national level. Democrats decided early on that the planned July convention in Milwaukee would not be feasible; it was pushed back to mid-August and radically scaled down, with delegates staying home and voting remotely and Biden himself staying away. The GOP has had a bumpier road. In June, Trump moved the convention from Charlotte, N.C., to Jacksonville, Fla., in a fit of pique over the North Carolina Democratic governor’s insistence on safety protocols. As Florida’s COVID-19 caseload surged this summer, party officials made a series of frantic adjustments, culminating in a last-ditch effort to hold the festivities in an outdoor stadium in the August heat. Finally, in late July, Trump announced the Jacksonville program would be scotched; the current plan, which is still being developed, is to hold a small number of party meetings in North Carolina and have the President accept the nomination with a televised speech at a location to be determined.

The lack of traditional conventions is perhaps not such a loss. Events where party insiders in smoke-filled rooms once actually picked presidential nominees and running mates have become, in the modern era, little

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more than infomercials. But they serve as a major engine of the parties' fundraising—another operation that's moved online in the age of coronavirus.

The swanky catered affairs that donors once paid tens of thousands of dollars per plate to attend are now BYOB livestreams. Campaigns have had to get creative as the novelty fades. "When the stay-at-home orders started, campaigns immediately started doing virtual events—a Zoom fundraiser, a field-organizer hangout," says Brian Krebs, who works at a Democratic digital-campaign firm called Rising Tide Interactive. "But the bar is rising now that a lot of people are Zoomed out. You've got to have a special guest or some kind of hook. People aren't going to show up if it's just 12 squares talking." On the other hand, celebrity guests can be easier to land when they can appear at your fundraiser without leaving L.A. The Texas Democratic Senate nominee MJ Hegar recently recorded an event with the cast of *Supernatural* and New Jersey Senator Cory Booker, none of whom set foot in Texas. Hegar campaign volunteers have also gotten creative with their outreach, holding a voter-registration texting session that doubled as a Taylor Swift listening party.

AROUND THIS TIME in an election, campaigns traditionally shift from registering, identifying and persuading voters to pushing them to the polls. The GOP is still doing so, knocking on a million doors a week, the Republican National Committee claims. But on the left, an intense debate has broken out about the ethics of going door-to-door amid a plague. Research suggests that in-person conversations with voters are the most effective way to get them to turn out. But most liberal groups and the Biden campaign aren't planning on door knocking this year, viewing it as too risky for workers and voters alike. One group that forged ahead, the Progressive Turnout Project, had to suspend its operations in a dozen states after several employees tested positive for COVID-19.

The irony is more Americans are eager for political engagement this year. In a Fox News poll in July, 85% said they were extremely or very motivated to vote, and the percentage of respondents who told Gallup they were more enthusiastic than usual about voting was up 10 points from 2016. Despite the difficulties of pandemic voting, primaries in states such as Texas and Georgia have set turnout records. At the same time, new voter registrations have plummeted because of the closure of government offices like departments of motor vehicles.

In Pinal County, Arizona, a small progressive organization called Rural Arizona Engagement had gotten only a quarter of the way to its voter-registration goal when it had to stop canvassing in March. Attempts to continue the work by phone were mostly unsuccessful. Even though Arizona is currently a coronavirus hot spot, the group hopes to go back into the field to turn out the vote. "We feel like if we can follow [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] guidelines and train our staff in a way that protects them and the people we're talking to, this is a year that requires this work to be done," says the group's co-executive director Natali Fierros Bock.



▲
Trump supporters at his rally in Tulsa, Okla., on June 20

The pandemic, she says, has heightened people's awareness of why their vote matters. (It's also increased canvassers' success rate: with so many people isolated in their homes, more are willing to answer the door and talk with a stranger.) Despite robust public support for wearing masks, the Pinal County board of supervisors decided against a mask mandate for businesses, and the rabble-rousing county sheriff, Mark Lamb, announced he would not enforce the state's stay-at-home order. (Lamb was forced to cancel a planned appearance with Trump at the White House when he was diagnosed with COVID-19 in June.) "People are starting to connect the dots," Fierros Bock says, "and consider who is serving in these local offices and how much power they wield."

THE PANDEMIC LANDED in the midst of America's primary-election season, forcing state election officials to adapt on the fly. The results offer a glimpse of the massive challenges the general election will pose—and the disasters that could ensue.

One of the first test runs came in Ohio, whose primary was scheduled for March 17, just days after the World Health Organization declared a global pandemic, the NBA abruptly suspended its season and states across the country began rapidly shutting



down. When Republican Governor Mike DeWine sought to delay the primary, some candidates sued, and courts ruled he didn't have the power to do so. Finally, at 4 a.m. on Election Day, with workers already starting to set up for balloting, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled that the state's health director could order the polls closed as an emergency measure. But the GOP-controlled legislature wouldn't go along with DeWine's proposal to move the vote to June, so a mail-only election with an April 28 deadline was held instead.

Other states soon had their own experiences with the logistical, constitutional and political complexities of pandemic voting. In Wisconsin's April 7 primary—held on schedule after a last-minute standoff between its Democratic governor and Republican legislature—hundreds of polling locations were forced to close when poll workers fearful for their safety declined to show up. Hundreds of thousands of voters still turned out, standing in socially distanced lines for hours to cast their ballots. (One scientific study later tied the election to a surge in COVID-19 cases, though other researchers disagreed with that assessment.) Georgia's June 9 primary melted down amid short staffing and technical problems, leading to endless lines and significant disenfranchisement

that Democrats charged was an intentional bid by GOP officials to suppress the vote. In New York, a state that normally votes almost entirely in person, election officials blame an unprecedented flood of absentee ballots for the fact that more than a month after the June 23 election, they still haven't declared a winner in some contests.

In each case, the coronavirus struck at a system that was already fragile. "It is a mistake to think of the pandemic as something separate from other problems with our election systems," says Rick Hasen, an election-law expert at the University of California, Irvine. "It interacts with the existing pathologies to make things worse." Hasen's most recent book, *Election Meltdown*, was published on Feb. 4, the day after the calamitous Iowa Democratic caucuses, whose delayed results illustrated the problems balky election infrastructure can produce even without a worldwide epidemic.

Many states that have been administering elections in person for decades are now attempting to pivot to mail voting, allowing people to vote absentee without an excuse or by citing COVID-19 as a legitimate medical reason. But not all. In June, the U.S. Supreme Court rejected a Democratic lawsuit that sought to allow all Texas voters to choose mail ballots. In Georgia, the GOP secretary of state mailed every voter a ballot application for the primary but will not do so for the general election. "I think it's because there was historic turnout, particularly among Democratic primary voters, and [Republicans] don't want to encourage that in the general election," says Nse Ufot, executive director of the New Georgia Project.

Some states, including California, Nevada and Vermont, will mail ballots to all voters, joining five existing states with universal mail voting. Many others will send all voters an absentee-ballot application, but experts warn they may not be prepared for the flood that is coming. Postage, postmark and notarization or witness requirements vary widely from state to state. States facing pandemic-induced budget crunches aren't necessarily in a position to pay for protective equipment and millions of stamps, but Congress has allocated only a fraction of the election funding they've requested. The U.S. Postal Service, itself teetering on the brink of insolvency, is ill equipped to handle the surge, and Democrats allege the popular agency, recently entrusted to a Trump ally, may be intentionally slowing the mail in urban areas in order to help the President. States' voting procedures continue to shift as the vote nears, making it difficult for voters to keep track of what's required.

What worries election experts the most is that all these challenges and changes could throw the result into doubt. Barring a blowout, election

night is likely to end without a clear winner, and it could take weeks or months to count all the votes. "What we didn't see in the primary, even where there was confusion or it took weeks to count, was someone calling the election rigged or stolen," says Aditi Juneja, an attorney who staffs the bipartisan National Task Force on Election Crises. "We want to make sure that happens in the general election. If the outcome is unclear or uncertain, that leaves space for bad actors to make wild claims."

That, of course, is exactly what Trump has been doing. Continuing the drumbeat he began in 2016, the President has repeatedly cast doubt on the legitimacy of the vote, wrongly insisting that mail voting is not secure and that the election will be "rigged." Trump claims there is a difference between vote by mail, which generally refers to ballots mailed to all voters, and absentee voting, when voters typically must request a ballot. But experts say there's no difference in terms of security. Trump attacked Jocelyn

BARRING A BLOWOUT, ELECTION NIGHT IS LIKELY TO END WITHOUT A CLEAR WINNER

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Benson, Michigan's Democratic secretary of state, for going "rogue" when she mailed absentee-ballot applications before the state's primary—a step many of her GOP counterparts had also taken. "It is not helpful when false or misleading information, mudslinging and partisan rhetoric are injected into the discourse," Benson tells TIME. "It causes people to have doubts about the sanctity of the process and the validity of their vote. The truth is, we are working every day to make it easier to vote and harder to cheat."

On July 30, Trump suggested postponing the presidential election, prompting an immediate outcry from Republicans and Democrats alike. "The concerns the President has raised are not valid in the state of Ohio," Ohio secretary of state Frank LaRose, a Republican, tells TIME. "Both political parties in Ohio have trusted our system for 20 years and work hard to get voters to take advantage of voting by mail." As for postponing the election, "That is not something we should even be considering," he says.

Election experts of both parties worry that Trump's pernicious campaign to undermine confidence in the election's integrity is a pretext for refusing to accept the result if he loses, throwing the nation into constitutional crisis or worse. When a bipartisan group of academics and former officials called the Transition Integrity Project recently war-gamed a contested election, every iteration of the exercise produced "both street-level violence and political impasse," the group's organizer, Georgetown Law professor Rosa Brooks, told the *Boston Globe*.

WHEN THE REALITY of the pandemic began to set in, Trump's approval rating initially went up, as often happens for Presidents in times of crisis. The percentage of Americans who approve of Trump—which has stayed within a narrow band throughout his term—reached 46% in late March, the highest level since his Inauguration, according to the polling average maintained by FiveThirtyEight. Then it began to plummet.

Today, barely 40% approve of Trump's performance, while nearly 55% disapprove. Americans now disapprove of his handling of the pandemic by a 20-point margin. Biden holds significant leads in key battlegrounds like Wisconsin, Florida and Michigan. States such as Texas, Arizona and Georgia, which Democrats haven't won at the presidential level in decades, may now be up for grabs. Many top Republicans fret that their candidates are in for a wipeout up and down the ballot. "The breadth and depth of Trump's weakness is hard to overstate," says Democratic pollster Margie Omero, a member of the Navigator Research team that has surveyed more than 24,000 Americans on a rolling basis since March. "There was a little bit of rally-round-the-flag at the beginning—people wanted him to succeed—and then when it was clear that he wasn't taking it seriously, you saw that change."

In truth, Trump was an unusually weak incumbent long before the pandemic hit, the only President never to top 50% approval in Gallup's regular tracking. His current rating remains higher than his nadir of 35% in August 2017, after the white-supremacist violence in Charlottesville, Va. Democrats' current 8-point advantage on the generic ballot is about the same as their margin in the national vote in 2018. Biden has consistently held an edge over Trump, posting margins similar to or greater than the current state polls since before he even entered the race. A large portion of the American electorate seems to have made up its mind about this President early on, abandoning him—and his party—and never looking back.

Indicators that normally correlate to incumbents' political fortunes, such as the economy, may not apply this year, says GOP pollster Patrick

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Ruffini. The situation is simply too anomalous. Many people see the pandemic as a fluke wrought by China, and may be receptive to the argument that the economic pain is not the President's fault. Trump may also be benefiting from the popular emergency economic relief legislation Democrats helped him enact. "The country can unite behind its leaders in a crisis if they feel like things are at least moving in the right direction," Ruffini says. "The summer's case spike seemed to break off that possibility for the President. He'll still have a chance to show that things have turned a corner before November, but time is running very short."

COVID-19 HAS CHANGED the tenor of the election in unmistakable ways. Optimism has nosedived: the share of people who believe the U.S. is on the right track has declined 20 points since March. The pandemic has brought new urgency to issues like access to health care, inequality and the social safety net, while driving Trump's preferred topics of immigration and trade out of the picture. "The voters are fundamentally the same, but the context of the 2020 election has changed," says UCLA political scientist Lynn Vavreck, author of *Identity Crisis: The 2016 Presidential Campaign and the Battle for the Meaning of America*.





Trump's character flaws suddenly loom larger for voters. "For a long time, it was annoying but it didn't necessarily change anything in their lives—I wish he'd stop tweeting, but the economy's good," says Lanae Erickson, senior vice president at the center-left think tank Third Way, which commissioned polls and focus groups of thousands of voters in suburban swing districts. "What this has done is to put the perception they already had about Trump together with real, horrific impacts on them and their family and their country."

Asked an open-ended question about Trump's vision for the country, about half the respondents in Third Way's surveys volunteered "self-serving" or "divisive." Respondents also rejected his calls for "law and order" in response to street protests. Asked who is hurt by Trump's vision, 30% of undecided suburban voters said "all of us." "It used to be people would say LGBT people, or women, or people of color," Erickson says. "Now, 4% say immigrants, 6% say minorities—but 30% say all of us."

Some focus-group participants were asked what they were looking for in the election. The responses were heavy on leadership qualities: people yearned for someone who was strong, compassionate and listened to experts. People agreed that Trump was

^
Trump, pictured in Tulsa, has cast doubt on the legitimacy of voting by mail

strong (and questioned Biden's strength) but rated the President abysmally on the other two.

Just as Trump's worst qualities were magnified, Biden's strengths suddenly seem matched to the moment. When he announced his candidacy a year ago, he said he was compelled to run by Trump's equivocal response to Charlottesville. Some Democrats criticized his mantra of a "battle for the soul of the nation" as too puffy or vague at a time when his rivals were pumping out ambitious left-wing policy proposals. But a character-based campaign, tinged with nostalgia, now looks not just prescient but essential, whether or not you believe Biden has what it takes to deliver on it.

Trump's campaign insists he is positioned for victory despite the headwinds. Public polls are undercounting Republicans, says Miller, the Trump political adviser, and the President's supporters are more enthusiastic about voting by a 2-to-1 ratio. "Are people going to stand in line for two hours to vote for someone they're not enthusiastic about?" he asks. But analysts in both parties are skeptical. "Overwhelmingly, voters believe the pandemic and the resulting economic meltdown are the most important issues facing the country," says GOP pollster Whit Ayres. "Efforts to change the subject might work with people who are already in favor of the President, but there's no evidence they're working with the people who need to be brought into his coalition if he's going to win."

If the pandemic has revealed the fault lines in American society, it has exposed something else too: some things are still too important to get caught up in politics. Trump's attempts to make public health a partisan matter have mostly failed. Large majorities of Americans support their states' pandemic restrictions, believe it's more important to rein in the virus than to get the economy up and running, think more needs to be done and—by resounding margins—support mask wearing.

The national mood has undergone a wholesale shift in this most tumultuous of election years. In Third Way's studies, voters talked about feelings of sadness, anger, anxiety and fear. Pollsters' response rates have skyrocketed because so many lonely, homebound people are answering the phone just to have someone to talk to. America is a divided nation, but also one that craves communion and solidarity. When a Black man was brutally murdered on video by police in Minneapolis, people took to the streets in unprecedented numbers. Three-quarters of Americans said they backed the recent racial-justice protests, and support for the Black Lives Matter movement surged, stunning political observers. It's hard to imagine this happening without Trump. But it's hard to imagine it without COVID-19 too.

When one day Americans look back on this plague, the campaign it coincided with will be an inextricable part of the story. The U.S. has held elections under difficult circumstances before: wars, depressions, natural disasters. Each time, in the face of difficulty, we voted on schedule; each time, democracy gave us the opportunity to choose how we would steer out of the crisis. —*With reporting by* MARIAH ESPADA *and* ABBY VESOULIS ▣



BIDE

The Click Campaign

**INSIDE JOE BIDEN'S
UPHILL BATTLE TO
WIN THE INTERNET**

BY CHARLOTTE ALTER

**ILLUSTRATION BY
JOAN WONG FOR TIME**



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JOYCE GREENBERG BROWN FIRST LEARNED ABOUT POLITICAL ORGANIZING from Martin Luther King Jr. in 1957, when he visited her youth group at a Philadelphia YWCA. She worked for George McGovern in Pennsylvania in 1972 and managed field offices in Florida for Barack Obama's 2008 and 2012 campaigns. She was so dedicated to Hillary Clinton that after Clinton lost, she dyed purple and green streaks into her white hair—the colors of the original suffragist movement—to protest Donald Trump.

If it weren't for COVID-19, Brown would be working at a field office for Joe Biden in Florida, where she lives. But the pandemic has prevented the kind of campaigning she's done for decades. There are no rallies in packed stadiums, no handshakes at parades, no photo lines or kaffeeklatsches. Instead, Brown, 76, is at home, spending hours using Google Voice to text Floridians about voting by mail, sending them a link where they can register for a mail-in ballot. She estimates she's sent roughly a thousand so far. "Digital is kind of a foreign word to me because I'm not a digital person," she says. "I would much rather be out on the streets."

For more than half a century, Democrats have put their faith in field organizing as the key to campaign success. But this year, instead of marching through neighborhoods with clipboards, Democratic staffers, Biden campaign volunteers and activists across the party are texting, messaging and commenting at their neighbors' virtual doorsteps. Instead of sharing beer in field offices, they're trading memes on Slack channels. Instead of finding volunteers at farmers' markets or school-board meetings, they're scouring Facebook groups and Twitter threads for potential recruits. Campaign events that were once held in high school gyms are now held on Zoom and promoted on Instagram and TikTok. Because in order to win Florida, or Arizona, or the White House, Democrats know that they first have to win the Internet.

You could think of the Internet as a battleground state in its own right. It has its own regions and cultures, its own communities and constituents, its own gatekeepers and power players. Just as operatives like to talk about the "five Ohios," or deploy different political messages in disparate parts of Pennsylvania, cutting-edge campaigns in 2020 are varying their pitches to voters by platform, storming different corners of the Internet with different tactics. They recruit volunteers in Facebook groups, blast factoids on Twitter and host Instagram Lives with celebrities. "Digital is the new field," says Democratic strategist Tim Lim. "You're basically taking 80 to 100 years of political organizing and throwing it out the window."

Across the party, operatives and volunteers alike are adjusting to their new roles. In late July, the Biden campaign unveiled an app, Vote Joe, that allows

**'YOU'RE
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Tim Lim,
Democratic strategist



volunteers to cross-reference their phone contacts with the voter file so they can target infrequent voters. Sign-ups on Mobilize, an events and volunteer-recruitment platform used by many Democratic campaigns, have increased 87% from April to July, and the vast majority of those sign-ups are now for digital events. State parties are training field organizers in online canvassing, grassroots groups are designing Instagram graphics, and teens are posting the hashtag #SettleForBiden to warn disaffected young voters against voting third party. TikTok videos with this hashtag have been viewed more than 50 million times.

But the Democrats have a lot of catching up to do. In recent years, the party has lagged behind the GOP's investment in digital infrastructure and advertising. Republicans have mastered the Facebook algorithm and become experts at making right-wing grievance go viral. Unlike Biden, who spent decades practicing the politics of handshakes and huddles, Donald Trump rose rapidly in 2016 thanks in part to a digital strategy that weaponized targeted Facebook ads. (Trump's digital strategist, Brad Parscale, a political novice in 2016, was tapped two years later to run the 2020 campaign, but was replaced in July amid sinking poll numbers and poor turnout at the President's first in-person rally in months.)

Trump, in other words, has been focusing on digital for four years; Biden has been at it for about four months. The investment shows: Trump has 11 times as many Twitter followers as Biden and eight times as many interactions on Facebook, and he outspent



Biden 3 to 1 on Facebook in the past 30 days. More than Florida or New York, the Internet is Trump's home state. "Trump's campaign was literally built around Facebook," says Tara McGowan, founder and CEO of the nonprofit ACRONYM, which builds digital infrastructure for Democrats. "Biden's campaign is still trying to make digital a centerpiece, but that's not how their team has thought in the past."

Yet followers, Facebook interactions and ads don't win elections; votes do. Biden is already ahead in the polls. What he needs now, his supporters say, is organizers to help him turn those poll numbers into votes, especially in an election where many Americans will be casting ballots by mail for the first time. That means grandmothers sending texts, teachers making graphics and homebound activists typing personalized Facebook messages, all working together to take on Trump's digital colossus and spread the gospel of voting by mail. To win in November, as Biden digital-organizing director Jose Nunez puts it, "The Joe Biden campaign and the Democratic Party [have] to build the largest grassroots digital volunteer movement in history."

MARIANA CASTRO HAS BEEN WAITING for this moment. A 26-year-old from Peru who was protected from deportation by the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, Castro has spent most of her adult life advocating for immigrants' rights. When Trump won Florida in 2016, she knew she would spend the next four years fighting him.

▲ Biden at a socially distant campaign event in Wilmington, Del., on July 14

"This not Biden vs. Trump," she says. "This is my entire community, my family, against Trump."

Now, as the deputy digital director for the Florida Democratic Party, Castro helps lead a team of six women, all in their 20s, who spend their days organizing Florida voters on social media. They live in five different cities—one in New York—and none have ever met one another, but they've become a close-knit team through daily Google Hangouts and FaceTime calls. Not even Castro and her boss, Chelsea Daley, 26, have met in real life.

As Daley sees it, the Internet can be carved into turf, just like a state. Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, TikTok and Snapchat each require a different outreach strategy, messaging and tone, and reach different types of voters. Which means each of the digital organizers specializes not in traditional subsets, like geographic regions or age groups, but in mastering different social-media platforms.

In the weeks leading up to the Florida Democrats' virtual Leadership Blue convention in July, the Twitter organizer sent hundreds of tweets announcing new attendees and speakers, while the young woman in charge of TikTok posted a "What I'd Wear As" meme video of herself dressing up as various Florida political types. The Instagram organizer put up a photo of a dog attending the convention on a laptop, while on Pinterest, the team posted a recipe for "Leadership Blueberry Pancakes." "Every platform is so different," Daley says. "The audience is different, the way you organize and mobilize is so different."

Castro spends her days in front of two laptops, an iPad and a ring light for making Instagram videos. She's mostly focused on organizing the Latino community in Florida, which she does from her mom's living room in Kissimmee. That means posting new ads in groups like Venezolanos con Biden, recruiting Latino influencers for Instagram Live events or soliciting personal stories from Florida voters to share to the Democrats' various platforms. "For the Hispanic community, social media has always been a way of communication, because we often can't travel back to our home countries," she says. "You build different communities through these digital platforms." Castro uses WhatsApp groups rather than text chains, because she knows that's the preferred messaging app for many Latino families. "If I text my mom through regular message, she won't text me back," Castro says.

The pivot to digital organizing involves rethinking some of the foundational concepts of political mobilization, which are often rooted in physical spaces. *Organizer* no longer means a student with a bullhorn or a clipboard. *Actions* are no longer neighborhood canvasses on Saturday mornings. And *communities* can be groups bound by ethnic identity (Cubanos con Biden), shared experiences (Veterans for Biden) or personal passions. (On Facebook, nearly 1,500 people follow a page called Joe Biden Loves Dogs.) But at its root, organizing is about persuading people to disrupt their day-to-day lives to achieve a desired political result. Online, that relationship building unfolds in private Facebook groups, DM chats and text messages, and is often invisible to the public eye.

On Facebook, Daley's organizers keep tabs on grassroots noncampaign groups with names like Florida for Joe Biden 2020. When they notice

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someone who seems interested in doing more, they invite them to the official Democratic Party Facebook group for their region of the state, like Polk Democrats Grassroots Action. It's the digital equivalent of seeing a homemade sign in someone's window and inviting them to an official campaign event. The team calls these official Democratic Facebook groups "virtual field offices," and that's where the real work happens.

These offices are run by paid organizers, who ensure members show up to digital events and spread Biden's message on their respective networks. The goal is to replicate the same level of "relational organizing that you'd get in a field office," Daley says, invoking Obama's 2008 strategy, which relied on people recruiting their friends and family.

Organizers call this process bringing people "up the ladder of engagement." Posting on their own social feeds is the first rung. That leads to joining the digital field offices, which in turn leads to attending events, which leads to recruiting friends and family. Using this formula, the Florida Democratic Party says it has recruited more than 119,000 active volunteers. They've made 5.6 million calls and sent 4.3 million texts. Florida Democrats now have at least 500,000 more mail-in ballot enrollments than Republicans, and recent polls show Biden opening up a solid lead in Florida—a state Trump can't afford to lose.

BIDEN IS HARDLY THE FIRST Democratic presidential contender to try to harness the power of the Internet. Howard Dean pioneered online fundraising during the 2004 campaign. Obama used YouTube in 2008 and built an analytics team in 2012 that conducted massive data-mining experiments to boost fundraising. Bernie Sanders leveraged viral content and online donations in both of his primary bids. Biden himself has some digital instincts: a former aide recalls that when the White House digital team was posting its first Snapchat video, the Vice President came up with his now iconic flourish of donning aviator sunglasses.

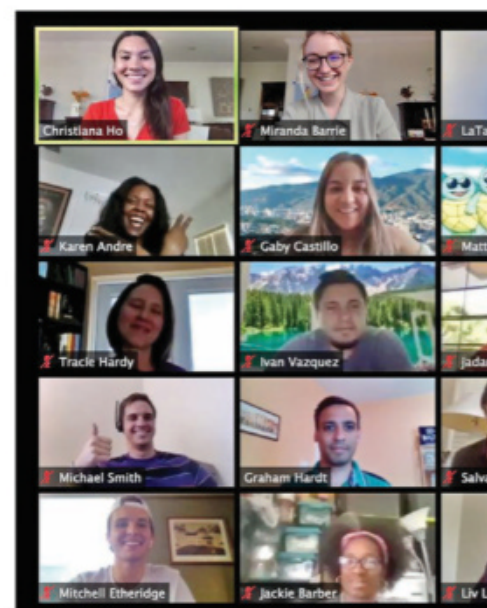
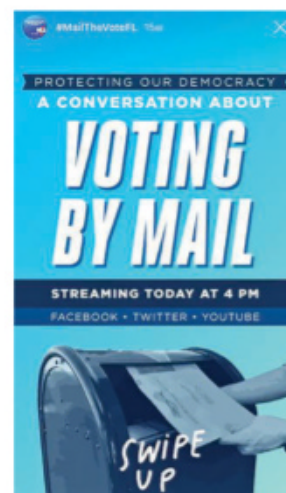
But at 77, Biden is an old-fashioned politician who's more comfortable working a rope line than posting on Instagram. During the Democratic primary, competitors like Sanders, Elizabeth Warren and Pete Buttigieg built sophisticated digital-outreach efforts; Biden emerged as the nominee despite having just a skeletal digital operation. Quarantined at home in the early days of the pandemic, he struggled at first to adjust to the Internet campaign, releasing a series of tepid videos to muted response.

In the months since, Biden has upped his game. He quadrupled his digital staff to roughly 100, bringing in hires from rival primary campaigns and media organizations like BuzzFeed. The Biden campaign, says digital director Rob Flaherty, now "actually looks a little more like a media publisher than a traditional campaign." It promotes Biden's message through feel-good videos designed to highlight the candidate's warmth. They tend to be positive, wholesome and practical, sharing graphics on his economic plans and videos from his fundraisers. Flaherty often talks about running a campaign to "restore the soul of the Internet" the way Biden aims to "restore the soul of the nation," leaving attacks to outside groups or the Democratic Party. Democratic National Committee chief mobilization officer Patrick Stevenson describes the division of labor this way: "We do the negative messaging; they do the positive messaging."

Biden's digital team knows the former VP's online following doesn't begin to compete with Trump's. So its strategy has revolved partly around leveraging the popularity of others. "Where are people already talking about this?"

**'TRUMP'S
CAMPAIGN
WAS LITERALLY
BUILT AROUND
FACEBOOK.'**

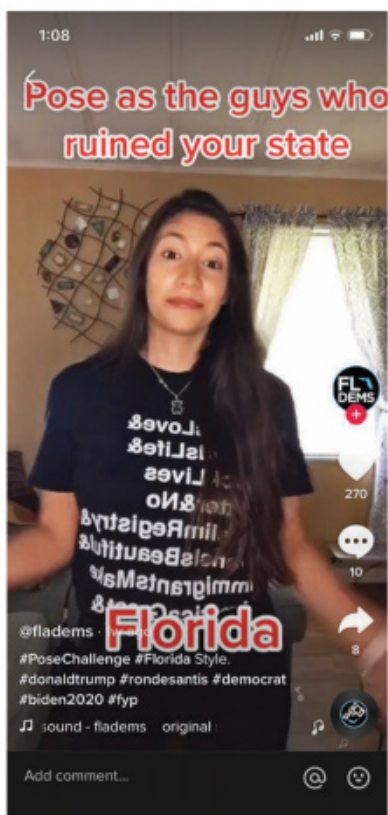
Tara McGowan,
ACRONYM



Where are the people who are already fired up about this?" says Biden senior adviser Caitlin Mitchell, 34, who is leading much of the digital strategy. Biden's team has organized Instagram Live sessions with influencers including TV personality Keke Palmer and Jerry Harris from the Netflix series *Cheer*. (The idea of working with Harris earned the support of Biden's college-age granddaughter Finnegan, who has the candidate's ear on digital matters.)

"They don't have the benefit of having these massive accounts," says Andrew Bleeker, founder of Democratic digital-consulting group Bully Pulpit Interactive. "What they do have is an ecosystem of progressives that are as fired up as I've ever seen."

To grow the campaign's digital reach, the first step is making contact with potential volunteers, often through an automated text when they sign up for an event, says Nunez, the campaign's new digital-organizing director. Once volunteers are inside what he calls the "front door," they'll be directed in one of two directions. If they live in a battleground state, they'll get linked with a local office. If they're volunteering in a nonbattleground state where the Biden team hasn't hired full-time staff, like California or



Clockwise from top: Biden's Facebook exhorts voters to wear masks; a TikTok post from Florida Democrats; organizers gather on Zoom; an Instagram story urges Florida Democrats to vote by mail

New York, they'll become part of a "distributed organizing vertical," based off the volunteer structures built by the Sanders and Warren campaigns. Battleground-state volunteers focus on registering local voters and persuading people in their area. Non-battleground volunteers focus on recruiting volunteers and driving turnout in battleground states.

Grassroots groups are helping too. Soul Squad, a team of roughly 30 amateur graphic designers, spend their free time packaging Biden's speeches and plans into digestible images to be shared on social media. The group is led by Christopher Schmidt, a 26-year-old middle-school science teacher in Pennsylvania who spends roughly five hours a day designing the graphics and managing the team. Schmidt says he was never very involved in traditional canvassing or field organizing; he doesn't like to confront strangers, especially about politics, especially at somebody's front door. But engaging online, he says, feels more natural. "It's super easy to just have someone share a graphic," he says. "It's kind of like baby steps for people that aren't always involved in politics." By October, he hopes, the people who are now posting his images will be making phone calls for Biden instead.

If Biden's digital content often has the feel of a friendly grandpa telling a story that goes on slightly too long, Trump's is all about outrage. His team blankets Facebook with ads that leverage fury to sell swag—Trump T-shirts! Trump hats! Trump wineglasses!—and harvest the data. This strategy has made the President a digital Goliath. Using data from CrowdTangle, a public-insights tool owned and operated by Facebook, TIME compared Trump's Facebook interactions to a combined list of more than 25 high-profile Democrats, including Biden and his campaign pages, former President Barack Obama, every major primary candidate, high-profile Democrats in the House and Senate, and Democratic Party pages. In the past three months, Trump alone got between double and triple the Facebook interactions of all these Democrats combined. "If they were having any success, they would be spending more on Facebook," says Trump campaign spokesman Tim Murtaugh of Biden's team. "Why are they spending so little? It's because they're not having success. It's not because they don't have the money."

The Trump juggernaut extends to digital organizing as well. It aimed to recruit 2 million volunteers; as of this month, 1.8 million had volunteered since January 2019, Murtaugh said. Since March, he says, those volunteers made more than 64 million voter contacts (phone calls and door knocks) through a web-based system called TrumpTalk. Four million of those happened in the past week. By contrast, Biden's organizing operation and the accompanying app only launched in late July: in the first few weeks, they've sent 500,000 texts and made 100,000 phone calls, a fraction of Trump's reach.

BUT TEAM BIDEN insists there's reason to be hopeful. There are signs that Trump's famous digital campaign—known as the "Death Star"—may not be firing on all cylinders anymore. Trump demoted Parscale in July. And feeding red meat to his base doesn't do much to persuade independents or swing-state voters, who favor Biden in most recent polls. Harvesting hate-clicks worked against Hillary Clinton, the subject of years of conspiracy theories and corrosive misogyny, but Biden tends not to elicit the same passion. Besides, as Biden's team insists: engagement is not the same as persuasion. "You'd rather have a hundred views if they're the right views than a thousand retweets in the echo chamber," says Teddy Goff, who ran Obama's digital operation in 2012. "An ad targeted toward Trump people that says, 'Donald Trump is the best, Democrats are crooks' will always be more engaging than an ad from Biden targeting persuadable seniors that says, 'Here's my plan for the middle class coming out of the recession.'"

Amanda Litman, a longtime digital organizer who is now the executive director of Run for Something, which recruits young Democrats to seek state and local office, makes a similar point. "Good digital programs are really boring," she says. "It is very authentically Joe Biden. It is stable. It is solid. It is a little boring. But it gets the job done."

The disparate text messages from the Trump and Biden campaigns crystallize the difference in their approaches. Trump's texts often take on the tone of an angry ex-boyfriend ("URGENT: President Trump texted you multiple times with no response?"). Biden's have a cheerier tone ("Do you want to spend some time with Joe Biden and Elizabeth Warren? They are hosting a grassroots fundraiser on Friday, and you're invited!"). Trump's messages sometimes suggest he will hold a grudge against delinquent donors ("President Trump asked why the last patriot didn't join. It's YOU!"), while Biden's subject lines are deferential: "A respectful ask of you."

There's no doubt the Democrats are fighting an uphill digital battle, outspent and outgunned. But they're betting their adversary may self-destruct. "We love that Brad [Parscale] called it the Death Star," says McGowan. "Because we know what happened to the Death Star in the end." —With reporting by ABIGAIL ABRAMS and LESLIE DICKSTEIN/NEW YORK □

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JOE BIDEN/FACEBOOK; @FLADEMS/TIKTOK; @MIRANDA_BARRIE/TWITTER; @FLADEMS/INSTAGRAM

The police
are a broken
legacy of a
racist system
and tasked
with work
they are not
trained to do.

It's time to
radically
rethink public
safety in
America

BY JOSIAH BATES | CAMDEN, N.J.
AND KARL VICK | MINNEAPOLIS





THE FORCE
Clockwise from top left: Police officers in Minneapolis; two Camden County, N.J., police vehicles; an officer at a Minneapolis gas station; and Sister Chabree Muhammad, with kids in Camden in July

PHOTOGRAPHS BY **WIDLINE CADET** (CAMDEN, N.J.) AND **RAHIM FORTUNE** (MINNEAPOLIS) FOR TIME

Nation

IN MINNEAPOLIS, THE FIRST DAYS AFTER GEORGE Floyd's killing exist in memory as kind of a blur. Even so, the burning of the Third Precinct police station on May 28 was a signal event, and not only for residents of the south side, where Floyd was killed and so many buildings went up in flames. Five miles to the north, residents of the city's other substantially Black area worried the chaos was coming their way. That night, Phillipe Cunningham, a city-council member representing part of North Minneapolis, drove around for 2½ hours without seeing any cops at all. They were hunkered in their stations.

In the void they'd left, a community stepped up. On Emerson Avenue, gang members took pride of place in the phalanx guarding the So Low Grocery Outlet, one of the north side's only two supermarkets. "We locked it down for seven nights," says the Rev. Jerry McAfee, a Baptist preacher who works with gangs. Members of his patrol were identifiable by green and white bandannas and weapons not necessarily displayed. "Here's what I can tell you," McAfee says. "Fort Knox wasn't guarded any better."

In an integrated neighborhood a mile and a half away, unarmed residents in orange tees formed a perimeter around the other supermarket. Night after night, they challenged the white youths circling the block in pickup trucks without license plates, vetted unknown volunteers and—it dawned on more than one of them—edged toward an approach to public safety that might supplant the deeply flawed one that had provoked the mayhem around them.

What could replace the police? The question, until recently confined to activist circles, has been forced into national debate by a brutal logic: If the killing of Floyd truly left Americans with a resolve to address systemic racism in their country, shouldn't the starting point be the system that produced his excruciating death? Almost two weeks after now former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin knelt on Floyd's neck, the Minneapolis city council concluded that its police department was beyond reform and must instead be replaced. In a unanimous vote, the council embarked on a yearlong quest to produce a "new model for cultivating safety in our city," explicitly steered by the desires of the people most oppressed by the current one.

If Minneapolis produces a new safety paradigm, the implications will be profound—reaching beyond the horror of police killings toward a rethinking of a criminal-justice system lamented by liberals and conservatives alike. If it fails, a status quo deeply rooted in the control of Black bodies will remain the norm, "and this will have been a nice little moment in history where we almost did something," says Jeremiah Ellison, a council member for Minneapolis' north side.

Residents' safety hangs in the balance, and so does a movement so new, it still needs a good name.



Though Minneapolis council members linked themselves to "defund police" by announcing their bold initiative while standing behind letters spelling out the protest slogan, their ambition can't be summed up in two words, much less two words with the potential to be so easily misunderstood. To succeed, the movement needs a more precise slogan than "defund," to capture an actual intention that has been all but impossible to articulate because it comes, for now, from another world, one that acknowledges that Black lives matter.

"We're in a time of theorizing," says Oluchi Omeoga, a co-founder of the Minneapolis activist group Black Visions Collective. "We're trying to build a world that does not exist yet."

In that world, the core mission of public safety is not enforcement but care, and a call to 911 is more likely to produce a specialist in the problem at hand than a police officer carrying a gun, 15 lb. of



gear and the additional weight of three centuries of racialized law enforcement. The new system would look for solutions from the very communities that the old system regarded as the sources of problems and guide investment accordingly. Law enforcement would not disappear, not in a country with more guns than people. But the officers who remained would be highly professional and trained in an ethos of valuing life. They would be focused on solving people's problems rather than locking people up and would work alongside those they serve.

Countless hours have been spent in the past few weeks discussing what has gone wrong in policing, but Minneapolis voters may take action as early as November, in the form of a referendum that would allow city lawmakers to continue exploring a new approach to safety. Everyone already knows it's going to be hard. Camden, N.J., a city more than a thousand miles away, has been held up by many as an

NORTH SIDE

The Rev. Jerry McAfee, left, and Minneapolis city council member Phillippe Cunningham, above, embody a generational change in activism, but both call community the key to public safety

illustration of what the existing model can be. But the experiences of citizens there reveal not just the potential for real change but also the limits of what has been possible—at least so far—while still keeping residents safe.

“As an elected official, I will not make any decisions whatsoever that will decrease safety,” says Cunningham. “Everything that I do is about increasing the safety of the residents. And it is very clear that this system that we have now is not doing that.”

ONE THING THE SYSTEM does have is longevity. Today's modes of policing in the U.S. can be traced back hundreds of years, and with them an understanding of why, in 2020, according to the database Mapping Police Violence, a Black person is three times as likely as a white person to be killed by police.

In America's early years, towns protected themselves informally, with the help of a part-time night watch—though night watchmen were notorious for simply using their shifts to get drunk. The country's first publicly funded police department started in Boston in 1838, with the primary goal of protecting property.

But in some places, “property” included human beings. “In this country, for the years that cover the 1600s to the mid-19th century, the most dominant presence of law enforcement was what we call today slave patrols. That's what made up policing,” Harvard history professor Khalil Gibran Muhammad told NPR this year. These patrols were tasked with providing swift punishment for runaways and enslaved people who broke the rules, and assuaging the white population's fear of a revolt.

Long after the Civil War, sheriff's departments administered slavery's postbellum by-products, segregation and Jim Crow oppression. During World War II, after thousands of African Americans moved to Oakland, Calif., to find work in the shipyards, the city responded by recruiting Southern police officers. In the postwar boom, redlining—which prevented home loans from going to Black people—enforced segregation of neighborhoods and denied Black people homeownership, the primary route to middle-class wealth. Maintaining that system reinforced the imperative of the slave patrol: vigilant oversight of a population perceived as threatening despite, or perhaps because of, its being oppressed.

The modern civil rights movement in the 1960s changed laws but not the fundamental nature of policing. Black and brown people have been disproportionately targeted by programs like the New York police department's street-stop effort known as stop and frisk, which a federal judge ruled in 2013 was used in an unconstitutional way. The past few months have served as a searing reminder of

Nation

how those dynamics play out in today's society. As protesters took to the streets, speaking out against racism and law-enforcement violence, some departments seemed to prove their point; in New York City in May, police drove an SUV into a group of demonstrators. In Philadelphia, police teargassed protesters trapped in a channeled roadway.

The recent “militarization” of local police—with departments nationwide receiving armored vehicles left over from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan—obscures more than the faces of officers: the truth is, cops rarely confront violent crime. Cadets spend most of their average 21 weeks of training on defensive tactics and firearms. But time-use studies find that patrol officers mostly deal with traffic, medical calls, accidentally tripped burglar alarms, arguments and the like. In 1999, when Baltimore was called the most violent city in America, its mayor said its police spent 11% of their time on crime, half of that not serious. In smaller places, studies have found that all crime occupied 7% to less than 1% of an officer's time.

“There's a mismatch between how we've constructed cops and what they actually do,” concludes New York University law professor Barry Friedman in a 70-page paper he wrote in March, titled “Disaggregating the Police Function.”

Officers are not only unequipped to handle what former Milwaukee police chief Ed Flynn has called the “intractable social problems that are dumped in the laps of our 25-to-30-year-old first responders.” They also often arrive heavy with the tools of forceful control: baton, Taser, firearm. Thanks to redlining and its reverberations, the neighborhoods where those social problems tend to run especially deep are often those where Black and brown people have been confined. And as Phillip Atiba Goff, a co-founder and the CEO of the Center for Policing Equity, a think tank focused on addressing racial gaps in law-enforcement impacts, points out, they are also the areas that tend to be highly policed: Black and Hispanic people are more likely than white people to have multiple interactions with the police.

It's a dangerous mix and has left many minority communities with scant reason to view the police as allies. Especially in the years since smartphones made it easy to share high-quality video, the world has been treated to a view of a problem that is much older than that technology, whether it's an officer caught on camera shooting someone in the back or using a choke hold: such incidents define policing for Black Americans. And beneath the headline-making moments caught on video lie policies from the Fugitive Slave Act to stop and frisk.

That history is a large part of why many activists and academics alike have come to believe that the relationship between Black Americans and U.S.



FROM WITHIN

Two Camden County police officers on patrol in the city; the department has made a concerted effort to focus on de-escalation and relationship building within the community



police can't be solved with incremental change. "The community brings its problems to the police to work out solutions within the community, but the police don't have any of the tools that we really need to solve these problems," says Alex Vitale, a professor at Brooklyn College and the author of *The End of Policing*, which argues that reform, training and department diversity don't go far enough. (A study released in July found that diversity on a force did not in fact lead to less police violence.)

But changes on a nationwide scale will be challenging. There are around 18,000 police departments in the U.S. There is no real federal oversight when it comes to policing agencies. Police departments across the country look mostly the same because, by and large, it has been assumed that there is pretty much one way of doing things.

"If we go down this path to re-examine what policing looks like, we need to make sure we know what really works. We need to look at what our potential outcomes will be," says Joseph Schafer, a professor of criminology and criminal justice at St. Louis University. "If you were going to sit down and create a policing system from scratch, it wouldn't look like what we have right now."

THE CITIZEN PATROLS left the streets of North Minneapolis when the police returned. But for several days after, McAfee was still hearing from gang members, looking not for trouble but its opposite. "Most of the guys that we work with, they love this community," he says. "They was still calling, showing up, 'cause they needed purpose."

On the city council, Cunningham and Ellison were not the only members who saw opportunity in the unrest. The Minneapolis police department (MPD) was deeply troubled, and activists had been beating the drum for change. In 2017, on the 150th birthday of the force, a group called MPD150 published a history of the department's brutal treatment, including the 1990 killing of 17-year-old Tycel Nelson, shot in the back as he fled, and the 2015 death of an unarmed Jamar Clark, which prompted weeks of protests. One chapter called for abolishing the department in favor of "community-led safety programs."

That once radical notion had already been gaining traction among academics. Two years after serving on President Obama's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, Yale Law School professor Tracey L. Meares wrote that "policing as we know it must be abolished before it can be transformed." Researchers at other major universities gathered at the same conclusion.

"It's all broken in policing," says NYU's Friedman. "We have decided to treat the police as a one-size-fits-all remedy for everything that's wrong." Friedman argues that most of the duties that have

accreted to police would be better dealt with by someone else, including traffic enforcement (which parts of New Orleans have awarded contract rights to a civilian firm to handle), care of the homeless (fielded in Denver by volunteers), drugs (more widely understood since the opioid crisis as an addiction grounded in despair) and mental-health crises (which Eugene, Ore., has dealt with since 1989 using counselors from a nonprofit that fields some 20% of 911 calls).

Mental illness accounts for a growing share of the jail population nationwide. That, in turn, argues for a public-health approach to safety, says Ebony Morgan, whose father was killed during an encounter with police in Eugene in 1996. A registered nurse, she works with the CAHOOTS program (short for Crisis Assistance Helping Out on the Streets), which last year sent a crisis counselor and a medic to 24,000 calls. "If you have the option that doesn't have the potential to escalate into something fatal, that is just so important," she says. "It's about trying to shift that lens back to the community responsibility, for folks to acknowledge that the way that we as a society treat people will have an impact on the rest of their life, and maybe even its duration."

In her classes at Johns Hopkins University, political scientist Vesla Weaver presents two charts comparing the world's most developed countries. The first shows spending on social welfare. "The U.S. is way out there in the stingiest part of that graph," she says. "Then on the other side, I show public-safety expenditure. We are way out on the extreme other end." Her point is a stark one: reorienting police funding "almost involves a recharacterization of the American state."

That may well be the idea embedded in the assertion that Black lives matter. And like the movement that carries the name, the new safety paradigm percolated from the grassroots. Weaver says the closest things to a pilot program were efforts, undertaken over the past five years in poor neighborhoods in Chicago and Baltimore, that relied on a community's own self-knowledge. "This is what safety really feels like," she says. "It doesn't mean the police. Us harvesting our own things. Us being mentors to young men in our neighborhoods."

This, then, was the positive alternative taking shape when Floyd's death abruptly pushed open the door to new ideas. But dipping a toe in the waters of change has proved ill suited to the outraged anger that has swept across the country since late May. Calls to "defund the police" rose to the top—for some, shorthand for the argument that public funding spent on law enforcement would be better spent on social services, but for others an idea that raises the specter of complete lawlessness. In a few places, the battle cry has been taken literally: the Los Angeles police department's budget was

cut by \$150 million, the NYPD's by \$1 billion. The amounts may be invested instead in social programs, perhaps even for more than a fiscal cycle.

But only the City of Lakes appears intent on what its city council terms a “transformative new model for cultivating safety.” The Minneapolis council’s June 12 resolution called for a full year of study, “centering ... stakeholders who have been historically marginalized or underserved by our present system.” After moving very quickly—“It all just happened so fast, to be honest,” says Cunningham—the idea is to proceed deliberately and consult widely.

“The only way we can solve this problem is, you gotta talk to me,” says Olivia Pinex, who was working at a south Minneapolis food bank on one recent day. “There’s a lot of solutions inside the community, but the problem is the police officers want to kill us first and then talk to our family. How about we talk first?”

No matter how that conversation goes, nothing substantial can happen without a change in the city charter. Getting a referendum to that effect in front of voters is a complicated process, opposed by Mayor Jacob Frey, who would lose line authority over the police department—and by the powerful police union. Also working against the council is a wave of violence: “gunfire incidents” in Minneapolis were up 224% in June and 166% in July, compared with a year earlier. At the moment, voters may feel they face a choice as stark as the contrasts on display along the corridor of Lake Street, where the plywood on storefronts alternates between elaborately rendered messages of aspiration (UNLEARNING WHITENESS) and desperate pleas (DON’T BURN and KIDS LIVE HERE). With nothing in between.

“The people who stoked this fire of ‘defund,’ they need another way to say it,” says Houston White, who owns a luxe barbershop on the north side. “It’s a PR and narrative nightmare. This is such a fragile discussion.” White, for instance, says he would prefer that a call about a loud stereo not be answered by “an officer with his hand on a gun.” But he also remembers his troubled youth and says the threat of arrest helped scare him straight.

In truth, not even activists who call for “abolition” expect the police to vanish. “I don’t think that the Minneapolis police department will be gone even next year, even in five years,” Black Visions Collective’s Omeoga says. “But it’s a transition. We know that this system is not working for us.” If a referendum to change the city charter does pass (or if the process takes so long that the question doesn’t get in front of voters until November 2021), the council will have more time to try to bring around skeptics, some of whom are indignant at not being consulted already. One is McAfee. The preacher casts the Black Lives Matter generation—intersectional and independent and often younger—as at once naive and rigid.

And yet McAfee seems to be on the same page as many Black Lives Matter activists. He arrived at his interview with TIME in sweats, having rushed to a home where a gang member was on the edge of violence. He had organized volunteers to stand between protesters and the north side’s own police precinct, and Minneapolis police confirm asking him to provide security at George Floyd’s memorial service. Years ago, McAfee says, “we had an on-call thing” that brought a “community-response team” to hospitals to head off retaliation after someone in the neighborhood was injured by another. That program was successful, he says, because the people have learned what works—they had to, given the risk of summoning police.

“What we’ve done for years is what the hell they’re talking about doing,” McAfee concludes.

It’s not so easy to formalize such arrangements into a municipal system. A buy-in from the current police chief would help (though it is highly unlikely, given his obligations to the mayor). As a Black veteran of the Minneapolis department widely admired for his efforts to change its culture, Medaria Arradondo is cited by activists as proof that the problem is the system, not individuals. But there will still be a place for cops in a new paradigm, and Cunningham recalls telling Arradondo, “I want you to know that while I don’t necessarily believe in reform, I believe in you. So if you could build your ideal force, if you did not inherit this system, what would that look like?”

SOME HAVE BEEN looking east—to Camden, N.J., widely regarded as the current exemplar of change in urban policing.

There, Pyne Poynt Park, home of the North Camden Little League, presents a clear view of the Philadelphia skyline. On a mid-July day, as temperatures inched above 90°F, Bryan Morton, a community activist who runs the league, offered a group of his older players reminders from the sidelines as they warmed up and got ready for practice: “Don’t forget the pitching machine. Y’all know the layout.” Morton started the league in 2011 in response to the high crime rates in Camden, as a way to give kids something to do. At the time, he says, none of the parks in the neighborhood were safe for kids to play in.

The ball field’s waterside position is a little removed from Camden’s downtown, but the problems within the city had their way of reaching the park. Sometimes when it was time for practices to start, drug dealers would still be using the same space to sell. “Shoot-outs were common; high-caliber weaponry was the norm,” he says.

At around the time when the league was launched, Camden, which is majority-nonwhite and nearly half Black, was one of the poorest cities in the state, with a 2012 median household income of about \$22,000 and a poverty rate of about 40%. It also had among





WITNESS TO CHANGE
Wasim Muhammad and his sons Nafi and Haafiz; Minister Muhammad says that when conditions in Camden were so bad that the city “started having gunfire in broad daylight downtown,” police “weren’t helping”

the highest crime rates in the country. Even so, says Morton, the members of the city’s understaffed police force spent their time in their cars or planted behind their desks.

“When you think of shootings, you think they happen in the evening or at night,” says Wasim Muhammad, a lifelong resident of Camden and minister of its Muhammad’s Temple of Islam No. 20. “We started having gunfire in broad daylight downtown. It was just out of hand.” And, he says, the police weren’t helping. In his view, the department was like a structure too unsteady to be worth shoring up: “Sometimes a building can be so damaged it’s not that we’ve got to repair the building; we’ve got to tear the building down and start a new one.”

Which is, essentially, what the city did. At the time, its budget was already running at a deficit, and statewide financial issues led then New Jersey Governor Chris Christie to cut state aid that paid the salaries of hundreds of Camden city workers. Nearly half of the police department was laid off in 2011, and because the union was unwilling to negotiate pricey elements of their contract, no new officers were hired. When 2012 saw an all-time-high murder rate, the county and local government had the leverage to disband the department entirely; even the union couldn’t stop the move, not that it didn’t try. The department relaunched in 2013, under county control rather than the city’s. Many of the laid-off officers were rehired for the revamped department. Also new: when the department reunited, it was under new leadership—leadership that Camden County communications director Dan Keashen says is committed to working with the local government to keep costs reasonable.

County freeholder director Louis Cappelli Jr. and former Camden mayor Dana Redd say they had two main objectives when they relaunched the department: reduce the crime rate, and make citizens feel safer. For Redd, a Camden native, this meant making sure residents had a voice in what the department would look like. “That’s probably the side that I’m very proud of, because while we were going through the difficult times in Camden, I spent quite an enormous amount of time meeting with the community, communicating with people,” Redd says. “I wanted to assure them that we weren’t going to quit because the going got tough.”

One thing the new department didn’t immediately solve was use of force and discrimination. As part of a major investigation of policing in New Jersey, in 2018, NJ Advance Media combed through data from every local department in the state; Camden’s use of force from 2012 to 2016 was on the high end. The investigation found a spike in complaints after the county took control and as crime began to drop; the vast majority were dismissed by the department. And even adjusted to account for population, a Black

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person in Camden was 8% more likely to have a police officer use force on him or her than a white person was.

Those numbers only started to change later. In 2014, the department instituted an “Ethical Protector” training program, after which excessive-force complaints began to fall, and about a year ago the department stepped it up with a new use-of-force policy—vetted by the Fraternal Order of Police and ACLU alike—that authorized deadly force only “as a last resort” and that was touted as a potential model for better policing nationwide.

Today, in Camden, officers have a mandate to de-escalate as often as possible. The department uses a virtual simulator to train officers to handle a wide variety of situations, from a homeless man who refuses to budge from in front of someone’s garage to a distressed man ready to throw his child off a bridge. In that training, whatever the scenario, the officer’s goal is to preserve life. The simulator isn’t the only technology in which the county has invested. The department can monitor blocks that are overdue for a visit and keeps tabs on whether officers are lingering in their cars or walking the streets. It reviews body-camera footage from the streets, studies it and tries to correct any mistakes officers might have made.

Joseph Wysocki, who was part of the old department, has served as the new department’s chief since 2015. His goal is to get his officers to build relationships with the citizens whose safety is their job. “You have to work with the community. It’s not us vs. them, it’s us together,” he says. Wysocki proudly recounts a department barbecue at which a local kid at first had to be cajoled into asking an officer for a plate, only to later be spotted playing basketball in the street with that same officer.

Some evidence in favor of the relaunch is not just anecdotal. Murders are down 63%, and robberies are down 60%. Overall violent crime is down 42%. It’s hard to pinpoint cause and effect here: these shifts took place in the context of a national period of economic growth, which reached Camden too, to an extent, as the poverty rate sank by over 5% by 2019. The unemployment rate, 10% in early 2012, came down to 4.4% by the beginning of this year; though the exact link between economic conditions and crime has proved hard to pin down, a certain amount of improvement in safety may be mere correlation. But some community members, like Morton, say the new police force has helped the city get there. And the park where his Little Leaguers play is no longer a drug-trade hot spot.

“Before the change, the police department did not care about our safety,” Morton says. “When they made the transition, they built partnerships with members of the community.”

That Camden is home to a community is plain to see. Its residential areas look worn down, but people who walk the streets wave to one another. Morton knows, however, that this community was skeptical about whether the relaunch would bring the needed change. To him, just as the police had to be held accountable, the people had to be open-minded about the possibility of moving beyond the past.

To others, seven years under new management has not resolved that skepticism. For one thing, the department still does not ethnically reflect the city it is protecting. “There is one Black captain,” says the Rev. Levi Combs III of Camden’s First Refuge Progressive Baptist Church. Metro police officers are disproportionately white, and most don’t live in the city. Combs dismisses the department’s rebirth as primarily a financial decision—city officials estimate they could be saving up to \$16 million a year with the department under county control, in part by escaping perks that were baked into the old contract, though the savings in early years were not in fact as high as predicted—and the supposed community buy-in as mere window dressing. “It’s marketing the city of Camden to attract more white people and more affluent people,” he says. “We have a lack of jobs, homeownership, lack of education resources.”

Advocates of a new safety paradigm see Camden as a case study in the boundaries of reform. Freed of a recalcitrant union and trained to prioritize life, police may well be seen as less of a threat by the community they are meant to serve, they say. But that’s a long way from a transformational model of safety built not around policing but instead around investment in the lives of Black citizens, who for decades were viewed as a source not of solutions but of threats. “There is no investment in our community,” says Combs.

Sure enough, even as Camden’s experience has become the go-to example of revamped policing, the defunding movement has hit there too; after all, when the department was reimagined, the size of the force *increased*. While Wysocki acknowledges that Camden’s original police department was essentially “defunded” when it was shut down, he worries that a national movement to shift dollars away from law enforcement may hit departments in their budgets for officer training, the very aspect he believes has contributed to his city’s turnaround.

Camden shows that it’s possible to hit restart on a police department and to have public safety improve after such a move. But the city also shows that such a drastic change doesn’t guarantee a fix—and, perhaps, that there’s little reason for a department to wait to be defunded before it starts prioritizing the people it’s meant to protect.



BRYAN MORTON

Morton, on July 16, coaching a team for the Little League he started in Camden in 2011, says his city's relaunched police department has done a good job of establishing partnerships with residents



DOMINIQUE JOHNS

Johns, a lifelong Camden resident, speaks with a friend on July 17; Camden has been held up by many as an example of change in a police system, but some citizens want an even deeper transformation



OLUCHI OMEOGA

Omeoga, near the George Floyd Memorial in Minneapolis on July 17, calls this moment of potential change a "time of theorizing" as activists try "to build a world that does not exist yet"

THIS CRITICAL MOMENT for the future of public safety is not America's first. "We have been in crisis around policing before, and very little changes," says NYU's Friedman. "And I'm going to be extremely disappointed if we find ourselves in disappointment several years down the road."

Thousands of people have taken to the streets across the nation protesting police brutality and systemic racism. At the same time, violent crime has surged in some cities. The usual summertime bump in crime may well be compounded this year by a pandemic that has left millions of Americans out of work—Camden's unemployment rate is even higher than it was in 2012—and, some officials have suggested, by slowdowns from some police forces unhappy at being publicly vilified. (Police departments tend to say they're not slowing down, just overwhelmed.) But the residents of poorer neighborhoods are the ones who stand both to lose and to gain the most. And the recent violence is both ammunition for those wary of too much change too quickly and a reminder of the need for a public-safety solution that actually works.

"Some people look at [the new paradigm] as the removal of trained officials to deal with violent incidents," says Goff of the Center for Policing Equity. "Police can help communities stay safe from the violence of crime. They can't protect the community from the violence of poverty. Being poor is violent."

If this summer proves to be a time for progress on the problems that make everyone feel less secure, the protests and the pandemic won't be the only things that set 2020 apart. For some activists, it finally seems possible to take that difficult step forward on the unspoken but perhaps more crucial counterpart to "defunding" the police: funding communities to help them protect themselves. If one side of the coin is on display in Camden, the second side is not yet minted.

"I think that some of these words are easy to misinterpret," Goff says of the effectiveness of *defunding* as a catchall term for what needs to happen. "I'm interested in having a brand-new conversation on what public safety looks like. I care more about making sure that vulnerable communities have the resources they need so they don't have to call the police in the first place."

There's an appetite for that in Minneapolis. Betty Davis, a chemical-dependency technician who lives in nearby St. Paul, is eager for the Minneapolis city council to move ahead. "Do *something*: classes, seminars, something in the community so we know how to step in," she says. "Educate the community. Get it together. One chord."

The challenge—for Minneapolis, or whatever jurisdiction fashions what will amount to a test run for the new paradigm—is to find both the language

Nation

and the structure that works for everyone. There is an elegance to the idea: use the mantle of “public safety” to funnel resources into the community that needs them, and knows how to keep itself safe, and in doing so will make others feel safe as well. No less important, “the state” can begin to remake its historical dynamic with the Black community, by leading with something other than a gun.

In researching his book *Uneasy Peace*, which seeks to account for the dramatic decline in urban crime rates over the past two decades, Princeton sociologist Patrick Sharkey came upon one telling contributor: for every community nonprofit set up to confront violence, the local murder rate dropped by about 1%.

“I think a model of public safety that starts with care or concern is exactly right,” says Sharkey, “but it also has to be carried out by people who understand how to create safe streets, who are trained, who are trained to shift their work and their practices so that they’re not dealing only with people who walk through their doors but are instead looking out and saying, Where are the problems in this community?”

On those safe streets, nonprofit organizations, local community groups and neighborhood leaders will be empowered to take charge of situations. A social worker with proper training and funding will respond to a nonviolent call, instead of a cop with a badge and a gun. If there’s fear of potential violence, an officer will accompany the social worker and be available should the need arise, perhaps waiting at the curb. And if the streets are ever going to be truly safe, while all this is going on, people motivated by care and concern will be working behind the scenes to address the underlying issues that gave rise to the problem in the first place.

“There are going to be lots of places where it’s a disaster, I’ve no doubt. And there are going to be places where there are really bad outcomes,” Sharkey says. “I think what we have to recognize is—that’s already happening. That’s going on right now. We’re not working toward a utopia. We’re working toward a different model that will, on average, produce different outcomes.”

After hundreds of years of cities and their police departments doing the same things and getting the same results, any different outcome is a big ask. But it’s a future worth imagining. —*With reporting by*
ANNA PURNA KAMBHAMPATY □

BEGIN ANEW

Minister Muhammad, who compares Camden’s old police department to a building so wrecked it was only worth tearing down, plays with children at Camden’s MEL Childcare Center, which is associated with his temple



WIDLINE CADET FOR TIME







Portfolio

CAPTURING COMMUNITY

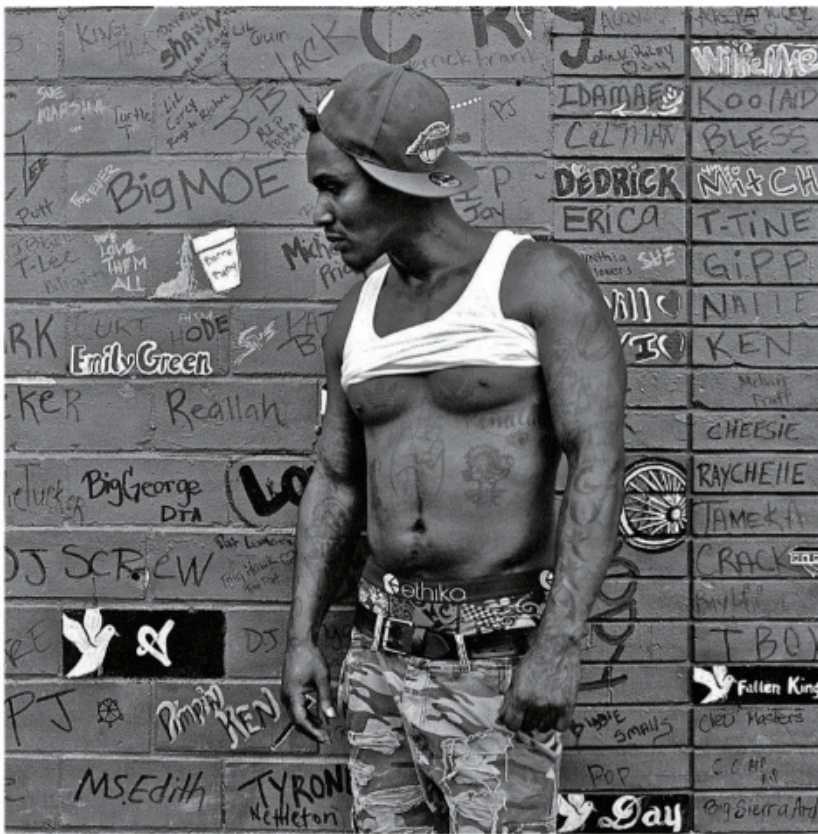
Earlie Hudnall Jr. has spent decades photographing historically Black neighborhoods in Houston

LONG BEFORE GEORGE FLOYD'S DEATH, EARLIE HUDNALL JR. was photographing the neighborhood where Floyd grew up. Houston's Third Ward, like many Black enclaves, has suffered the long-term effects of systemic racism and inequity. But Hudnall, who has been documenting several historically Black neighborhoods in Houston for more than 40 years, does not focus on the hardships of poverty. Instead, his photos capture the everyday lives of residents, filled with moments of beauty and joy. "People need to know that you see things within what they call 'the ghetto,'" says Hudnall. "It's home where kids and people have to survive and live and coexist together."

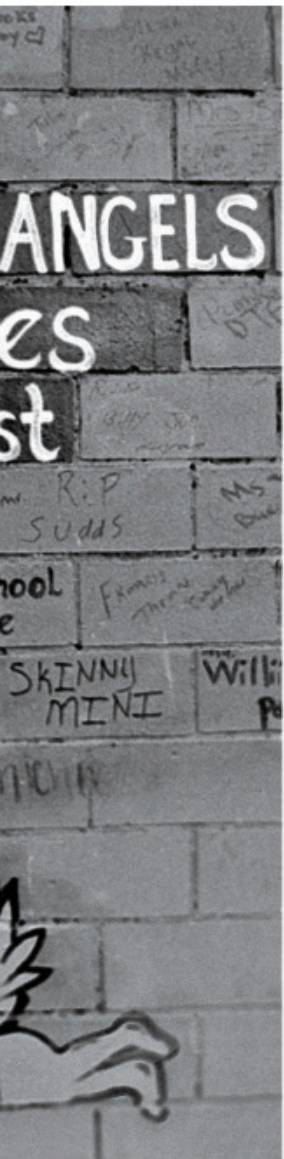
Hudnall's earliest notion of photography's importance came from sitting on the porch with his grandmother Bonnie Jean in Hattiesburg, Miss., looking through an album she had put together of the community. "That just stuck with me because it was a document that represented our history," says Hudnall. "So much has been lost within the Black community from not being able to maintain its own history, from slavery up till now." In 1968, after serving in Vietnam, he moved to Houston and studied at Texas Southern University, where he found a mentor in artist and professor John T. Biggers. "He always said, 'Art is life,'" Hudnall says. "One must draw upon their personal experiences, family, community and what you're all about. This has been my whole plight."

Hudnall records for posterity the architecture of weathered shotgun houses and the vibrant lives within them. He depicts people at ease, celebrating holidays, dressed in their Sunday finery, and kids in the thrall of summertime. "These are the young Floyds coming up," he says. "They need to be cared for and guided. Rather than holding up a sign and marching for a day or two, then forgetting about it, come here, talk to people, get to know them." —PAUL MOAKLEY

Wheels (1993). "These boys were just rolling from scene to scene in front of the camera," Hudnall says. "I seldom ask someone to pose. I just try to take the situation that's presented to me."



Clockwise from top left:
 Head Close Cut (1990);
 The Wall (2020);
 Masquerade From Katrina
 (2005); Lady in Black Hat
 With Feathers (1990);
 June 19th (1987); Black
 Birds (2013); Mr. Shine
 (1988); Why? (2020)

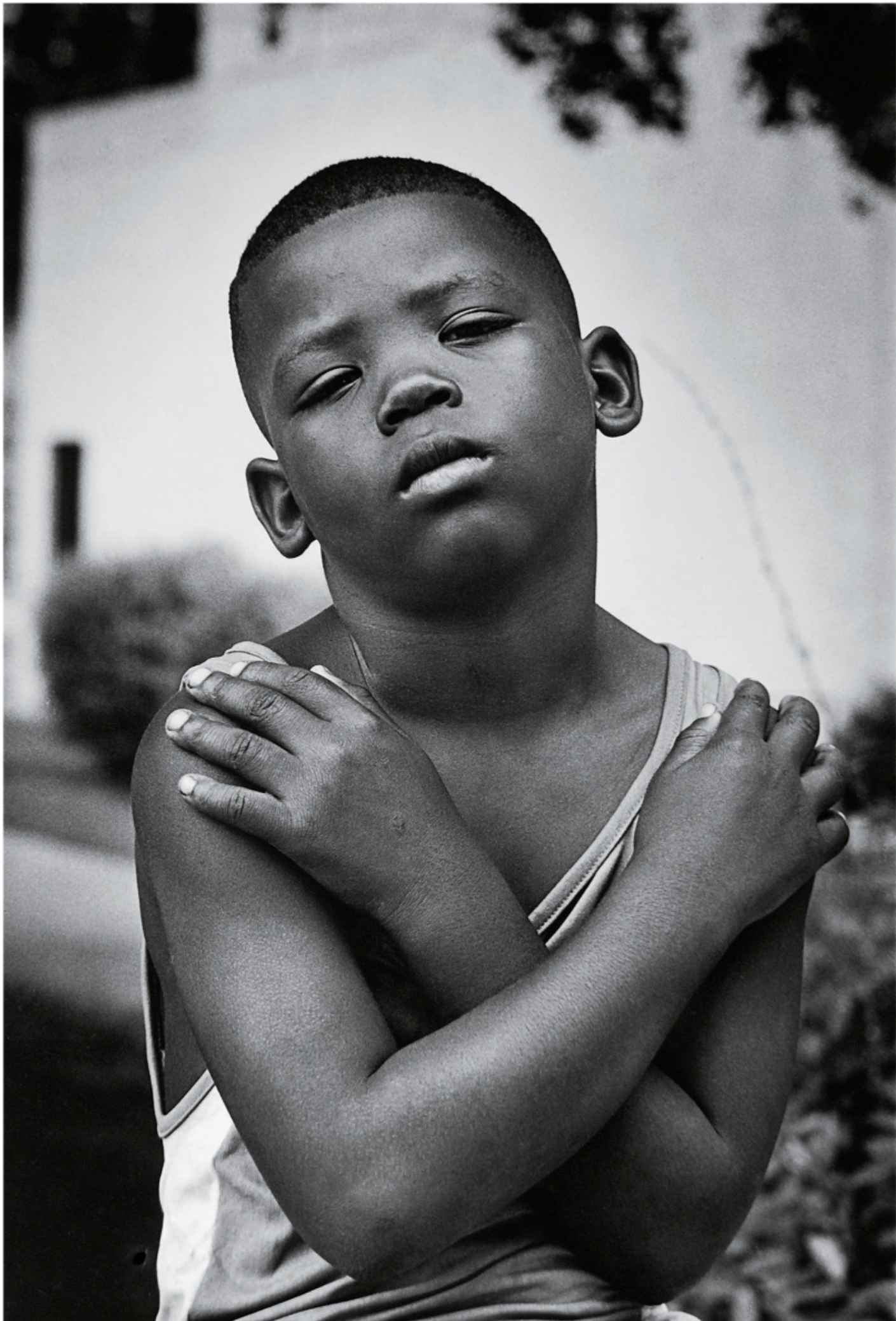






Hot Summer Days (2011). "Each day that I wake up, I'm just trying to photograph life as I see it," Hudnall says. "You have to walk around and respect what is about to happen in front of the camera. It's a sacred moment."





From left: Girl With Flag (1991); All Kings Were Boys (1989). "I want my photos to remind people of something or someone familiar and identify with it in some way," says Hudnall. "There is no greater gift."



Jarvis the robotic butler on duty at the Grand Hotel in Sunnyvale, Calif., on July 30

FEWER —
— **JOB**S,
MORE —
— **MACHINES**

**IN THE PANDEMIC ECONOMY,
HUMANS ARE BEING LEFT BEHIND**

BY ALANA SEMUELS

For 23 years, Larry Collins worked in a booth on the Carquinez Bridge in the San Francisco Bay Area, collecting tolls. The fare changed over time, from a few bucks to \$6, but the basics of the job stayed the same: Collins would make change, answer questions, give directions and greet commuters. “Sometimes, you’re the first person that people see in the morning,” says Collins, “and that human interaction can spark a lot of conversation.”

But one day in mid-March, as confirmed cases of the coronavirus were skyrocketing, Collins’ supervisor called and told him not to come into work the next day. The tollbooths were closing to protect the health of drivers and of toll collectors. Going forward, drivers would pay bridge tolls automatically via FasTrak tags mounted on their windshields or would receive bills sent to the address linked to their license plate. Collins’ job was disappearing, as were the jobs of around 185 other toll collectors at bridges in Northern California, all to be replaced by technology.

Machines have made jobs obsolete for centuries. The spinning jenny replaced weavers, buttons displaced elevator operators, and the Internet drove travel agencies out of business. One study estimates that about 400,000 jobs were lost to automation in U.S. factories from 1990 to 2007. But the drive to replace humans with machinery is accelerating as companies struggle to avoid workplace infections of COVID-19 and to keep operating costs low. The U.S. shed around 40 million jobs at the peak of the pandemic, and while some have come back, some will never return. One group of economists estimates that 42% of the jobs lost are gone forever.

This replacement of humans with machines may pick up more speed in coming months as companies move from survival mode to figuring out how to

operate while the pandemic drags on. Robots could replace as many as 2 million more workers in manufacturing alone by 2025, according to a recent paper by economists at MIT and Boston University. “This pandemic has created a very strong incentive to automate the work of human beings,” says Daniel Susskind, a fellow in economics at Balliol College, University of Oxford, and the author of *A World Without Work: Technology, Automation and How We Should Respond*. “Machines don’t fall ill, they don’t need to isolate to protect peers, they don’t need to take time off work.”

AS WITH SO MUCH of the pandemic, this new wave of automation will be harder on people of color like Collins, who is Black, and on low-wage workers. Many Black and Latino Americans are cashiers, food-service employees and customer-service representatives, which are among the 15 jobs most threatened by automation, according to McKinsey. Even before the pandemic, the global consulting company estimated that automation could displace 132,000 Black workers in the U.S. by 2030.

The deployment of robots as a response to the coronavirus was rapid. They were suddenly cleaning floors at airports and taking people’s temperatures. Hospitals and universities deployed Sally, a salad-making robot created by tech company Chowbotics, to replace dining-hall

employees; malls and stadiums bought Knightscope security-guard robots to patrol empty real estate; companies that manufacture in-demand supplies like hospital beds and cotton swabs turned to industrial robot supplier Yaskawa America to help increase production.

Companies closed call centers employing human customer-service agents and turned to chatbots created by technology company LivePerson or to AI platform Watson Assistant. “I really think this is a new normal—the pandemic accelerated what was going to happen anyway,” says Rob Thomas, senior vice president of cloud and data platform at IBM, which deploys Watson. Roughly 100 new clients started using the software from March to June.

In theory, automation and artificial intelligence should free humans from dangerous or boring tasks so they can take on more intellectually stimulating assignments, making companies more productive and raising worker wages. And in the past, technology was deployed piecemeal, giving employees time to transition into new roles. Those who lost jobs could seek retraining, perhaps using severance pay or unemployment benefits to find work in another field. This time the change was abrupt as employers, worried about COVID-19 or under sudden lockdown orders, rushed to replace workers with machines or software. There was no time to retrain. Companies worried about their bottom line cut workers loose instead, and these workers were left on their own to find ways of mastering new skills. They found few options.

In the past, the U.S. responded to technological change by investing in education. When automation fundamentally changed farm jobs in the late 1800s and the 1900s, states expanded access to public schools. Access to college expanded after World War II with the GI Bill, which sent 7.8 million veterans to school from 1944 to 1956. But since then, U.S. investment in education has stalled, putting the burden on workers to pay for it themselves. And the idea of education in the U.S. still focuses on college for young workers rather than on retraining employees. The country spends 0.1% of GDP to help workers navigate job transitions, less than half

what it spent 30 years ago.

“The real automation problem isn’t so much a robot apocalypse,” says Mark Muro, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. “It is business as usual of people needing to get retraining, and they really can’t get it in an accessible, efficient, well-informed, data-driven way.”

This means that tens of thousands of Americans who lost jobs during the pandemic may be unemployed for years or, in Collins’ case, for good. Though he has access to retraining funding through his union contract, “I’m too old to think about doing some other job,” says Collins, who is 63 and planning on taking early retirement. “I just want to go back to what I was doing.”

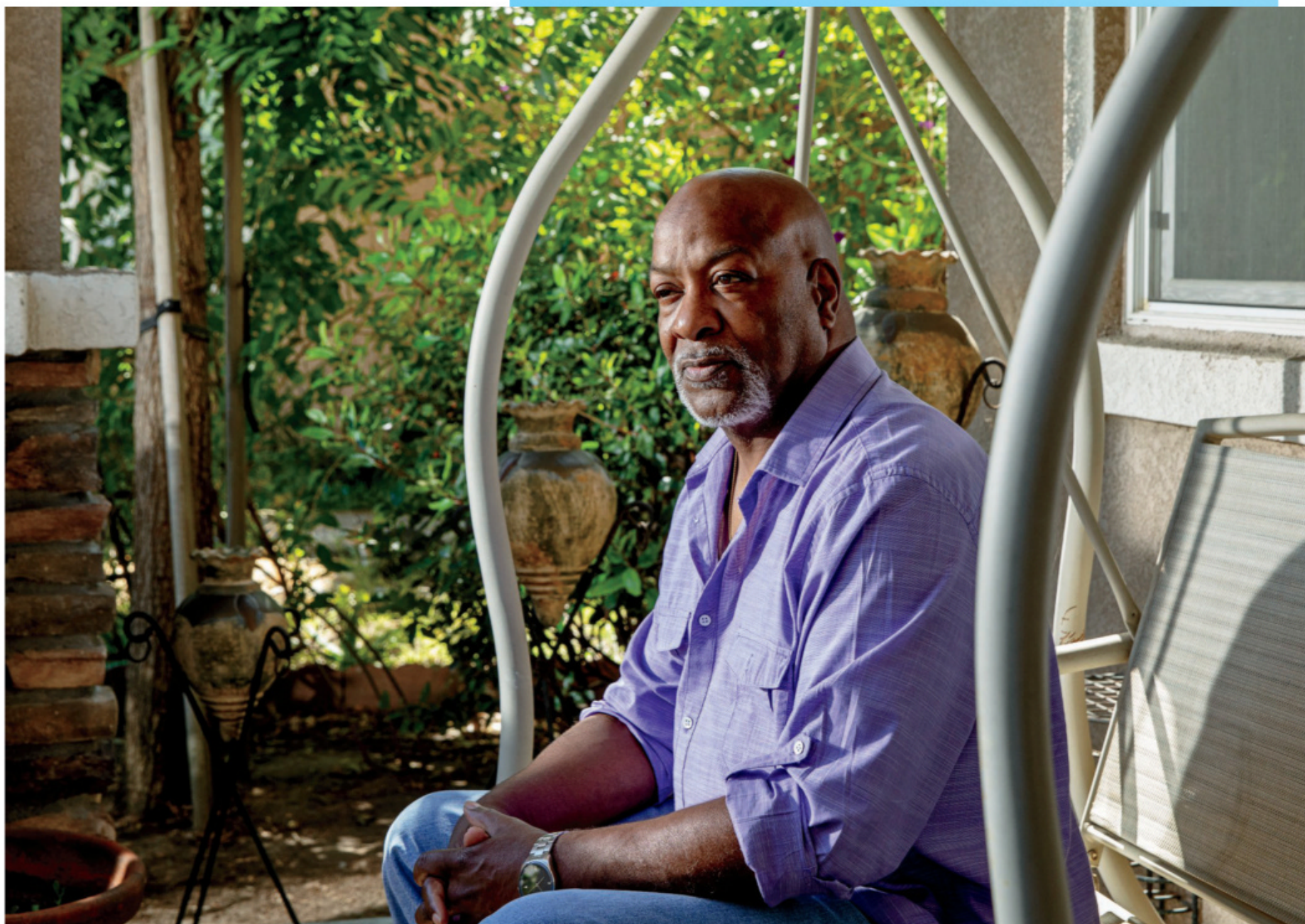
CHECK INTO A HOTEL TODAY, and a mechanical butler designed by robotics company Savioke might roll down the hall to

deliver towels and toothbrushes. (“No tip required,” Savioke notes on its website.) Robots have been deployed during the pandemic to meet guests at their rooms with newly disinfected keys. A bricklaying robot can lay more than 3,000 bricks in an eight-hour shift, up to 10 times what a human can do. Robots can plant seeds and harvest crops, separate breastbones and carcasses in slaughterhouses, pack pallets of food in processing facilities.

That doesn’t mean they’re taking everyone’s jobs. For centuries, humans from weavers to mill workers

have worried that advances in technology would create a world without work, and that’s never proved true. ATMs did not immediately decrease the number of bank tellers, for instance. They actually led to more teller jobs as consumers, lured by the convenience of cash machines, began visiting banks more often. Banks opened more branches and hired tellers to handle tasks that are beyond the capacity of ATMs. Without technological advancement, much of the American workforce would be toiling away on farms, which accounted for 31% of U.S. jobs in 1910

LARRY COLLINS, at home in Lathrop, Calif., on July 31, was a bridge toll collector until COVID-19 led the state to automate the job to protect employees and drivers. “I just want to go back to what I was doing,” says Collins, whose job is among the millions that economists say could be lost forever as companies accelerate moves toward automation.



Economy

and now account for less than 1%.

But in the past, when automation eliminated jobs, companies created new ones to meet their needs. Manufacturers that were able to produce more goods using machines, for example, needed clerks to ship the goods and marketers to reach additional customers.

Now, as automation lets companies do more with fewer people, successful companies don't need as many workers. The most valuable company in the U.S. in 1964, AT&T, had 758,611 employees; the most valuable company today, Apple, has around 137,000 employees. Though today's big companies make billions of dollars, they share that income with fewer employees, and more of their profit goes to shareholders. "Look at the business model of Google, Facebook, Netflix. They're not in the business of creating new tasks for humans," says Daron Acemoglu, an MIT economist who studies automation and jobs.

The U.S. government incentivizes companies to automate, he says, by giving tax breaks for buying machinery and software. A business that pays a worker \$100 pays \$30 in taxes, but a business that spends \$100 on equipment pays about \$3 in taxes, he notes. The 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act lowered taxes on purchases so much that "you can actually make money buying equipment," Acemoglu says.

In addition, artificial intelligence is becoming more adept at jobs that once were the purview of humans, making it harder for humans to stay ahead of machines. JPMorgan says it now has AI reviewing commercial-loan agreements, completing in seconds what used to take 360,000 hours of lawyers' time over the course of a year. In May, amid plunging advertising revenue, Microsoft laid off dozens of journalists at MSN and its Microsoft News service, replacing them with AI that can scan and process content. Radio group iHeartMedia has laid off dozens of DJs to take advantage of its investments in technology and AI. I got help transcribing interviews for this story using Otter.ai, an AI-based transcription service. A few years ago, I might have paid \$1 a minute for humans to do the same thing.

These advances make AI an easy choice for companies scrambling to cope during the pandemic. Municipalities



that had to close their recycling facilities, where humans worked in close quarters, are using AI-assisted robots to sort through tons of plastic, paper and glass. AMP Robotics, the company that makes these robots, says inquiries from potential customers increased at least fivefold from March to June. Last year, 35 recycling facilities used AMP Robotics, says AMP spokesman Chris Wirth; by the end of 2020, nearly 100 will.

RDS VIRGINIA, a recycling company in Virginia, purchased four AMP robots in 2019 for its Roanoke facility, deploying

them on assembly lines to ensure the paper and plastic streams were free of misplaced materials. The robots could work around the clock, didn't take bathroom breaks and didn't require safety training, says Joe Benedetto, the company's president. When the coronavirus hit, robots took over quality control as humans were pulled off assembly lines and given tasks that kept them at a safe distance from one another. Benedetto breathes easier knowing he won't have to raise the robots' pay to meet the minimum wage. He's already thinking about where else he can deploy them. "There



The CARQUINEZ BRIDGE TOLL PLAZA in Vallejo, Calif., is empty of tollbooth collectors on July 30, the result of the state's decision to automate the jobs at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. For now, workers are being paid in exchange for taking online courses in other fields, but that's not a benefit available to most of the millions of U.S. employees who have lost jobs during the pandemic.

are a few reasons I prefer machinery," Benedetto says. "For one thing, as long as you maintain it, it's there every day to work."

Companies deploying automation and AI say the technology allows them to create new jobs. But the number of new jobs is often minuscule compared with the number of jobs lost. LivePerson, which designs conversational software, could enable a company to take a 1,000-person call center and run it with 100 people plus chatbots, says CEO Rob LoCascio. A bot can respond to 10,000 queries in an hour, LoCascio says; an efficient call-center rep can answer six.

LivePerson saw a fourfold increase in demand in March as companies closed call centers, LoCascio says. "What happened was the contact-center representatives went home, and a lot of them can't work from home," he says.

Some surprising businesses are embracing automation. David's Bridal, which sells wedding gowns and other formal wear in about 300 stores across North America and the U.K., set up a chatbot called Zoey through LivePerson last year. When the pandemic forced David's Bridal to close its stores, Zoey helped manage customer inquiries flooding the company's call centers, says Holly Carroll, vice president of the customer-service and contact center. Without a bot, "we would have been dead in the water," Carroll says.

David's Bridal now spends 35% less on call centers and can handle three times more messages through its chatbot than it can through voice or email. (Zoey may be cheaper than a human, but it is not infallible. Via text, Zoey promised to connect me to a virtual stylist, but I never heard back from it or the company.)

Many organizations will likely look to technology as they face budget cuts and need to reduce staff. "I don't see us going back to the staffing levels we were at prior to COVID," says Brian Pokorny, the director of information technologies for Otsego County in New York State, who has cut 10% of his staff because of pandemic-related budget issues. "So we need to look at things like AI to streamline government services and make us more efficient."

Pokorny used a free trial from IBM's Watson Assistant early in the pandemic

Economy



Robots clean airport floors, patrol parking lots and deliver groceries as companies adjust to cope with the pandemic. But the U.S. provides few options for retraining workers who are losing jobs to automation.



and set up an AI-powered web chat to answer questions from the public, like whether the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, the county seat, had reopened. (It had, as of June 26, with limited capacity.) Now, Watson can answer 75% of the questions people ask, and Otsego County has started paying for the service, which Pokorny says costs “pennies” per conversation. Though the county now uses AI just for online chats, it plans to deploy a Watson virtual assistant that can answer phone calls. Around 36 states have deployed chatbots to respond to questions about the pandemic and available government services, according to the National Association of State Chief Information Officers.

IBM and LivePerson say that by creating AI, they’re freeing up humans to do more sophisticated tasks. Companies that contract with LivePerson still need “bot builders” to help teach the AI how to answer questions, and call-center agents see their pay increase by about 15% when they become bot builders, LoCascio says. “We can look at it like there’s going to be this massive job loss, or we can look at it that people get moved into different places and positions in the world to better their lives,” LoCascio says.

But companies will need far fewer bot builders than call-center agents, and mobility is not always an option, especially for workers without college degrees or whose employers do not offer retraining. Non-union workers are especially vulnerable. Larry Collins and his colleagues, represented by SEIU Local 1000, were fortunate: they’re being paid their full salaries for the foreseeable future in exchange for taking

AIRPORT: JEFF SWENSEN—GETTY IMAGES; PARKING LOT: KNIGHTSCOPE; GROCERIES: ALEX WONG—GETTY IMAGES

32 hours a week of online classes in computer skills, accounting, entrepreneurship and other fields. (Some might even get their jobs back, albeit temporarily, as the state upgrades its systems.) But just 11.6 % of American workers were represented by a union in 2019.

Yvonne R. Walker, the union president, says most non-union workers don't get this kind of assistance. "Companies out there don't provide employee training and upskilling—they don't see it as a good investment," Walker says. "Unless workers have a union thinking about these things, the workers get left behind."

In Sweden, employers pay into private funds that help workers get retrained; Singapore's SkillsFuture program reimburses citizens up to 500 Singapore dollars (about \$362 in U.S. currency) for approved retraining courses. But in the U.S., the most robust retraining programs are for workers whose jobs are sent overseas or otherwise lost because of trade issues. A few states have started promising to pay community-college tuition for adult learners who seek retraining; the Tennessee Reconnect program pays for adults over 25 without college degrees to get certificates, associate's degrees and technical diplomas. But a similar program in Michigan is in jeopardy as states struggle with budget issues, says Michelle Miller-Adams, a researcher at the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research.

HOUSE AND SENATE DEMOCRATS introduced a \$15 billion workforce-retraining bill in early May, but it hasn't gained much traction with Republicans, who prefer to encourage retraining by giving tax credits. The federal funds that exist come with restrictions. Pell Grants, which help low-income students pay for education, can't be used for nontraditional programs like boot camps or a 170-hour EMT certification. Local jobless centers, which receive federal funds, spend an average of \$3,500 per person on retraining, but they usually run out of money early in a calendar year because of limited funding, says Ayobami Olugbemiga, press secretary at the National Skills Coalition.

Even if federal funding were widely available, the surge of people who need retraining would be more than

universities can handle, says Gabe Dalporto, the CEO of Udacity, which offers online courses in programming, data science, AI and more. "A billion people will lose their jobs over the next 10 years due to AI, and if anything, COVID has accelerated that by about nine years," says Dalporto. "If you tried to reskill a billion people in the university system, you would break the university system."

Dalporto says the coronavirus should be a wake-up call for the federal government to rethink how it funds education. "We have this model where we want to dump huge amounts of capital into very slow, noncareer-specific education," Dalporto says. "If you just repurposed 10% of that, you could retrain 3 million people in about six months."

Online education providers say they can provide retraining and upskilling on workers' own timelines, and for less money than traditional schools. Coursera offers six-month courses for \$39 to \$79 a month that provide students with certifications needed for a variety of jobs, says CEO Jeff Maggioncalda. Once they've landed a job, they can then pursue a college degree online, he says. "This idea that you get job skills first, get the job, then get your college degree online while you're working, I think for a lot of people will be more economically effective," he says. In April, Coursera launched a Workforce Recovery Initiative that allows the unemployed in some states and other countries, including Colombia and Singapore, to learn for free until the end of the year.

Online learning providers can offer relatively inexpensive upskilling options because they don't have guidance counselors, classrooms and other features of brick-and-mortar schools. But there could be more of a role for employers to provide those support systems going

forward. Dalporto, who calls the wave of automation during COVID-19 "our economic Pearl Harbor," argues that the government should provide a tax credit of \$2,500 per upskilled worker to companies that provide retraining. He also suggests that company severance packages include \$1,500 in retraining credits.

Some employers are turning to Guild Education, which works with employers to subsidize upskilling. A program it launched in May lets companies pay a fee to have Guild assist laid-off workers in finding new jobs. Employers see this as a way to create loyalty among these former employees, says Rachel Carlson, the CEO of Guild. "The most thoughtful consumer companies say, Employee for now, customer for life," she says.

With the economy 30 million jobs short of what it had before the pandemic, though, workers and employers may not see much use in training for jobs that may not be available for months or even years. And not every worker is interested in studying data science, cloud computing or artificial intelligence.

But those who have found a way to move from dying fields to in-demand jobs are likely to do better. A few years ago, Tristen Alexander was a call-center rep at a Georgia power company when he took a six-month online course to earn a Google IT Support Professional Certificate. A Google scholarship covered the cost for Alexander, who has no college degree and was supporting his wife and two kids on about \$38,000 a year. Alexander credits his certificate with helping him win a promotion and says he now earns more than \$70,000 annually. What's more, the promotion has given him a sense of job security. "I just think there's a great need for everyone to learn something technical," he tells me.

Of course, Alexander knows that technology may significantly change his job in the next decade, so he's already planning his next step. By 2021, he wants to master the skill of testing computer systems to spot vulnerabilities to hackers and gain a certificate in that practice, known as penetration testing. It will all but guarantee him a job, he says, working alongside the technology that's changing the world. —*With reporting by ALEJANDRO DE LA GARZA and JULIA ZORTHIAN/NEW YORK* □

**'I REALLY THINK
THIS IS A
NEW NORMAL—
THE PANDEMIC
ACCELERATED
WHAT WAS GOING
TO HAPPEN ANYWAY.'**

—ROB THOMAS, SVP at IBM

World

A New Global Depression Is Coming

FORGET RAPID RECOVERY. COVID-19 WILL
BRING PROLONGED ECONOMIC PAIN

By Ian Bremmer





*Businesses remain
boarded up in mid-
Manhattan, with
U.S. unemployment
at 11.1% in June*

PHOTOGRAPH BY ELIZABETH BICK

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THE WORLD IS CONFUSED AND FRIGHTENED. COVID-19 infections are on the rise across the U.S. and around the world, even in countries that once thought they had contained the virus. The outlook for the next year is at best uncertain; countries are rushing to produce and distribute vaccines at breakneck speeds, some opting to bypass critical phase trials. Meanwhile, unemployment numbers remain dizzyingly high, even as the U.S. stock market continues to defy gravity. We're headed into a global depression—a period of economic misery that few living people have experienced.

We're not talking about Hoovervilles. Today the U.S. and most of the world have a sturdy middle class. We have social safety nets that didn't exist nine decades ago. Fortunately, that's true even for developing countries. Most governments today accept a deep economic interdependence among nations created by decades of trade and investment globalization. But those expecting a so-called V-shaped economic recovery, a scenario in which vaccinemakers conquer COVID-19 and everybody goes straight back to work, or even a smooth and steady longer-term bounce-back like the one that followed the global financial crisis a decade ago, are going to be disappointed.

Let's start with the word *depression*. There is no commonly accepted definition of the term. That's not surprising, given how rarely we experience catastrophes of this magnitude. But there are three factors that separate a true economic depression from a mere recession. First, the impact is global. Second, it cuts deeper into livelihoods than any recession we've faced in our lifetimes. Third, its bad effects will linger longer.

A depression is not a period of uninterrupted economic contraction. There can be periods of temporary progress within it that create the appearance of recovery. The Great Depression of the 1930s began with the stock-market crash of October 1929 and continued into the early 1940s, when World War II created the basis for new growth. That period in-

cluded two separate economic drops: first from 1929 to 1933, and then again from May 1937 into 1938. As in the 1930s, we're likely to see moments of expansion in this period of depression.

Depressions don't just generate ugly stats and send buyers and sellers into hibernation. They change the way we live. The Great Recession created very little lasting change. Some elected leaders around the world now speak more often about wealth inequality, but few have done much to address it. Large segments of society, particularly people who weren't already on the verge of retirement, were able to hunker down and later return to the same approach to saving and investing they practiced before the crisis. They were rewarded with a period of solid, long-lasting recovery. That's very different from the current crisis. COVID-19 fears will bring lasting changes to public attitudes toward all activities that involve crowds of people and how we work on a daily basis; it will also permanently change America's competitive position in the world and raise profound uncertainty about U.S.-China relations going forward.

In addition, political dysfunction—in the U.S. and around the world—is more severe than in 2008–2009. As the financial crisis took hold, there was no debate among Democrats and Republicans about whether the emergency was real. In 2020, there is little consensus on what to do and how to do it.

Return to our definition of an economic depression. First, the current slowdown is without doubt global. Most postwar U.S. recessions have limited their worst effects to the domestic economy. But most were the result of domestic inflation or a tightening of national credit markets. That is not the case with COVID-19 and the current global slowdown. This is a synchronized crisis, and

The economic impact of COVID-19 will cut deeper than any recession in living memory

just as the relentless rise of China over the past four decades has lifted many boats in richer and poorer countries alike, so slowdowns in China, the U.S. and Europe will have global impact on our globalized world. This coronavirus has ravaged every major economy in the world. Its impact is felt everywhere.

Social safety nets are now being tested as never before. Some will break. Health care systems, particularly in poorer countries, are already buckling under the strain. As they struggle to cope with the human toll of this slowdown, governments will default on debt. For all these reasons, middle-income and developing countries are especially vulnerable, but the debt burdens and likelihood of defaults will pressure the entire global financial system.

The second defining characteristic of a depression: the economic impact of COVID-19 will cut deeper than any recession in living memory. The monetary-policy report submitted to Congress in June by the Federal Reserve noted that the “severity, scope, and speed of the ensuing downturn in economic activity have been significantly worse than any recession since World War II.” Payroll employment fell an unprecedented 22 million in March and April before adding back 7.5 million jobs in May and June. The unemployment rate jumped to 14.7% in April, the highest level since the Great Depression, before recovering to 11.1% in June.

NOW FOR THE BAD NEWS. First, that data reflects conditions from mid-June—before the most recent spike in COVID-19 cases across the American South and West that has caused at least a temporary stall in the recovery. Signs of corporate economic distress are mounting. And second and third waves of coronavirus infections could throw many more people out of work. In short, there will be no sustainable recovery until the virus is fully contained. That probably means a vaccine. Even when there is a vaccine, it won't flip a switch bringing the world back to normal. Some will have the vaccine before others do. Some who are offered it won't take it. Recovery will come by fits and starts.

Leaving aside the unique problem of measuring the unemployment rate during a once-in-a-century pandemic, there is a more important warning sign here. The Bureau of Labor Statistics report also



noted that the share of job losses classified as “temporary” fell from 88.6% in April and May to 78.6% in June. In other words, a larger percentage of the workers stuck in that (still historically high) unemployment rate won’t have jobs to return to. That trend is likely to last because COVID-19 will force many more businesses to close their doors for good, and governments won’t keep writing bailout checks indefinitely.

These factors lead us toward the third definition of depression: a slowdown that will last longer than recessions of the past 80 years. The Congressional Budget Office has warned that the unemployment rate will remain stubbornly high for the next decade, and economic output will remain depressed for years unless changes are made to the way government taxes and spends. Those sorts of changes will depend on broad recognition that emergency measures won’t be nearly enough to restore the U.S. economy to health. What’s true in the U.S. will be true everywhere else.

In the early days of the pandemic, the G-7 governments and their central

^
A London coffee shop sits closed as small businesses around the world face tough odds to survive

banks moved quickly to support workers and businesses with income support and credit lines in hopes of tiding them over until they could safely resume normal business. The Fed, European Central Bank, Bank of England and Bank of Japan threw out the rule book to add unprecedented support to ensure markets could continue to function.

This liquidity support (along with optimism about a vaccine) has boosted financial markets and may well continue to elevate stocks. But this financial bridge isn’t big enough to span the gap from past to future economic vitality because COVID-19 has created a crisis for the real economy. Both supply and demand have sustained sudden and deep damage. And it will become progressively harder politically to impose second and third lockdowns.

That’s why the shape of economic recovery will be a kind of ugly “jagged swoosh,” a shape that reflects a yearslong

stop-start recovery process and a global economy that will inevitably reopen in stages until a vaccine is in place and distributed globally.


What could world leaders do to shorten this global depression? They could resist the urge to tell their people that brighter days are just around the corner. People need leaders to take responsibility for tough decisions.

From a practical standpoint, governments could do more to coordinate virus-containment plans. But they could also prepare for the need to help the poorest and hardest-hit countries avoid the worst of the virus and the economic contraction by investing the sums needed to keep these countries on their feet. Today’s lack of international leadership makes matters worse. If COVID-19 can teach world leaders the value of working together to avoid common catastrophes, future global emergencies will be that much easier to manage for the good of all. Unfortunately, that’s not the path we’re on.

Bremmer, a TIME columnist, is president of the Eurasia Group

Should we empty our son's
college fund to pay for rehab? | 🔍

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How to sleep better

THE CHANGING
SCIENCE, BUSINESS
AND CULTURE OF A
GOOD NIGHT'S REST

PHOTO-ILLUSTRATIONS
BY KANGHEE KIM

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
TOMMY PEREZ FOR TIME



Selling sweet dreams

INDUSTRIES FROM TRAVEL TO TECH ARE CASHING IN BY CATERING TO THE RESTLESS

By [Kelsey McKinney](#)

IN A SMALL ROOM WITHOUT WINDOWS, I AM INSTRUCTED to breathe in sync with a colorful bar on a screen in front of me. Six counts in. Six counts out. Electrodes tie me to a machine whirring on the table. My hands and feet are bare, wiped clean and placed atop silver boards. My finger is pinched by an oximeter, my left arm squeezed by a blood-pressure cuff. Across from me, a woman with a high ponytail, scrublike attire and soft eyes smiles encouragingly. She is not a doctor, and this is not a lab. The air smells like lavender and another fruity scent I later learn is cassis. My chair is made of woven reeds, topped with a thick cushion and a pillow for lumbar support. The windowless room feels more cozy than claustrophobic; this is not torture but a luxury. I am, in fact, in a five-star resort with a 2,000-sq-m spa and an indoor heated pool. This process, I have been promised, will help me sleep better.

For years, I had been waking up exhausted. My primary care doctor ran my blood work three separate times to try to suss out an underlying problem, and each time it came back fine. I had no problem falling asleep, or even really staying asleep. The problem was that no matter how many hours of sleep I got, I had to haul myself out of bed in the morning, grumpy and lethargic.

So, in December, before COVID-19 ravaged the world and made travel unsafe, I journeyed to a beautiful valley in Portugal's Port wine region to take part in the €220-per-night Six Senses Sleep Retreat to try to learn to sleep better. Six Senses has long made wellness and sustainability two of its main pillars of business. They have yoga retreats and infrared spas. They're aiming to be plastic-free by 2022—all plastic, not just single-use. But for the past two years, the luxury resort brand has bet big on sleep. In 2017, they launched a sleep program with a sleep coach, sleep monitoring, a wellness screening, bedtime tea service and a goody bag of sleep-health supplies. The idea was that, with three nights of analysis and behavioral adjustments, I might finally train my body to get a good night's sleep. It's a vacation with a purpose, and it's one with big appeal: Six Senses offers the program at 10 of its resorts and is requiring all new resorts (including New York City in 2021) to include the program.

Luxury hotels have been pushing health as a selling point for travel since well before events made the two oxymoronic. The global wellness-tourism market was valued at \$683.3 billion in 2018 by Grand View Research, and according to the Global Wellness Institute's 2018 report, 830 million wellness

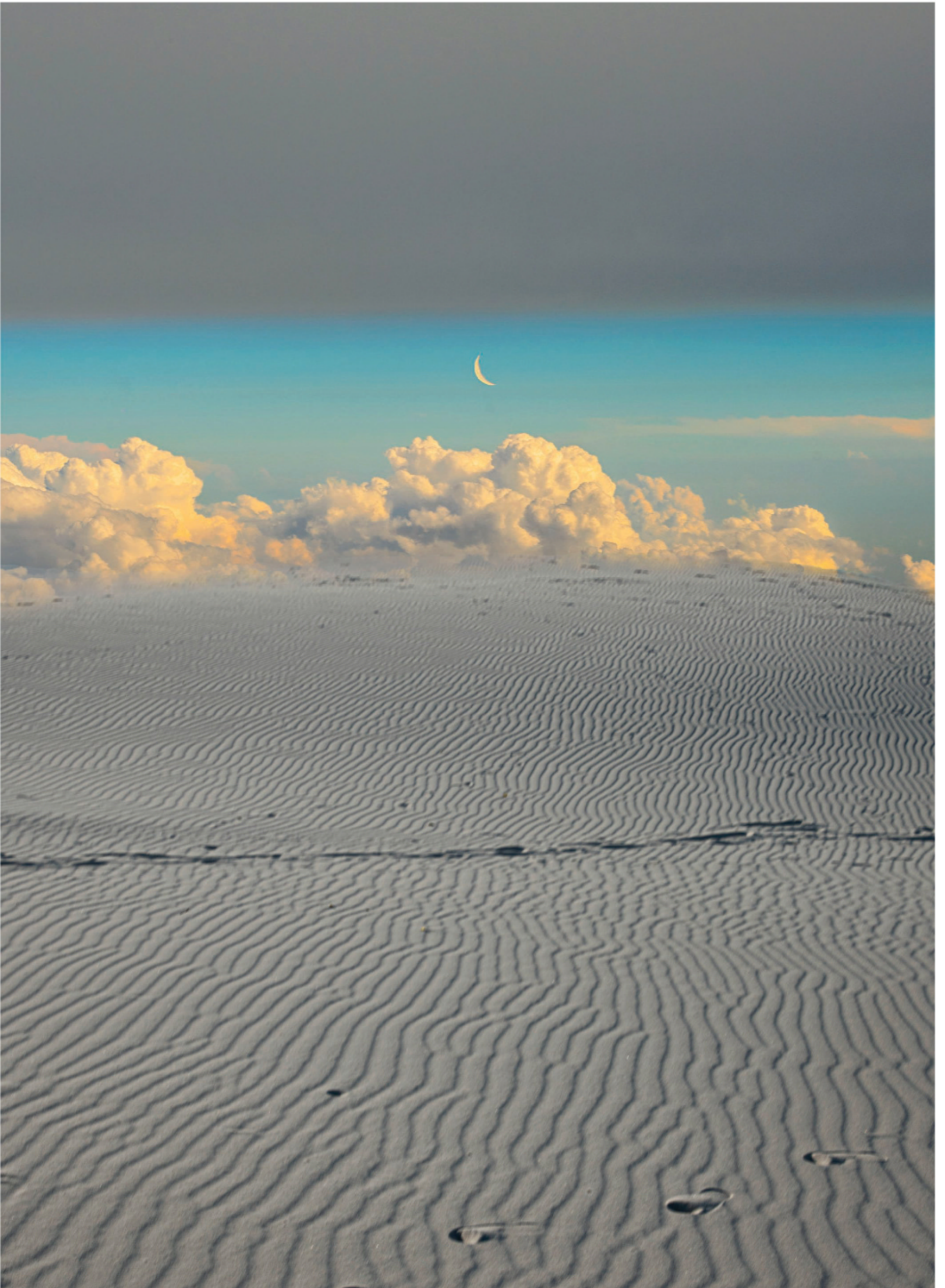
trips were taken by travelers in 2017. That was up nearly 17% from 2015. In 2018, American Airlines partnered with the meditation app Calm to help their passengers sleep. Headspace has partnerships with seven different airlines to do the same thing, all over the past few years. A survey from the National Institutes of Health shows that the number of U.S. adults who reported meditating while traveling tripled from 2012 through 2017. And all this travel wellness has one common goal: to get people to sleep better, because we know that—generally—people aren't sleeping well.

IN 2016, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) published findings claiming that one-third of adults are not getting enough sleep and that sleep deprivation is costing the country some \$400 billion each year in productivity. It is also important to note that many studies have found a large disparity in sleep quality based on race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status. In comparisons of white and Black populations, studies have found that white women have the best sleep duration and Black men the worst. Those disparities do not go away when studies adjust for socioeconomic level. The Sleep Foundation writes that a factor may be higher levels of stress because of discrimination in daily life.

Although consumers have opened their wallets in pursuit of better sleep since the debut of memory foam in 1966, the past five years have been a boom for the sleep-wellness industry. The global sleeping-products market brought in \$69.5 billion in revenue in 2017, and, according to the most recent report published in May 2018 by P&S Market Research, the industry is on track to hit \$101.9 billion in 2023. The consulting group McKinsey put out a seven-page guide to investing in sleep health in 2017. And anyone who has tried to buy a mattress online recently has noticed just how many new mattress brands there are: Casper, Tuft & Needle, Purple, Leesa, Allswell, SleepChoices, Bear. The U.S. mattress industry has doubled in value since 2015, from \$8 billion to \$16 billion.

In my desperate quest for good sleep, I've bought into all of this. When I sat down to calculate it all, I was stunned to find that over the past three years, I have spent more than \$1,000 on sleep. I bought a Fitbit, a Sonos speaker with a built-in alarm, a new pillow, a new mattress, a fluffier comforter, a weighted blanket, cold eye masks, a humidifier, pajamas made of bamboo, pajamas made of 100% cotton, pajamas made of satin and an alarm clock that mimics a sunrise. The sleep retreat, I hoped, would do something all the other purchases had not.

I DON'T SLEEP WELL on the plane. After four hours of fitful slumber interrupted by turbulence, dinner service and my seat neighbor bumping into me on



the red-eye from New York City to Lisbon, I groggily deplane and replane for the short flight to Porto, down another espresso and drive the one and a half hours to the Douro Valley. By the time I arrive at the hotel, the sun is beginning to set and my bed looks very inviting. It is only 5 p.m.

I'm led to my room by a woman named Vera who introduces my supplies: an eye mask, bamboo pajamas, earplugs, lavender spray for my bed and a worry journal where I can write down anything bothering me before I sleep. I flop down on the €2,500 mattress and hope that whatever I learn here will be easily transferable to the \$200 mattress I bought off Amazon and my sad cotton-blend sheets. By the bed is a small box made by ResMed, which will track my movements while I sleep and present me with colorful graphs of data each morning.

I follow the given instructions: eat dinner leisurely, have only one glass of wine, take a bath in the deep tub, drink chamomile tea, put on the new pajamas, write in the journal and go to bed around 10 p.m. When I wake up, the ResMed app shows a series of colorful bars—my “sleep architecture” progression through deep, REM and light sleep—and a score of 97. “I had nothing to say about that sleep,” shrugs Javier Suarez, the director of the spa and wellness programs at Douro Valley, at my first consultation. He studied physiotherapy at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), and he knows this is abnormally good. “What we [often] see here is the first night, [guests] sleep bad because they come jet-lagged or they're anxious,” he says. I'd slept a hard, uninterrupted eight hours. I feel proud of the prep I did before I came, adjusting my bedtime to try to prevent jet lag.

There are many scientific reasons to desire good sleep. Poor sleep quality is associated with a whole host of unhealthy side effects. Getting bad sleep puts people at a higher risk for diabetes, cardiovascular disease, Alzheimer's, impaired memory, problem-solving issues, fatigue, anxiety, mood disturbances and poor performance at work. There's a market, then, to help people sleep better, not just because it makes money, but also because it is generally good for people. “There's no wellness without good sleep. Forget about it,” Suarez tells me. “If you don't make sleep your priority, then you will not be healthy.”

The Global Wellness Institute attributes the growing wellness industry to four things: an aging population, increased global rates of chronic disease and stress, the negative health impacts of environmental degradation and the frequent failures of modern Western medicine. In the case of insomniacs, the ever popular sleep drugs Ambien, Lunesta, Sonata and others received black-box warnings from the FDA—the agency's most serious caution—in May 2019. Those turned off by the foreboding packaging

may turn to more holistic sleep-wellness methods. Sleep scientists have also been working to better publicize their research on the benefits of sleep hygiene. In 2013, the CDC and the American Academy of Sleep Medicine launched the National Healthy Sleep Awareness Project, which aimed to raise public knowledge of sleep disorders and the ways sleep affects health.

Obsession is the inevitable peak of any trend. While I'm at the resort, Suarez recommends several other ways I can optimize my health, including Wellness FX, a company that will run a full blood panel, and Viome, a company you can mail your poop to in order to learn about your gut microbiome. We have the ability now to analyze absolutely everything



▲
An outdoor resting spot at the sleep retreat at Six Senses Douro Valley in Portugal

about ourselves sans doctor oversight: our blood pressure, our pH, our urine, our poop, our genes. Sleep is just part of the cultural movement toward health obsession. A 2017 study done by Rebecca Robbins at New York University found that a full 28.2% of people in the U.S. track their sleep—with an app, a wearable sleep tracker, or both—and Robbins, now a postdoctoral fellow at the Brigham and Women's Hospital and Harvard Medical School, says she thinks that number has likely increased since the study.

All this data is what runs the sleep-wellness industry. Every major sleep-wellness company tracking sleep is collecting data—cumulative data. Eight Sleep, for example, says it has 40 million hours of sleep traffic logged. Alexandra Zatarain, a co-founder and vice president of brand and marketing for the company, says the medical establishment has “never had access to people's actual sleep [outside of] clinical settings.” Six Senses, on the other hand, has complete data about how people sleep when they're on vacation, thanks to their sleep pro-

grams. Companies theoretically use all this data to make their products better for the consumer, but they also use it for targeted marketing (perhaps to sell you a new pillow or blanket) or sell it outright. Some sleep-wellness companies more benevolently share their data with academic institutions to learn more about what it could mean. Eight Sleep is working on studies with Mount Sinai, UCSF and Stanford. Matt Mundt, who founded a company called Hatch Sleep, which makes a blanket cocoon sleep pod for adults, says he plans to announce a partnership with a major medical system to bring the product into clinical trials.

The sleep-wellness industry is made up of three categories of products: treatments (prescription sleep aids, homeopathic remedies, and doctor interventions like surgeries or sleep-apnea-treatment devices), routine disrupters (sleep trackers, meditation apps, dietary changes and sleep programs) and nesting (mattresses, pillows, curtains, humidifiers). Treatments are mainly performed and monetized by the medical industry and the hospitality industry (like this sleep retreat). Most of the buzzy sleep-wellness companies like Eight Sleep, Oura, Casper and OMI are creating products that fit into the routine disrupter and nesting categories. Eight Sleep, for example, sells a mattress that regulates its own temperature (nesting) and tracks your sleep to provide personalized coaching (treatment). The brand has raised \$70 million over the past three years, with \$40 million of that raised in November. Zatarain says the company plays to the public desire to self-analyze and self-optimize. “We want people to be asking themselves, ‘Am I sleep-fit, or not?’” she says.

AFTER MY FIRST NIGHT of delicious, wonderful 97-score sleep, I’m feeling a little cocky. I—I’ve convinced myself already—am sleep-fit. Suarez is not so sure. “I bet you tonight you’re going to do worse,” he says on day two. “You’ll get an 87 or something.” The data, he says, does not care about my confidence.

I spend much of my second day at the retreat thinking about my sleep score. The keys to good sleep, I’m told, are simple: exercise; eating well; not drinking too much; a dark, quiet space; creating a wind-down routine; no screens two hours before bed; and a comfortable bed. The greatest enemy of sleep is stress. The main value of the sleep score—and sleep tracking in general—is not to affect your sleep, but to tell you when you need to change your waking habits.

“The biggest win [of sleep tracking] is in the behavior change,” says Els van der Helm, the co-founder and CEO of Shleep, which designs customized sleep programs. Through her company, van der Helm works to convince companies that employees’

sleep should be prioritized not only because it is good for them, but also because it will make the company more profitable. (Shleep itself raised \$1.4 million in venture capital in August 2019.) At her presentations, van der Helm sees the same behavior again and again. As she describes easy things employees can do to improve their sleep, she suggests a wake-up light alarm. Immediately, everyone grabs their phones and orders one online. “That’s great, but can they be as passionate about exercise, or creating a wind-down routine?” she says. “The issue is that people love throwing money at the problem and just buy something and think they’re good.”

The problems with our sleep—for those who are otherwise healthy—are often problems we can fix ourselves. “You don’t need any of that stuff,” Suarez tells me when I run through the list of products I’ve tried. “People say, ‘How can I sleep better?’ And my answer is, ‘How can you have a better life?’”

Making sleep improvement all about what we can purchase to help us also creates an untrue narrative around what that data means. In her study on sleep-tracking habits, Robbins also found a disparity in who tracks their sleep: the higher a person’s income, the more likely they were to track their sleep. “A very concerning aspect of the conversation around sleep is the message that sleep is a luxury,” Robbins says. “We need to remove the notion that sleep is a luxury and replace it with the truth, which is that sleep is something we all deserve and that unifies us.”

So on my second day at the sleep retreat—yes, a massive luxury—I do everything right. I think about my sleep score and forgo a second glass of wine, even though I’m on vacation. I think about my sleep score and go to yoga. My body and I deserve it.

That night, I feel terrible getting into bed. I’m stressed about the amount of work I have to do, and I keep thinking about how that stress will disrupt my sleep. Suarez is either a sleep witch who intentionally cursed me, or someone who knows what he’s talking about. My money is on the latter. I close my eyes and open them again only a few hours later, thinking about my sleep score. Eventually, I get back to sleep and wake in the morning to a markedly worse 85.

Suarez had warned me that some Type A people slept worse on their second night simply because they knew they were being tracked, but when Vera reviews my Night 2 results, she says she can tell what the problem was. The ResMed shows two scores for each night’s sleep, both calculated based on your movement in bed: one for your mental sleep and one for your physical. On the second night, my mental sleep was fine. It was my body sleep that was a disaster. I needed, Suarez says, to wear myself out.

So on the third day, I sign up for a cardio class in the gym after a nice long walk. By the time I begin my wind-down routine in the evening, I’m already sore.

‘We want people to be asking themselves, “Am I sleep-fit, or not?”’

Alexandra Zatarain,
co-founder of
Eight Sleep

In the morning, I wake up feeling refreshed. I can't remember the last time I felt this way first thing in the morning. I roll over and check my score: 94. Success. The charts show that I had not only slept well, but I also got plenty of deep sleep. "I'm not giving you a perfect solution for sleep," Suarez says before I leave the resort, "I'm just showing you what happens when you do things right."

WHEN I RETURN from the sleep program, I feel better physically than I have in a long time. I find myself making decisions based not on my health, but on how they will affect my sleep quality. I don't have coffee late even though it's a struggle to stay awake back on the East Coast. I do my wind-down routine and spray my lavender spray and sleep hard through the night. The biggest change, though, is how often I think about my sleep, which is constantly. I join a gym, something I had been meaning to do for a year, simply because I know it will help me sleep. And it does work—for a while.

My perfect sleep routine begins to devolve even before the pandemic hits. At home, I fall asleep with the TV on watching *Monday Night Football*. I don't have time to exercise every day. Unsurprisingly, I'm much, much more stressed than I had been at the luxury hotel with every amenity in the world and no job to do. I need motivation—inspiration—so I turn to Instagram, and I find @followthenap.

Alex Shannon is a "sleep influencer" who spends most of his time running the account, crafting cozy-looking images of heavenly sleepscapes. He started the account a year and a half ago and says he has noticed a substantial growth in the focus on sleep health in the time since. The boom in products has been good for him too. Every new supplement or sunrise alarm clock or mattress is another potential sponsorship. He's one of only a few influencers focused solely on sleep, but plenty of general wellness influencers also dabble in sleep, and the content is there. More than 26.8 million posts on Instagram have been tagged #sleep and almost 4 million have been tagged #nap. Even now, when he's not traveling because of COVID-19 concerns—he was often sent to expensive sleep retreats gratis, in exchange for posts—Shannon has pivoted his sleep content to his own home. And he says he's had a lot of interest from foreign travel boards making plans for when the travel restrictions are lifted. "I feel like as recently as a few years ago, making rest and relaxation a priority was seen as selfish somehow," Shannon says, "but with the rise of 'self-care,' it's become much more acceptable to slow down and take care of ourselves."

Part of that impulse to slow down has been engineered by sleep companies themselves. If wellness can look good on Instagram, it can make money. Just take the boom in Casper sales. Casper was hardly

the first mattress startup to market, and it wasn't even the first to roll its mattresses. But in 2014, the company encouraged customers to post videos unboxing their Casper mattresses and watching them unfurl. The influx of mesmerizing videos, all featuring Casper's logo, helped the company become the leading brand in mattress startups. James Newell, a vice president at an investment firm that backed Casper, said in an interview with *Freakonomics* that Casper "would tell you they're not a mattress company, they're a digital-first brand around sleep." It helps that Casper is estimated to have an \$80 million marketing budget.

"Our brand ambassadors"—a common synonym for influencers paid to promote a product—"are providing their honest feedback and review of our products, providing potential customers with another perspective outside of our own," says Julianne Kiider, the affiliate and influencer manager for Tuft & Needle. "The way we sleep is such a personal thing, so these diverse perspectives help guide followers to the right product for their own sleeping habits." Several major mattress brands declined to share data about how much of their advertiser budgets are spent on influencers, if mattresses are given to influencers for free, and how well influencer marketing really works. But a scroll through major wellness-influencer accounts shows plenty of cozy bed photos with discount codes in the captions. Shannon says in this scenario, the influencer's payment is often a kickback of the percentage of mattresses sold with their discount code. For him, it's paying off.

"We all dream of being a little more relaxed, a little less stressed and not feeling guilty about indulging ourselves," he says. That dream—of sleeping through the night and being more relaxed and waking up refreshed and ready for the day—is exactly what has made sleep wellness such a lucrative industry.

In March, four months after my visit to the sleep retreat, COVID-19 began to spread in the U.S., and the dream felt further away than ever. Several of my friends got sick, and I stopped sleeping. Then the Black Lives Matter protests began, and I continued to sleep fitfully, worried for my friends and fellow citizens. This time, though, I knew what mistakes I was making. I knew that stress was keeping me awake, bolstered by scrolling through my phone for news updates until 11 p.m. and not exercising and having another glass of wine. I knew all that, but I was too stressed to stop. One night, in a sleepless haze, I swiped away from the news and found myself browsing my old online shopping haunts. I added a lavender spray and a new set of pajamas to my cart, and clicked BUY NOW.

'We all dream of being a little more relaxed, a little less stressed ...'

Alex Shannon, sleep influencer

McKinney is a features writer and co-owner at Defector Media



A little night music

Since the FDA added a black-box warning to Ambien and other sleep aids last year, signifying serious risks, insomniacs have begun looking for drug-free ways to sleep—and some musicians and scientists think music could be just as effective. Over the past few years, sleep music has slipped into the mainstream, with ambient artists collaborating with music therapists, apps churning out hundreds of hours of new content, and sleep streams surging in popularity on YouTube and Spotify. Scientists are delving deeper into the field; in September, the National Institutes of Health awarded \$20 million to research projects around music therapy and neuroscience. And since the rise of the coronavirus, demand for sleep music has soared even higher.

Through the mid 20th century, sleep music was mostly confined to the fringes of Western culture. Experimental minimalist composers like John Cage, William

IN AN ANXIOUS ERA, THE DEMAND FOR SOOTHING MUSIC HAS SOARED, PUSHING THE FIELD INTO NEW TERRITORY

By Andrew R. Chow

Basinski and Robert Rich created serene, repetitive music in all-night concerts that explored the edges of consciousness.

But other musicians began to delve into sleep music for more functional reasons. In the '90s, the musician Tom Middleton was sleep-deprived after years of touring. He found studies that showed relaxing music can affect the parasympathetic nervous system, which helps the body relax before sleep. One trial in a Taiwan hospital found that older adults who listened to 45 minutes of relaxing music before bedtime fell asleep faster, slept longer and were less prone to waking up during the night.

Barbara Else, a senior adviser with the American Music Therapy Association, says music can play a crucial role in quelling racing thoughts and establishing routines. “We can see respiration rate and pulse settle down. We can see blood pressure lower,” she says.

Relying on similar research and working with neuroscientists, Middleton began devising music in which each element—harmony, rhythm, frequency, environmental noise—was chosen based on scientific underpinnings. In 2018, he released *Sleep Better*, an eight-part suite that features lapping waves, chirping birds and sustained synthesizer chords designed to line up with your circadian rhythms and encourage deep REM sleep, which is thought to help turn short-term memories into long-term ones.

MEANWHILE, the rise of streaming has allowed for continuous listening through the night; Spotify created an entire sleep vertical with 42 playlists. A larger cultural shift favoring “wellness” and mental health brought meditation and mindfulness to the mainstream in Western society. Now, multimillion-dollar apps like Calm are partnering with musicians, including Middleton, to create scientifically designed new sleep music.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, Calm has seen their daily downloads double. Endel, a platform that creates sound environments using artificial intelligence, says that their app installs have grown by 80%. Basinski, the minimalist composer, says his streaming royalties doubled from March to April. And after being inundated by requests from longtime listeners, Rich created a beatific album, *Offering to the Morning Fog*. “There could not be a better antidote to COVID-19 than this blissful, serene soundscape,” one commenter wrote on Bandcamp.

More studies are needed to see if music can rival the effectiveness of medicine, but the anecdotal evidence is there. “A sleeping pill is a sedative hypnotic that influences our brain. Can we use sound to rewire the brain and make us feel drowsy? Yes,” says Middleton. “The main challenge is if we can keep people in the various states of sleep, such as restorative delta-wave sleep.”

What exactly is your brain doing while you sleep?

NEW RESEARCH ON ITS PHYSIOLOGY SHOWS WHY WE NEED TO TAKE SLUMBER SERIOUSLY

By Alice Park

EACH OF US CARTS AROUND A 3-LB. UNIVERSE THAT orchestrates everything we do: directing our conscious actions of moving, thinking and sensing, while also managing body functions we take for granted, like breathing, keeping our hearts beating and digesting our food. It makes sense that such a bustling world of activity would need rest. Which is what, for decades, doctors thought sleep was all about. Slumber was when all the intricate connections and signals involved in the business of shuttling critical brain chemicals around went off duty, taking time to recharge. We're all familiar with this restorative role of sleep for the brain—pulling an all-nighter or staying awake during a red-eye flight can not only change our mood, but also affect our ability to think clearly until, at some point, it practically shuts down on its own. When we don't get enough sleep, we're simply not ourselves.

Yet exactly what goes on in the sleeping brain has been a biological black box. Do neurons stop functioning altogether, putting up the cellular equivalent of a DO NOT DISTURB sign? And what if a sleeping brain is not just taking some well-deserved time off but also using the downtime to make sense of the world, by storing away memories and captured emotions? And how, precisely, is it doing that?

In the past five years, brain researchers have begun to expose a hidden world of chemical reactions, fluids flowing into and out of the brain, and the busy work of neurons that reveal the sleeping brain is as industrious as the waking one. Without good-quality sleep, those critical activities don't take place, and as a consequence, we don't just feel tired and cranky, but the processes that lead to certain diseases may even get seeded. One of the reasons we sleep, it now seems, might be to keep a range of illnesses—including cognitive diseases like Alzheimer's and other dementias—at bay. As Adam Spira, a professor in the department of mental health at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, puts it, "Sleep really should not be seen as a luxury or waste of time. People joke that they'll sleep when they're dead, but they might end up dead sooner if they don't sleep."

BLAME POLYMATH Benjamin Franklin, who averred, "There will be sleeping enough in the grave"; ever since, a culture of industry has rooted itself in the human psyche—embedding the idea that activity, even well into the night, is valued far more than daily rest.

In part that's because while medical experts have



long recommended seven to eight hours of sleep a night—including some time spent in deep, or non-REM, sleep—exactly what our bodies are doing during that time is less clear. Now, thanks to newer technologies for measuring and tracking brain activity, scientists have defined the biological processes that occur during good-quality sleep. That they seem to be essential for lowering the risk of brain disorders, from the forgetfulness of senior moments to the more serious memory loss and cognitive decline of dementia and Alzheimer's disease, may convince the Franklins of the world that sleep is not for the lazy.

Experts in the field of Alzheimer's are especially excited, since there are currently no treatments for the neurodegenerative disease, and sleep-based strategies might open new ways to slow its progression in some and even prevent it in others.

"There has been a real renaissance in research around the connection between sleep, sleep quality, sleep disturbance and dementia, especially Alzheimer's dementia," says Dr. Kristine Yaffe, professor of psychiatry, neurology and epidemiology at the University of California, San Francisco. The National Institutes of Health is currently funding at least half a dozen new studies exploring how sleep may impact dementia, and the Alzheimer's Association created a committee to promote more research in the area.

For decades, researchers thought sleep dis-



turbances were a symptom or a consequence of Alzheimer's. They assumed that as clumps of amyloid proteins built up, then started to strangle and kill nerve cells—particularly in the memory regions of the brain—changes in sleep followed. Even older people without Alzheimer's can experience changes in their sleep patterns, sleeping less and more lightly as they age. So experts didn't initially take these shorter and more fragmented sleep cycles seriously.

But in the 1980s and 1990s, scientists began studying whether there was any causal relationship between sleep patterns and cognitive-test performance among older people without Alzheimer's by studying them over longer periods of time. Those studies suggested that people with poor sleep habits tended to perform worse on cognitive tests over time. "That got people thinking about the possibility that sleep could be a risk factor in dementia," says Spira.

Yaffe's recent research, which focused on a group of healthy older women, supported the idea that what seemed to matter, in terms of dementia risk, was the quality as opposed to the quantity of sleep. Those who reported spending less time in bed actually sleeping, and more time tossing and turning and waking up throughout the night, were more likely to develop any type of dementia five to 10 years later than those who got better-quality sleep.

Others focused on explaining the biology behind

the sleep-dementia connection. At this point, Alzheimer's researchers knew that a buildup in the brain of amyloid and another protein called tau were key features of the disease. At Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, David Holtzman, chair of the department of neurology, launched studies to track exactly where in the brain this amyloid originated. His search led him to nerve cells, which release fragments of the protein as they go about their normal business. Typically, these protein by-products (sometimes called amyloid beta) are released into the circulatory system, where they float around without causing problems, but in some cases they remain in the brain, where they morph into a sort of molecular Velcro, sticking together to form amyloid plaques, which in turn damage neurons.

But what controls the production of amyloid beta? In a 2009 study on mice, Holtzman found that while the animals were awake, levels of the protein fragments circulating in their brains surged. When the mice slept, the levels dropped dramatically—especially during the deeper stages of non-REM sleep. And when he and his team deprived the mice of non-REM sleep, more amyloid built up in their brains over time than in mice who got regular nightly rest. He saw similar changes when he compared amyloid in the spinal fluid of people who were well rested vs. sleep-deprived.

It was a revelation for Alzheimer's experts. "That showed experimentally for the first time that there was an effect of sleep deprivation on Alzheimer's disease pathology," says Spira. "That's what really flipped everything on its head." In 2013, to test whether the same effect occurred in people, Spira studied brain scans of 70 healthy adults with an average age of 76. Indeed, the scans of those who reported less or compromised sleep showed higher levels of amyloid plaques than the scans of those who slept better.

A year later, a biological explanation for why poor sleep might be linked to Alzheimer's emerged. Dr. Maiken Nedergaard, co-director of the Center for Translational Neuromedicine at the University of Rochester, identified a previously ignored army of cells that is called to duty during sleep in the brains of mice and acts as a massive pump for sloshing fluid into and out of the brain. This plumbing system, which she dubbed the "glymphatic system" (it works in parallel to the lymph system that drains fluid from other tissues in the body), seemed to perform a neural rinsing of the brain, swishing out the toxic proteins generated by active neurons (including those amyloid fragments) and clearing the way for another busy daily cycle of connecting and networking.

Taken together with Spira's discovery that levels of amyloid spiked during the day and dropped during sleep, Nedergaard's findings gave further credence to the theory that sleep might perform a housekeeping function critical for warding off diseases like Alzheimer's. "These results very much support the notion that one of the roles of sleep is to actually accelerate the clearance of beta amyloid from the brain," says Nora Volkow, director of the U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse.

LATE LAST YEAR, Laura Lewis, assistant professor of biomedical engineering at Boston University, built on Nedergaard's work by matching up the ebb and flow of cerebrospinal fluid in the brain with brain-wave activity, which indicates different stages of sleep. She showed that in healthy adults, during the day when the brain is active, there is less fluid bathing neurons and tissues in the organ. During sleep—and especially during deeper sleep—this solution saturates the brain in a cleansing flood. The finding reinforced Nedergaard's theory that sleeping may help clear the brain of toxic proteins that can eventually cause disease.

Still, while all these discoveries are strongly suggestive, they are not what scientists would call definitive. For that, researchers need two additional pieces of evidence: first, a clear correlation between disrupted sleep patterns and a higher risk for Alzheimer's; and second, evidence that if these high-risk people improve their sleep, that risk falls.

They are currently working to build those data sets, and already the results are promising. For

example, Volkow measured baseline amyloid levels in the brains of 20 healthy people ages 22 to 72 years, then scanned their brains again after each had a good night's sleep and yet again after each was kept awake for about 31 hours straight. After a loss of sleep, levels of amyloid were 5% more than after adequate sleep; the spikes were concentrated in parts of the brain involved in memory and higher thinking, which are typically affected in Alzheimer's.

But seeing levels of amyloid change with more or less sleep doesn't necessarily mean sleep habits are contributing to Alzheimer's. To make that case, researchers are studying people with disorders like sleep apnea, or those who work night shifts or keep irregular working hours, such as first responders, pilots and flight attendants. Studies already suggest that all of these groups are more vulnerable to Alzheimer's. The next step is to see if treatment, or changes in sleep habits, matters. For people with sleep apnea, for example, doctors can prescribe devices to wear during sleep to keep oxygen flowing more consistently to the brain so they don't wake up. In shift workers, researchers want to test the impact of resetting their biological clocks to a standard day-night schedule. If these efforts lower their likelihood of developing Alzheimer's, that would make a strong case for a connection between lifelong sleep patterns and risk of dementia.

Researchers also need to better understand how sleep medications and treatments like melatonin affect the dementia process. While some sleep aids promote the deeper sleep that seems to be protective against brain decline, it's not clear yet whether long-term dependence on such medications can maintain the benefit.

Even while these studies are being done, many experts believe the data are already strong enough to start educating at least older people, especially those at higher risk of developing Alzheimer's, about improving their sleep habits. Yaffe, for one, already does that with her patients. "Even practical sleep-hygiene tips, where we teach people best practices like avoiding caffeine in the evening and darkening their room and staying off their phones, could help them sleep better," she says. "I would love to see whether this low-cost and pragmatic approach could improve cognition or prevent decline in Alzheimer's patients."

She and others don't believe sleep alone can fully prevent Alzheimer's or halt its progression. But together with other therapies that could emerge to treat the disease, sleep may be a powerful way to help people lower their risk even further. It's even possible that sleep could play an important role in keeping our brains healthy in other ways: by controlling metabolism and other cellular functions behind diseases like diabetes, hypertension and even cancer. As the latest research shows, a good night's sleep isn't a luxury—it's critical for keeping the brain healthy. □

The system seemed to perform a neural rinsing of the brain, swishing out toxic proteins

How the pandemic is changing the way we sleep

NOT EVERYONE IS TOSSING AND TURNING ALL NIGHT DURING QUARANTINE

By Jeffrey Kluger

COVID-19 and its associated quarantine have disrupted pretty much every aspect of our lives. If you're like plenty of people, that includes your sleep, with the pandemic bolluxing up what might have been the most predictable and peaceful eight hours of your day. Unless, that is, you're like plenty of other people, and the quarantine has led to some of the best sleep you've ever had.

"There are upsides and downsides," says Dr. Cathy Goldstein, associate professor of neurology at the University of Michigan Sleep Disorders Center. "We have more time, so we're devoting more of it to sleeping—but we can also get too much." At the same time, she points out, the pandemic might be causing other people to get too little.

Sleep is governed by two systems: the homeostatic and the circadian. The homeostatic is simply a function of how much sleep you've had and when you need more. The circadian is pegged to the 24-hour clock and the daylight-nighttime cycle.

Left to ourselves, with no external clock but the rising and setting of the sun, we would all fall naturally into an approximate

midnight to 8 a.m. sleep cycle. During quarantine, it appears that some people are finding their way back to that primordial sleep state. In two new papers in the journal *Current Biology*, researchers had only good news to report.

"They found the subjects were sleeping slightly longer and at more consistent times across the course of the week," Goldstein says. "They found a reduction in 'social jet lag,' which is the deviation from the midnight to 8 a.m. natural cycle."

But things are also more complicated. People with jobs that allow them to work from home may be less physically active than normal, which can disrupt the homeostatic system; they may have less exposure to outdoor light and dark, which can disrupt the circadian.

And those are people in the best and most enviable work situations. People who lost their jobs and parents facing unknowns about school reopenings are likely to be kept up by profound anxiety. Those on the front lines of the pandemic now define their lives by little *but* work, which takes its own toll in terms of stress.

Other factors that mess with

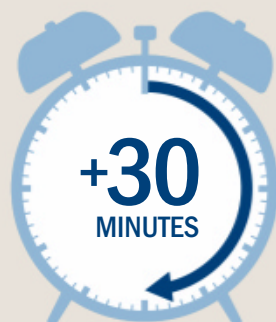
our sleep are more within our control, especially our media diets. The news has been especially overstimulating lately, from the coronavirus itself, to systemic racism and the uprisings to protest the inequities, to the usual partisan mud fights. Gorge on that all day, and you go to bed stuffed and anxious. When it comes to news, then, less is more. "We can get a good update in five minutes," says Dr. David Neubauer, associate professor at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and a faculty member at the school's Sleep Disorders Center. "We don't need five hours."

The news-delivery system also matters. We carry our phones and tablets right into our beds at night, exposing us to both information overload and to blue-wavelength light that is thought (though not proved) to suppress the sleep-inducing hormone melatonin. "I have people put their phones to bed at least one hour before they go to sleep," Goldstein says.

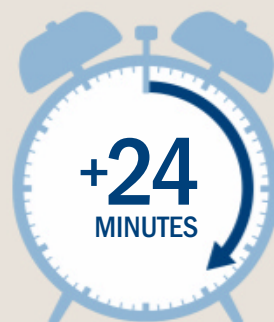
Clearly, we have yet to control the coronavirus pandemic, but as individuals, we can try to control our response to it. Improving our sleep might be one of the healthiest responses of all.

SLEEP STATS

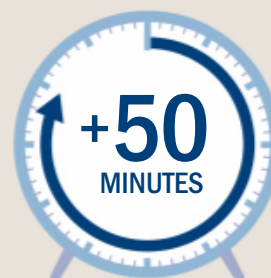
Americans are staying up later and sleeping longer under COVID-19 lockdown conditions



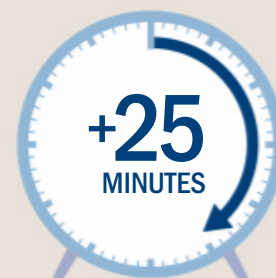
Difference in weekday sleep duration



Difference in weekend sleep duration



Difference in bedtime on weekdays



Difference in bedtime on weekends

92% of subjects reported getting 7 or more hours of sleep a night—up from 84% pre-lockdown



The next frontier of personalized medicine: your inner clock

WE USED TO THINK EVERYONE NEEDED EIGHT HOURS OF SLEEP. NOT SO, ACCORDING TO NEW SCIENCE

By Mandy Oaklander

FOR AS LONG AS SEEMAY CHOU CAN REMEMBER, she has gone to bed at midnight and woken around 4:30 a.m. Chou long assumed that meant she was a bad sleeper. Not that she felt bad. In fact, sleeping just four hours a night left her feeling full of energy and with free time to get more done at her job leading a research lab that studies bacteria. “It feels really good for me to sleep four hours,” she says. “When I’m in that rhythm, that’s when I feel my best.”

Still, in an effort to match the slumber schedules of the rest of the world, she would sometimes drug herself—with melatonin, alcohol or marijuana edibles—into getting more sleep. It backfired. “If I sleep seven or eight hours, I feel way worse,” she says. “Hung over, almost.”

Although the federal government recommends that Americans sleep seven or more hours per night for optimal health and functioning, new research is challenging the assumption that sleep is a one-size-fits-all phenomenon. Scientists have found that our internal body clocks vary so greatly that they could form the next frontiers of personalized medicine. By listening more closely to the ticking of our internal clocks, researchers expect to uncover novel ways to help everybody get more out of their sleeping and waking lives.

HUMAN SLEEP is largely a mystery. We know it’s important; getting too little is linked to heightened risk for metabolic disorders, Type 2 diabetes, psychiatric disorders, autoimmune disease, neurodegeneration and many types of cancer. “It’s probably true that bad sleep leads to increased risks of virtually every disorder,” says Dr. Louis Ptacek, a neurology professor at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF). But details about what’s actually going on during shut-eye are sparse. “We know almost nothing about sleep and how it’s regulated,” says Ptacek.

Some people are morning larks, rising early, and others are night owls, who like staying up late. Those patterns are regulated by the body’s circadian rhythm, a 24-hour internal clock. People can manipulate their circadian rhythm through all kinds of external factors, like setting an alarm clock or exposing themselves to light. But the ideal sleep duration has long been thought to be universal. “There are many people who think everyone needs eight to eight and a half hours of sleep per night and there will be health consequences if they don’t get it,” says Ptacek. “But that’s as crazy as saying everybody has to be 5 ft. 10 in. tall. It’s just not true.”

Ptacek and his wife Ying-Hui Fu, also a professor

of neurology at UCSF, are pioneers in the relatively new field of sleep genetics. About a decade ago, Fu discovered the first human gene linked to natural short sleep; people who had a rare genetic mutation seemed to get the same benefits from six hours of sleep a night as those without the mutation got from eight hours. In 2019, Fu and Ptacek discovered two more genes connected to natural short sleep, and they’ll soon submit a paper describing a fourth, providing even more evidence that functioning well on less sleep is a genetic trait.

The researchers are now collecting data on short sleepers in order to figure out just how rare these mutations are. “If we can get a better understanding of why their sleep is more efficient, we can then come back and help everybody sleep more efficiently,” Fu says. Among the participants is Chou, who also happens to work at UCSF. One day at a faculty meeting, she and Ptacek chatted about his work. She immediately recognized herself when he described short sleepers. “I had never heard of this. But once I started reading about it, it was sort of an epiphany.”

Chou doesn’t know yet if she has the identified genetic variants. But after the researchers interviewed her about her family’s sleeping patterns, she realized her mom is also a short sleeper. “I have memories of when I was younger, and my dad being frustrated with her for staying up really late, but she always seemed fine,” she says. The researchers took blood samples from both women.

Doctors once dismissed short sleepers like Chou as depressed or suffering from insomnia. Yet short sleepers may actually have an edge over everyone else. Research is still early, but Fu has found that besides being more efficient at sleep, they tend to be more energetic and optimistic and have a higher tolerance for pain than people who need to spend more time in bed. They also tend to live longer. Chou says the first three hold true for her; by nature, she is sunny and positive, and though she often finds bruises on her body, she usually doesn’t remember getting them. “I find it annoying how much people complain about little physical pains,” she says.

So far, these are just intriguing observations. But by studying genetic short sleepers, Fu and Ptacek believe they’ll eventually learn lessons for the rest of us. “As we identify more and more genes and we think about the pathways in which they function, at some point, a picture is going to emerge, and we will begin to have an understanding of how sleep is regulated in greater detail,” Ptacek says. This, they hope, will lead to targeted treatments, like pills or vitamins, to improve sleep efficiency in everyone.

Researchers are also looking beyond sleep to other circadian bodily processes that might benefit from a personalized or targeted approach. While a master clock in the brain acts like a conductor, setting time for the whole body, the rest of the body is like



orchestra players with clocks of their own. “All your organs have rhythms,” says Steven Lockley, an associate professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School who studies circadian rhythms and sleep. “There’s a clock in your heart, a clock in the lungs, a clock in the kidneys.” Just about everything in the body—metabolism, hormones, the immune system, reproductive function and the way DNA is translated—is influenced by a circadian rhythm, he says.

And not everybody’s is the same. People’s internal clocks are often hours off from one another, Lockley says. “The range of individual differences is much bigger than anyone really understands yet.”

The body’s complex clock system has implications for both healthy people and those with medical conditions, and scientists are already seeing glimpses of how they can time certain tests and treatments to get more accurate or potent results. A cholesterol reading, for example, might be affected by what time

of day you go to the doctor’s office, because the liver (which makes cholesterol) has a circadian rhythm. “The time of day at which you measure something could make someone look clinically abnormal, even though they’re not,” Lockley says.

Medicine might also be more effective if taken at a certain time. Because they’re metabolized in the liver, “drugs change their effects throughout the day,” Lockley says. Other circadian bodily processes, like cell function, can also affect how medication acts. Early research suggests certain drugs—including some for colorectal cancer, pain and asthma—perform better or are less toxic when taken at different times of day.

Exercise, which can be as powerful as medicine for some conditions, is good for you whenever you do it. “But I do think that the time of day may have an influence, on top of the effects of exercise, on our metabolic health,” says Juleen Zierath, professor of physiology at Karolinska Institute in Sweden. In one small study published in 2018 in the journal *Diabetologia*, Zierath and her team started 11 men with Type 2 diabetes on a high-intensity interval training program. The men exercised either in the morning (around 8 a.m.) or the afternoon (4 p.m.) for two weeks, then switched schedules. The researchers expected that regardless of the time of day, men in both groups would see improvements in blood-sugar levels. But “when they exercised in the morning, they actually had slightly higher levels of blood sugar [than baseline], which we didn’t expect at all,” Zierath says. It’s not clear to what extent the type of exercise and other variables matter, but the study provides an intriguing hint that time of day might make a difference for exercise.

Scientific knowledge is nascent when it comes to optimizing testing and treatment by the clock. Our understanding of individual circadian time is even more primitive. But Lockley believes it’s the key to personalized medicine; he and others are exploring ways to measure a person’s internal circadian time through simple clinical tests. “Hopefully in the next five to 10 years, you’d go to the doctor, give a breath test or a pee sample, and the doctor would know your biological time,” he says. “Then all your test results and treatments could be based on your real internal time, which is going to be very different between you and me based on our internal clocks.”

For now, even the understanding that our bodies often operate according to different clocks is a big scientific advance. It’s already changed the way Chou sleeps, lives and works. “I’ve just become more comfortable with accepting my sleep,” she says. She now asks her employees about their sleep schedules to anticipate when each will be at their peak. She also informs everyone about her own abbreviated schedule, so they know she doesn’t expect an immediate response to an email she sends at 4:05 a.m. “That’s just when my brain is working,” she says. □



This will put you to sleep

INSIDE THE ART OF THE BEDTIME STORY

By **Phoebe Smith**

IT STARTS ON A CRISP WINTER NIGHT. OUTSIDE IT'S dark and cold, the grass already coated with a thick, white layer of hoarfrost. Inside I sit—wrapped in a blanket, drinking my hot chocolate, surrounded by the orange glow of candlelight, with lavender incense diffusing into the air—slowly and purposefully crafting a tale. One designed to send millions of people, like you, drifting off to sleep.

It sounds like a peaceful scene. One so soporific I might send myself off to dreamland before I've finished my story. But it hasn't always been this way.

Earlier in the day, everything was frantic. With deadlines looming, calls to make and emails to answer, it was like my phone was alive, lighting up with job after job, demanding my attention with high-pitched alerts and jarring beeps. It's easy to let a smartphone's incessant needs flood into our bedrooms too. And that, according to professor Orfeu Buxton, editor in chief of the journal *Sleep Health*, is why many of us are losing our ability to drift off naturally.

"When we sleep, things that keep us awake or disrupt our sleep are generally called threats," he says. "We're mammals, after all; we're not computers. We don't just shut off and sleep. These threats can be endogenous—internally generated, like if you have stressful thoughts—or they can be exogenous, such as the noise of an ambulance or pinging notifications on your phone overnight. All those engage the threat vigilance detection centers in our brain."

Phones—and their alerts—have been designed to steal our attention. So about 10 years ago, desperate to sleep better, I fully removed myself from my phone's reach. I took up wild camping—sleeping in remote and wild places around the country, away from campsites, people and, crucially, wi-fi. Sometimes I head off for a week with no contact with the modern world, other times for just a single night. No matter which way I choose, it always seems to reset my sleeping pattern effectively.

MY QUEST for these sleeping adventures has led to some extreme bedtime scenarios. I've dangled off the edge of a sea cliff while seals frolicked below in the waves. I've bedded down inside caves where the only light comes from my own campfire. I've lain on mountaintops watching the stars and listening only to my breath as it clouds above me, then dissipates into the night sky.

And although, to some people, they may sound like scary places to take a pillow, I've found over the years that they often lead to the best night's sleep. I am suddenly forced to see my concerns from a different perspective. How on earth can answering an email be anywhere near as important as sourcing clean water? How can posting on social media rank with staying warm, dry and safe? And why would answering a message be a worry when I need to navigate my way in the dark?

There's another primal function I tap into by sleeping outdoors: resetting my circadian clock.

"We all have an internal clock in our brain that tells us what biological time of day it is," says Ken Wright, a professor at the University of Colorado and director of a sleep lab. By sleeping in nature the



way I do, I not only physically remove myself from exogenous threatening sounds and the demands of my smartphone, but also expose myself to natural light, which results in a better quality of sleep.

I realized a while ago that I could use my adventures to help others who also struggled to sleep. Words have the ability to soothe and calm. By writing about my wild sleeps, I could bring my fellow insomniacs with me. When we were kids, many of us were read to by a grownup—the bedtime story was (and still is) a classic way to get restless children to nod off. But many of us decided we were too old for this, that we had grown out of it. Which is why I began to write special nonfiction bedtime travel stories for adults—the aim being that they would never reach the end.

“When you try to sleep, your mind monitors your efforts, which actually keeps you awake,” says Dr. Steve Orma, a clinical psychologist specializing in insomnia. “Doing something calming before bed, that’s designed to help you let go and take you elsewhere, will prepare your body for sleep.”

IN MY SLEEP STORIES, each word is chosen carefully. Adjectives—which in literature are often removed or allowed only sparsely—are necessary in a bedtime tale to transport you to the place I’m in, so we can wander together through lavender fields in Provence, meander along the waterways in Oxfordshire, travel aboard South Africa’s slow and steady Blue Train, or listen to the wind in the leaves amid the giant cedar trees in Morocco’s hidden forest.

The sound of words is also key. I must choose them in such a way that they delicately inform what we can see, in a tender and comforting way. No loud

sounds are found in these sentences, only peaceful, lulling prose. Then there are the other senses. Smells evoke images and sensations that relax and reassure. Sights must be captivating enough that you want more, yet magnificent enough that you are lost within them.

There was never a rule book for writing Sleep Stories—my techniques started with intuition and the drive to try to create something that I would like to have read to me when I was snuggled up in bed, surrounded by the warmth of my duvet. As time has moved on, as it always does, I listen to feedback I get from listeners, for places and themes that people tell me have made them feel most comforted, most relaxed, and then decide on my next destination and the journey I will take them on with another tale.

The process to write these stories can take many hours, but I always begin penning them in the same setting as I did the first time I wrote one on that winter’s night. Everything must be perfect: the lighting dim as though I were outside in my camp, the sounds soft, the phone off and out of reach, and my imagination allowed to feel as free as though it were on a mountaintop.

Only then can I begin to take you with me on a journey, one whose ending you may never even reach. But in which I know you will become immersed, snuggled into a world I’ve created for us both, where candlelight flickers, where all the world remains on the other side of the door. When my tale becomes your tale, we are both free to dream.

Smith is the sleep storyteller in residence for the app Calm and the author of Extreme Sleeps: Adventures of a Wild Camper

No loud sounds are found in these sentences, only peaceful, lulling prose

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Time Off



SEE HERE NOW
Shamanic
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a sound bath: wellness
shows are the new
makeover shows

INSIDE

SETH ROGEN TRAVELS
THROUGH TIME

INSIDE THE WORLD OF
MARTIN MARGIELA

THE TRUE STORY OF
A SCANDAL AT HARVARD

PHOTOGRAPH BY FELICIA GRAHAM

Time Off is reported by Mariah Espada and Josh Rosenberg

ESSAY

Television, now heal thyself!

By Judy Berman

IF YOU'VE WATCHED ANY AMOUNT OF REALITY TV, you've witnessed a scene like the one that closes the series premiere of TBS's *Lost Resort*: a beautiful 20-something woman, surrounded by scenery straight out of the Garden of Eden, screams her heart out. Her hot castmates look on helplessly, wearing skimpy athleisure and concerned expressions.

On *The Bachelor*, this kind of meltdown would probably be about competing for a mate. *The Amazing Race* and its ilk force exhausted contestants to work together to complete challenges designed to incite conflict. But in *Lost Resort*, the meltdown is the challenge. The series transports nine people to a resort in the Costa Rican jungle on what it describes as a "journey of self-discovery," in the care of "an eclectic team of alternative healers." In this instance, we are observing something called a "rage ritual"—and, in a broader sense, one of the sillier manifestations of a new trend in reality TV: the wellness show.

Wellness is, of course, a massive cultural force unto itself. Too tenacious to be a trend, it's more like a new lifestyle paradigm for youngish, relatively affluent Westerners willing to pay a premium for high-end products, treatments and experiences—all in the pursuit of practices, from yoga to ayahuasca shamanism, that mostly originated in the Global South. The Global Wellness Institute, a nonprofit umbrella organization for the \$4.5 trillion industry, defines wellness as "the active pursuit of activities, choices and lifestyles that lead to a state of holistic health."

Gwyneth Paltrow, whose Goop empire sits at the perilous crossroads of media and e-commerce, is perhaps the most famous face of contemporary wellness culture. This winter, she unveiled Netflix's *The Goop Lab With Gwyneth Paltrow*, a docuseries in which she and her staff test a suite of buzzy practices. Also on Netflix, *Down to Earth With Zac Efron* sends the actor around the world with his buddy Darin Olien, whom Efron describes as a "guru of healthy living and superfoods," on a bro trip focused on wellness, food and conservation. (The investigative series *Un(Well)*, coming to Netflix on Aug. 12, will either balance out the aforementioned fluff or further confuse viewers.) YouTube Original game show *Sleeping With Friends* challenges YouTube personalities to improve their sleep hygiene. And HBO Max recently announced that it would partner with the popular app Calm on *A World of Calm*, a series that will enlist performers like Mahershala Ali, Nicole Kidman and Keanu Reeves to narrate episodes designed to soothe.

Diverse though they are, all wellness shows share one entitlement: the possibility of transformation—for subjects on-screen, the viewer or both. This is hardly a new theme. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is written into the DNA of Western storytelling, from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* to *My Fair Lady*.



^
The cast of Lost Resort includes a pastor experiencing a crisis of faith and a codependent mother and daughter

Just as it was in that musical, not to mention in so many teen movies, physical transformation was a favorite trope of reality series in the '00s. But since then, an increased awareness of the dark side of reality TV and a surge in pop feminism have put an end to most makeover shows. The new wave of wellness shows isn't just tapping into a novel market; it's also satisfying our hunger for transformation stories. But is the spectacle of rage rituals really nourishing viewers' bodies or souls more than what came before it?

REALITY TV WAS a Wild West in the early 21st century—and horrific concepts outnumbered brilliant ones. ABC's *Extreme Makeover* spent four seasons combining the acute pain of cosmetic surgery with the prolonged agony of brutal diets and exercise regimens to transform regular people into supermodels. With 2004's short-lived *The Swan*, Fox upped the ante by restricting its "ugly duckling" cast to women and pitting the gut-renovated subjects against one another in a beauty pageant. In her book



Reality Bites Back, critic Jennifer L. Pozner called it “the most sadistic reality series of the decade.”

Gentler makeover stuck around longer. TLC stalwart *What Not to Wear*, in which hosts Stacy London and Clinton Kelly cheerfully upgraded the wardrobes of the sartorially clueless, limited cosmetic intervention to hair and makeup. But the show still fed on the mostly female participants’ insecurities, implying that any woman who failed to conform to external beauty standards must want to change. London revamped her approach for 2015’s *Love, Lust or Run*. “I’m not out to change them,” she told HuffPost of her subjects. “I don’t want them to blend in; they aren’t necessarily meant to look conventional.”

Network executives also found new ways to cash in on Americans’ obsession with weight loss. NBC’s long-running hit *The Biggest Loser* tantalized viewers with the opportunity to watch obese people dramatically transform their bodies through a hellish program of calorie restrictions and hours of daily

exercise. Under the supervision of trainers, many contestants would lose upwards of 100 lb. in a few months. Hospitalizations, horror stories and a chorus of criticism from medical professionals suggested the show was exploiting its casts more than helping them. *Loser* disappeared in 2016, after a widely publicized study found contestants were regaining pounds because rapid weight loss had slowed their metabolisms.

This winter, the show resurfaced on USA, amid a TV landscape that’s ravenous for content but starved for ideas. The contrite *Loser* promised to focus on sustainable lifestyle changes, incorporating therapy and nutrition. Though critics didn’t all agree that this makeover was extreme enough, USA and Syfy networks head Chris McCumber touted *Loser 2.0* as a “holistic, 360-degree look at wellness.”

THE WELLNESS SHOW is, on its scrupulously moisturized face, more humane than the makeover show. It often involves celebrities who would never endanger their reputations by airing out their homeliest undergarments on TV, because wellness culture is a magnet for people whose livelihoods depend on staying youthful and attractive. The stated aim of these shows is to help people, not humiliate them. Watching this stuff is supposed to feel good, not dirty.

Unfortunately, the effectiveness—and safety—of many disciplines that fall under the enormous umbrella of wellness varies widely. Wellness culture includes such research-backed practices as yoga and meditation; it also encompasses alternative therapies like crystal healing, whose utility is limited to the placebo effect. At its fringes are harmful, demonstrably false beliefs like those promoted by the antivaccine movement. But even legitimate corners of the wellness world can be cultish, hyper-commercialized, emptily aspirational.

Wellness shows reflect that range. *Sleeping With Friends* is pretty careful, offering time-tested wisdom like avoiding screens before bed. Series like *Goop Lab* and *Down to Earth* can be

much flakier. Efron’s alternately goofy and philosophical narration creates the impression that he’s just as sanguine about the possibility that water from Lourdes’ famous spring can cure cancer as he is about the promise of geothermal energy. Paltrow has come under fire for selling women expensive products that could hurt them. (In 2019, a woman sustained second-degree burns from vaginal steaming, a treatment Goop had endorsed.) And her show fails to meaningfully distinguish between research-supported science and forays into ridiculous topics like psychic mediumship.

Lost Resort, for its part, blurs the line between nonjudgmental therapy and mean-spirited entertainment. The show professes to care about its participants; some

of them, like a woman who can’t stop mourning her stillborn baby, do evoke empathy. Others are edited to fit the contours of classic reality-TV villains. And it’s hard to know how seriously we’re supposed to take the healers. Oneika, who teaches meditation to incarcerated people, seems pretty legit. But the retreat’s leader is a woman named Chrissie Fire Mane, an expert in “shamanic psychotherapy” with a fondness for finger cymbals. Benjamin doesn’t exactly refute the viewer’s suspicion that the show cast healers based on appearance. “Your body is your temple,” he opines. “I was blessed to have a temple that’s 6 ft. 4 and has nice hair and develops muscles well.” Set pieces like the rage ritual land more as manufactured drama than as effective treatments for cast members whose issues range from anger management to detachment from emotions.

Wellness is a complicated topic. Genteel framing aside, the shoddy science and subliminal lifestyle marketing that underlie so many wellness shows could be more dangerous than the transformation porn of makeover programs. And while reality TV might sometimes educate us or inspire empathy, its chief function will always be to entertain. Anyone who says differently probably has some snake oil to sell you. □

‘All you have to do is be your being. That’s really what I’m trying to bring.’

BENJAMIN,
a wellness coach,
in the series premiere
of *Lost Resort*



MOVIES

A spiky delight straight from the old country

By Stephanie Zacharek

EVEN AS OUR POLITICAL LANDSCAPE HAS BECOME OVERLOADED with ridiculously wrongheaded pronouncements, comic absurdity in the movies—dumb, or even smart, stuff that just makes you laugh—feels more precious than ever. We’ve all become worried Victorian orphans facing our glum future. RIP delight; it was nice while it lasted.

But wait! Seth Rogen as an early 20th century pickle-company grunt who falls into a vat of brine and emerges, perfectly preserved, in modern-day Brooklyn? Did someone actually conceive that as a movie idea—let alone get the thing made? The good news for you and for me, my fellow wan Victorian orphans, is that *An American Pickle* is a real movie, and it’s delightful. Sometimes a logically indefensible premise is the only thing that makes life seem logical.

Rogen plays a dual role here: He is, first, Herschel Greenbaum, a native of the Eastern European region of Schlupsk, a land of mud and hardship. We first meet Herschel in 1919, as he woos a local girl, Sarah (Sarah Snook). “She has all her teeth, top and bottom,” he notes approvingly. Both have tragic backgrounds, alluded to in dashes of black humor—“Her parents were murdered by Cossacks, my parents were murdered by Cossacks!”—and when yet more violence strikes their village, they set out for America, eager to start a family that will stretch forth through generations.

Then Herschel falls into that vat. He awakens, still wearing his rumbled cap and sporting his scraggly beard, to learn that his beloved wife is long dead; his feelings of displacement stir anger in his heart. Then he learns he has one living relative,



Rogen and Rogen: the pickle doesn’t fall far from the tree

a great-grandson, Ben Greenbaum (Rogen again). Ben whisks Herschel to his nerd-bachelor Brooklyn apartment, introducing him to the wonders of Alexa and the miracle of SodaStream (seltzer was an unaffordable luxury in the old country), as well as teaching him the new dance steps, though Herschel has retained some pretty fly *Fiddler on the Roof* moves.

THIS IS the assertively heartwarming part of *An American Pickle*. But not to worry, it doesn’t last long. Herschel is Ben’s only connection to family: Ben’s father, Herschel’s grandson, has died in a car crash, as has Ben’s mother. But before long, Herschel and Ben—a failed app developer who also, it appears, harbors anger in his heart—have a falling-out. Herschel strikes out on his own and becomes a pickle-cart mogul. Ben, jealous and spiteful, tries to sabotage him. It becomes clear that neither is particularly nice, and certainly not to each other. Yet their faults unite them, and their stumbling odyssey back toward each other is what gives *An American Pickle* its spiky warmth.

Directed by Brandon Trost and adapted by Simon Rich from his own novella, “Sell Out,” *An American Pickle* has an acidic zing that neutralizes any sentimentality. Rogen has a great feel for Yiddish humor, for its lilt-ing rhythms and its joy, but also for its bleakness. (When Herschel learns that Ben has lost his parents, he says, with genuine compassion, “I’m very sorry,” before asking, “Murder, or regular?”) But Rogen can carry the movie’s more serious threads too: while Ben claims that he’s not religious, he comes to understand that even among the non-observant, religion can be the thread that connects families through centuries. Rogen, Trost and Rich have a sense of how ridiculous, and sometimes punishing, life can seem, in 1919 or in 2020. Yet even without the advantage of being preserved in brine, we get through the madness. *L’chaim*.

‘Making the movie was kind of re-enacting my own history in a lot of ways.’

SETH ROGEN, on Marc Maron’s *WTF* podcast, reflecting on how his own grandmother was born as her family fled Poland in 1919

AN AMERICAN PICKLE streams on HBO Max beginning Aug. 6



A sketch for Margiela's tabi boot

MOVIES

Mysterious genius, revealed

Miraculously, the revolutionary Belgian designer Martin Margiela—from his start in the late 1980s until 2008, when he left the house that bears his name—has never shown his face in public. His creations—angular white tunics poised to take wing, strangely erotic soft leather boots with a *tabi*-style split toe—could be jarringly conceptual or starkly beautiful, and were often both. But his insistence on privacy ensured that the clothes always spoke for themselves.

If that approach makes Margiela sound arrogant, Reiner Holzemer's superb documentary *Martin Margiela: In His Own Words* proves the opposite. Holzemer never shows the designer's face, but we hear his voice and see his hands: he explains how his anonymity gave him freedom ("I knew I could give more if I felt protected"), and we watch as he fashions a sturdily exquisite necklace from a champagne cork and a length of black ribbon. The effect is so intimate that we walk away with an almost tactile sense of who Martin Margiela is, the way we confidently, yet only sort of, know what the man in the moon looks like. His mystery becomes our secret too. —S.Z.

MARTIN MARGIELA is available on streaming platforms beginning Aug. 14

MOVIES

Tomorrow is another day—maybe

IF WRITER-DIRECTOR AMY SEIMETZ'S indie thriller *She Dies Tomorrow* were a song rather than a movie, it would be the anthem for our current age of anxiety, an artfully atonal ode to the eternal question, Am I imagining this, or is it really happening? Amy (Kate Lyn Sheil) is settling into the house she's just bought when she suffers what appears to be a panic attack. She calls a close friend, Jane (Jane Adams), begging her to come over. Her voice is so weak, she can barely make herself heard, though it's also unclear whether she's speaking at all—it's as if all communication has broken down cosmically as well as digitally.

When Jane shows up, Amy outlines the cause of her anguish: she's convinced she's going to die the next day. Jane reassures her that this cannot possibly be true—only to return home and find herself seized by the certainty that she too is destined to die on the morrow. Jane confesses her anxiety to others (her brother, Chris Messina; a doctor, Josh Lucas), who try to calm her, until panic seizes them as well. It appears that Amy is an unwitting superspreader, a Jenny Appleseed sowing debilitating fears of mortality from one person to the next.

If all of that sounds vaguely comical and unsettling, that's the point: the movie's oblique, jittery rhythms are designed to make *us* feel a little crazy too, before we come to our senses and laugh at ourselves. Seimetz has been working in film and television for years as an actor, writer, director and producer; she has appeared in films like *Pet Sematary*, and she directed the 2012 thriller *Sun Don't Shine*. She'll try her hand, fearlessly, at anything. Perched at the restless midpoint of psychological and supernatural horror, *She Dies Tomorrow* is dotted with experimental flourishes: the screen is occasionally smeared with what looks like blood, though it might be an ectoplasmic communiqué from another world. And there's no tidy resolution—*She Dies Tomorrow* leaves a trail of jagged question marks in its wake.

But that, too, appears to be part of its design. In all likelihood, most of us will wake up tomorrow and manage to survive the day. But Seimetz's movie plants that one unruly seed of doubt: you just never know. —S.Z.

SHE DIES TOMORROW is available to stream on various platforms beginning Aug. 7



Mark it on the calendar: Sheil plays a woman who's certain her death is imminent

NONFICTION

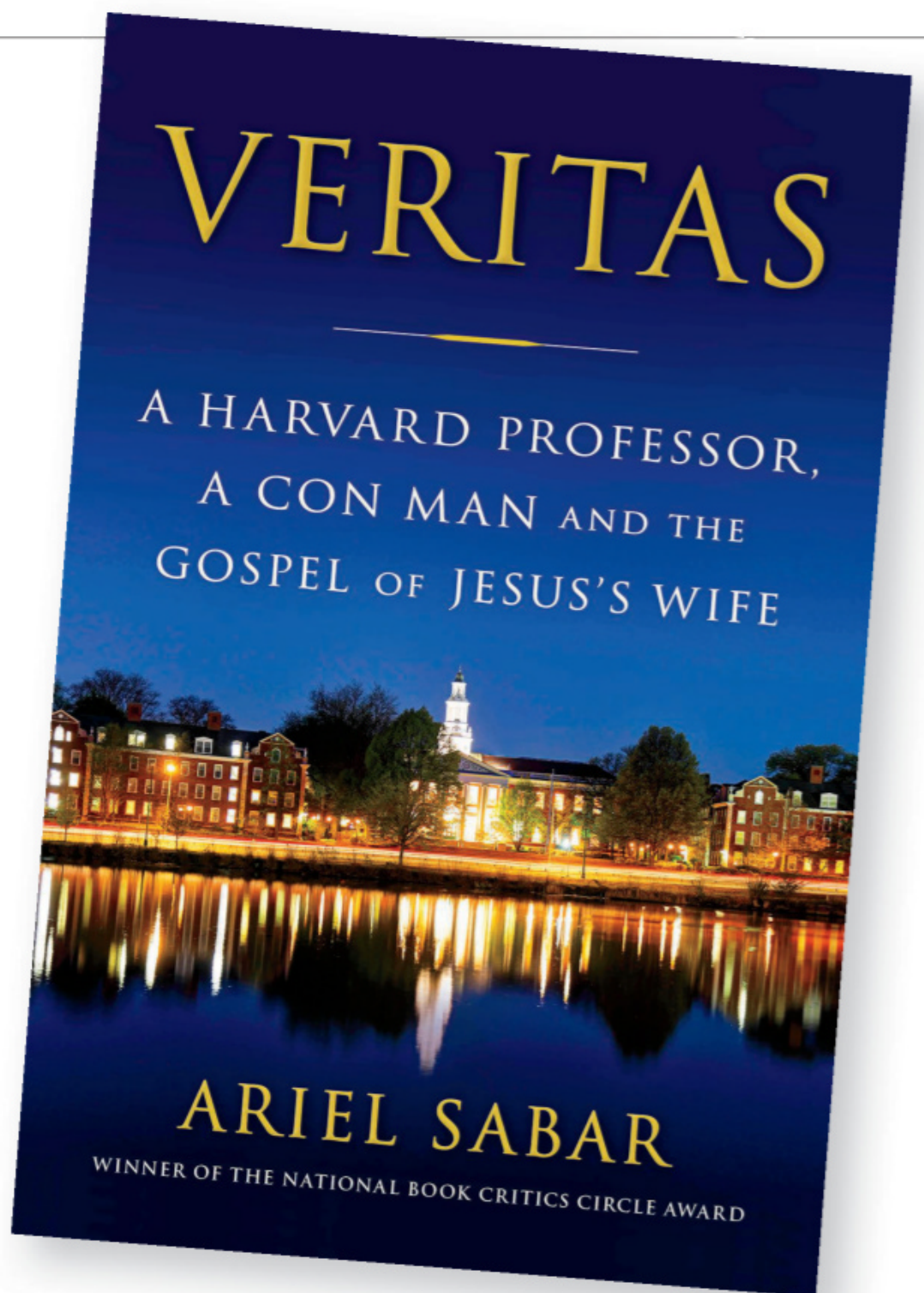
The truth about Jesus' wife

By Lucas Wittmann

FOR A MOMENT BACK IN 2012, READERS AROUND the world might have thought that Jesus had had a wife. Karen King, an esteemed professor at Harvard University's Divinity School, made headlines when she revealed what she named "The Gospel of Jesus' Wife," a small fragment of papyrus with eight cryptic, incomplete lines in Coptic, including: "Jesus said to them, My wife ...". The journalist Ariel Sabar was on hand in Rome for her attention-grabbing announcement, which seized the media's attention (including this magazine's), thanks to the tantalizing possibility of an entirely different Christian history—one in which Mary Magdalene, the possible wife in question, was even more central to Jesus' story. King's discovery had the potential to upend a millennia-old, male-centric history.

King said at the time, "My own faith, and the faith of other Christians, is best built on good history." But that's not exactly what she was presenting to the world, as Sabar examines in his new book *Veritas: A Harvard Professor, a Con Man and the Gospel of Jesus's Wife*. As she had done previously in her original and acclaimed work on the Gnostic Gospels, King told a brilliant alternate history, neatly packaged and ready for prime time. But this time there was one problem: it wasn't true. Even before she went public with her discovery, some scholars and papyrologists questioned the authenticity of the fragment. Then the furor died down a bit until 2014, when a publication in an esteemed journal of theological history seemed to confirm that this papyrus might be real. But by 2016, thanks to Sabar's reporting in the *Atlantic* and a growing list of rebuttals from Coptic experts and scientists, it was clear the fragment was nothing more than a bad forgery cobbled together from publicly available Gnostic texts with sloppy penmanship. King finally admitted that she had been duped.

SABAR REVEALED in his reporting that the text had originally been brought to King by Walter Fritz, a failed German student of Egyptology and director of the Stasi Museum turned Florida-based wife-swapping pornographer. The mystery of Fritz—and why King did not fully investigate the provenance of this scrap—is at the center of *Veritas*. It's a story about journalism done right, about Sabar's own capable, dogged sleuthing to get to the bottom of those famous headlines. Along the way, Sabar explores the history of alternate Christian texts, the eccentric scholars who investigate

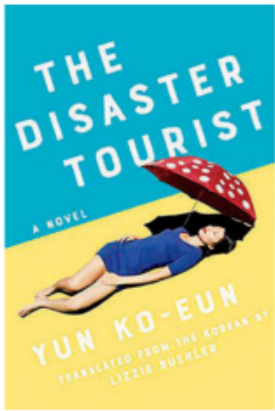


Starting in 2012, journalist Sabar investigated the story of the infamous Coptic fragment that turned out to be a forgery

them and the internal workings of Harvard.

In our moment of truthiness, to borrow a term from Stephen Colbert, *Veritas* offers a vital lesson less about Christianity than about what happens when a scholar decides that the story is more important than the truth. King had spent her career presenting an important scholarly narrative about the need to re-evaluate and reinterpret the canonical story of Christianity, to allow for women to play a central role and to question some of the central tenets of how established churches told the world's most famous story. But in Sabar's convincing and damning assessment, when it came to Jesus' wife, she bypassed the facts, ignored peers who warned her something was amiss and failed to thoroughly interrogate how Fritz had come to possess this stunning artifact.

One can imagine the appeal of the moment: the chance to inspire a frank discussion about who gets to be at the center of the story of Christian truth. By the end of *Veritas*, the reader is left wishing King had stuck to her own vision of "good history" and asked the hard questions before she went public. Instead, she let a papyrus scrap obscure the larger point she had been making for decades. □



FICTION

A recipe for Disaster

Thirty-something Yona Ko has spent the past 10 years of her life working as a programming coordinator for Jungle, a travel agency that specializes in disaster tourism. Though she's one of Jungle's top employees, she tries to resign after being sexually assaulted by a colleague. But when she hands in her resignation letter, Yona is met with an intriguing offer: a paid trip to one of Jungle's destinations.

South Korean author Yun Ko-eun's sharp novel *The Disaster Tourist*, newly translated by Lizzie Buehler, follows Yona as she travels to the fictional island of Mui. She's experiencing Jungle's "Desert Sinkhole" package—it's one of many that the company offers for travelers to explore areas once destroyed by disasters. Along the way, Yona meets fellow tourists, like a college student who is excited by Jungle's insurance plan and the "massive payout" they'll send to his parents if he dies on the trip.

The Disaster Tourist becomes increasingly thrilling and strange when Yona discovers a plan for a man-made disaster that will bring in much-needed money but will devastate the island. As Yona wrestles with her own involvement in the plan, Yun constructs a darkly funny and disturbing portrait of the tourism industry—and the lengths we'll travel to survive in a world that runs on greed. —A.G.

FICTION

Following the last flight

By Annabel Gutterman

IN CHARLOTTE MCCONAGHY'S ADULT debut *Migrations*, animals are dying at an alarmingly fast rate. There are no more bears in the north or reptiles in the south. Big cats have disappeared. Wolves too. The novel's quiet, bird-loving protagonist Franny Stone is specifically concerned with the Arctic tern, which has the longest migration of any animal in the world. The last flock is on its final descent, flying from the Arctic to the Antarctic, and Franny is determined to follow it.

The issue, though, is that Franny has no way of doing so—she doesn't have a boat and has never sailed professionally.

Migrations opens in Greenland, where Franny tracks down the captain of the *Saghani* and talks her way aboard. By chasing the terns, she argues, the crew will find the fish they desperately need to catch.

Immediately, the water is rough and the wind is freezing. Shortly into their journey, the vessel has to navigate around an iceberg, which McConaghy describes with thrilling intensity. But Franny isn't scared—she's ready to die

on the boat if it comes to it. One of the crew members asks her why she's so tired of living. She says to herself: "It's not life I'm tired of, with its astonishing ocean currents and layers of ice and all the delicate feathers that make up a wing. It's myself."

As the *Saghani* continues on its dangerous trip, it becomes clear that Franny is not the person she says she is. Her passport is not her own. She's

writing letters to her husband but never sends them. The novel flips to earlier parts of Franny's life, revealing the traumas of her past and the fierce attachment she has to the sea.

In piecing together who this mysterious protagonist really is, McConaghy creates a detailed portrait of a woman on the cusp of collapse, consumed with a world that is every bit as broken as she is. *Migrations* offers a grim window into a future that doesn't feel very removed from our own, which makes Franny's voice all the more powerful. In understanding how nature can heal us, McConaghy underlines why it urgently needs to be protected. □

A grim window into a world with far fewer animals



McConaghy, who lives in Sydney, is making her U.S. adult-fiction debut after publishing eight young-adult books in Australia

6 Questions

Bill Gates The tech magnate turned philanthropist on the U.S. response to COVID-19, prospects for a vaccine and how to share it

This pandemic seems a little different in that the U.S. doesn't seem to be serving as a model for how to best respond. What has been responsible for that? If you score the U.S., our domestic response has been weak but can improve. Our R&D response—funding vaccines and therapeutics—has been the best in the world. And then in the third category, making those tools available to the world, we're hoping this supplemental bill—1% to the resources—would be enough to have a pretty dramatic effect and get other countries to give. So that one's incomplete still.

How do you think government leaders can better work with public-health leaders to learn from the lessons of Ebola, HIV and previous influenza outbreaks? Well, it is amazing, the contrast to Ebola—the U.S. allocated money and went and helped out, even though the threat of that to the U.S. itself was very, very minor. Here we haven't yet shown up in the international forums, where the money to get these tools out to countries is being discussed. That still absolutely can be fixed. The private sector [left] all by itself would simply charge the highest price and only give to the very wealthy. When you use the private sector, which is where the deep expertise is, you have to use them in the right way. And that's not being done. It can't just be a pure market-driven thing.

The Gates Foundation is one of the largest funders of vaccine research around the world. How can we ensure that vaccine trials are successful? The political pressure to move quickly is not a perfect thing—even calling the thing [Operation] Warp Speed, talking about going around certain Food and Drug Administration guidelines. So far, the staff, the nonpolitical staff, has held the line that we really have to prove efficacy and have the full safety database and that we're not going to go off like

“OUR R&D RESPONSE—
FUNDING VACCINES
AND THERAPEUTICS—
HAS BEEN THE BEST
IN THE WORLD”



we did with hydroxychloroquine and give it emergency use, when there was no serious data to suggest there was anything there. It was purely political. Sort of like a wives'-tale type thing. We really can't do that with the vaccine.

Are you confident that the fall won't be as disastrous as this summer?

Strangely, the death rate this summer has not gotten up to the peak death rate, and that's partly because we do have remdesivir and dexamethasone. There are things the medical profession with lots of heroes and great thinking does to reduce the death rate. So the fall is a mix for me, where the innovation track is the good news that could bring things down, but a lack of social distancing—that one hangs in the balance.

How confident are you that vaccine manufacturing and distribution will provide a vaccine to everyone who needs one? As yet, the U.S. hasn't spoken up on its willingness to help the developing countries here, like the U.S. has done in every other global health thing. I'm hopeful that the supplemental bill, like 1% of it, will go to people like Gavi and Global Fund, who bring us that health equity.

Are you optimistic about how we will manage this pandemic? I think the U.S. response will improve. I think the innovation will come along. I think U.S. generosity will show up to help the world on this. I mean, it's a huge setback. The only good thing that will come out of this is we'll advance some technologies that will help us be ready for a future pandemic, and will help us with other diseases. But I was one of the voices that said we should be ready for this. We weren't ready for it, and the price of that will be very high. But we will get past it. —ALICE PARK

Adapted from a *TIME* 100 Talk.
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