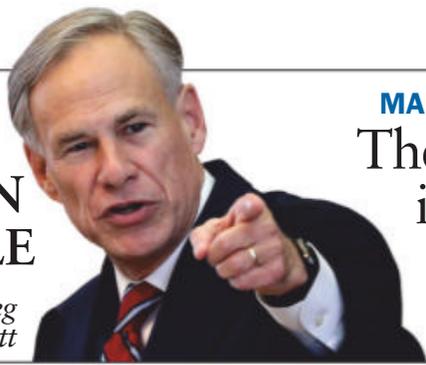


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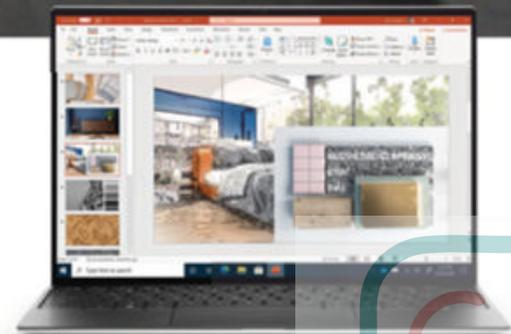
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Editor's letter

To be a house hunter in 2021 is to live in a near-constant state of disappointment. After months of being locked down inside our two-bedroom Brooklyn apartment, my wife and I realized last year that we needed more space—ideally a house with a yard or basement where we could occasionally banish our bouncing and bickering 5- and 8-year-old kids. And so we decided to join the masses of urbanites attempting to become suburbanites. I say “attempting” because the Covid-era combination of an unprecedented shortage of properties for sale and a surge in potential buyers has turned the process of finding a house and then getting a bid accepted into a Holy Grail-like quest. (See Making Money.) We've made about 10 failed offers in recent months, all for modest three-bedroom homes, roughly half of which we lost to all-cash buyers and the remainder to people willing to pay 15 percent or more over the asking price. To beat the competition, buyers are resorting to ever more extreme measures. People are bid-

ding on homes they haven't seen in person and waiving inspections. A Bethesda, Md., resident even pledged to name her first-born after a seller. It wasn't enough; someone else got the house.

This craziness is playing out at the same time that a very different kind of crisis is unfolding in the rental sector. At least 11 million Americans are behind on their rent, many as a result of losing their jobs during the pandemic, and thousands of small landlords are teetering on the edge of bankruptcy. (See The Last Word.) The Centers for Disease Control's rental eviction moratorium is set to expire at the end of June, so many families in arrears could soon find themselves homeless. America's split-screen housing market is an almost perfect symbol of the preexisting social inequalities that have been exposed by the pandemic. While some of us are seeking to upgrade, many low-income workers—already disproportionately sickened and impoverished by Covid—are simply trying to keep a roof over their head.

Theunis Bates
Managing editor

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The showdown over new voting restrictions

What happened

The national battle over restrictive new election laws dramatically escalated this week, after Texas Democratic lawmakers derailed the passage of a controversial new bill by walking out of the statehouse and the Republican governor threatened to strip funding for their salaries and staff. In a surprise revolt, 60 Democrats quietly exited a Sunday-night legislative session, thus depriving Republicans of a quorum. The bill would have banned drive-through and 24-hour voting used by many Black and Hispanic voters in the Houston area in 2020, imposed new restrictions on mail-in voting, and ended early voting on Sunday morning, when many Black churchgoers have traditionally gone to the polls. It also would have made it easier for judges to overturn contested election results. Republicans say the law is needed to ensure election integrity. It's "a strong bill that gives accessibility & security to Texas elections," tweeted co-sponsor Sen. Bryan Hughes. But Democrats say the clear goal is to quash turnout among voters of color, who overwhelmingly lean Democratic. "Every American needs to be watching what's happening in Texas right now," said Rep. Colin Allred (D-Texas). "This isn't legislation, it's discrimination."

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott vowed to call lawmakers, who adjourned for the summer, back for a special session to pass the bill. He threatened to strip funding for legislators and their staffs from a pending budget. "No pay for those who abandon their responsibilities," he tweeted. "Stay tuned."

President Biden promised to "fight like heck" against Republican efforts to restrict voting, which have led to passage of more-stringent voting laws in 14 states, including Florida, Georgia, and Iowa. He said Vice President Kamala Harris would lead the administration's efforts to pass H.R. 1, the sweeping federal bill that would establish national standards for election administration. "This sacred right is under assault with incredible intensity like I've never seen," Biden said.

What the editorials said

Texas Republicans are engaged in a "scandalous charade," said the *Houston Chronicle*. Their bill is rank "voter suppression" masquerading as voting integrity, which Republicans tried to ram through using "underhanded, spineless, political gamesmanship." Texas Republicans have struggled mightily to find proof of widespread fraud, and repeatedly failed. So why did Texas need to make it harder to vote? "We didn't."

Spare us the "melodrama," said *The Wall Street Journal*. This bill is no "assault on democracy." It rolls back "Covid-19 innovations" like drive-through and 24-hour voting. But when did emergency pandemic measures "sud-



The Texas House chamber after Democrats left

denly become the new baseline?" Texas voters would still get some two weeks of early voting—more than in "Biden's beloved Delaware." And courts could only require an election do-over if the number of illegal ballots exceeded the margin between winning and losing candidates.

What the columnists said

"Democrats, this is how you do it," said Jay Michaelson in *TheDailyBeast.com*. To block this travesty of a bill, Texas Democrats actually fought rather than get rolled over, using "tricks, stunts, and gambits" to block its passage and calling

national attention to Republicans' "cravenly self-interested" voter-suppression efforts. On both the state and federal level, Democrats need to pull out all stops to derail the "racist and anti-democratic freight train" barreling across the nation.

The Democrats' "moral panic" over new voting laws is "misplaced," said Jonah Goldberg in *TheDispatch.com*. Progressives believe "maximizing turnout is essential to democracy," while conservatives believe "integrity" is paramount. There are good-faith arguments for both positions. Some new Republican voting restrictions "are manifestly unreasonable," but many more aren't, such as requiring voter ID. And if Republicans are seeking advantage, that's no less true of Democrats pushing H.R. 1, which would federalize elections and "do all sorts of unreasonable things to drive up turnout."

Provisions designed to reduce turnout aren't even "the most alarming" part of Republican legislation, said Max Boot in *The Washington Post*. Both Georgia and Texas are putting partisans in charge of supervising elections, making it easier to declare fraud and overturn election results. Similar efforts are underway in other "key swing states." If the House and Senate tip to GOP control in 2022, we could see "a nightmare scenario" in 2024: A GOP-controlled Congress overturning election results "to install Trump or a Trump mini-me in the White House." That "would spell the end of American democracy."

If "democracy is dying," Democrats need to act like it, said Luke Savage in *TheAtlantic.com*. H.R. 1 and the John Lewis Voting Rights Act—which would restore parts of the 1965 Voting Rights Act struck down in 2013—will die in the Senate unless Democrats use their 51 votes to eliminate the filibuster. Centrist Democratic Sens. Joe Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema both insist they won't take that step, which means that Republicans will determine the election rules in 2022 and 2024. Biden and Democrats must do "whatever it takes to bring holdout senators inside, in private or in public."

What next?

The Texas Democrats' victory is a temporary one, said Paul Weber in the *Associated Press*. The voting bill's passage is all but certain when Gov. Greg Abbott brings the legislature back for a special session—the only question is when it will happen. Democrats are "betting their dramatic flight" from the statehouse "will make Republicans think twice about some provisions," particularly the ban on early voting Sunday morning. There has been some talk of compromise, but "bare-knuckled Republican governing is a way of life" in Texas and nothing has been promised. Republican legislators have introduced nearly 400 voting bills in 48 states, and many are still pending, said Elise Viebeck in *The Washington Post*. States "to watch in the coming weeks" include Arizona, where proposed measures would tighten ID requirements for mail-in voters and set earlier postmarking deadlines, and Michigan, where "a stream of proposals" include limiting the use of drop boxes and "empowering partisan election challengers."

Illustration by Fred Harper. Photo from Reuters Cover photos from AP (2), Media Bakery

Biden's \$6 trillion budget proposal

What happened

President Biden unveiled a \$6 trillion budget proposal last week that would make massive new investments in education, transportation, and clean energy—and push the U.S. to its highest level of planned spending since World War II. The proposed 2022 budget puts together several of the policy initiatives that Biden outlined during his first four months in office. It includes his \$1.7 trillion infrastructure plan, which would modernize roads and bridges and invest in broadband and elder care, and the \$1.8 trillion American Families Plan, which would subsidize child care and guarantee two free years of community college. About half of the proposed spending would be covered by higher taxes on corporations and top earners; the corporate tax rate would go from 21 percent to 28 percent, and the top individual tax bracket from 37 percent to 39.6 percent. This “is a budget that reflects the fact that trickle-down economics has never worked,” said Biden, “and that the best way to grow our economy is [from] the bottom up and the middle out.”



Biden: A 'bottom up' plan to grow the economy

The White House predicts a \$1.8 trillion deficit next year and about \$1.3 trillion each year after that for the next decade. Republicans quickly attacked Biden's proposal as too expensive. This plan “promises higher taxes, higher prices, crushing debt, and less security,” said House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy. “It is the most reckless and irresponsible budget proposal in my lifetime.” Budget proposals are traditionally more of a presidential statement of priorities than a concrete set of expectations, and Biden's plan faces tough odds in the narrowly divided Congress.

What the editorials said

This spending proposal is “unprecedented in American peacetime history,” said *The Wall Street Journal*. Even as the economy rebounds, Biden “wants to keep using the cover of Covid to sneak through an expansion” of the regulatory state at the expense of core federal responsibilities. His plan would give the Environmental Protection Agency a 21.3 percent funding boost and Health and Human Services a 23.1 percent lift. The Defense Department would receive a measly 1.6 percent increase—a budget cut if you factor in inflation.

At least Democrats and Republicans are getting closer on the need for more infrastructure spending, said *The Washington Post*. Biden initially wanted a \$2.3 trillion package and Republicans \$568 billion; now after weeks of talks they're at \$1.7 trillion and \$928 billion, respectively. There is less common ground on what an infrastructure bill should contain—Republicans want money only for “hard” infrastructure such as roads—and virtually none on how to pay for it. Still, the president “might just have the clout to get everyone to yes.”

What the columnists said

“The most important thing about this budget isn't so much the dollars it would deliver as the dogma it dismisses,” said Paul Krugman in *The New York Times*. For four decades, our leaders have been in thrall to “an ideology fundamentally opposed to spending money to help ordinary citizens.” That doesn't mean Biden's proposal is socialism; if implemented, the U.S. would still have a smaller government than most other wealthy countries. But his willingness to borrow and tax more to improve lives—by making child care more affordable and energy cleaner—“could have huge consequences.”

They won't be pretty, said Stephen Moore in *TheHill.com*. In “a temporary display of honesty,” the budget forecasts yearly economic growth over the next decade to be under 2 percent. The causes of that stagnation are obvious. Biden's tax hikes will swallow profits that should be reinvested in the economy. And an ever-rising national debt—under the president's plan, it will hit 117 percent of the country's economic output by 2032—will “mean higher inflation and higher interest rates.”

There is “one objective-reality deadline” for all of Biden's ambitious plans, said Ed Kilgore in *NYMag.com*. On July 31, a temporary two-year suspension of the debt ceiling will expire. A vote on a debt-limit increase will give Republicans the perfect chance to rediscover their “fiscal hawkishness now that their free-spending 45th president is no longer in office.” That coming fight “will absorb time and energy” that Democrats would rather spend on policy initiatives, while aiding GOP messaging against the “radical socialist Democrat agenda.”

It wasn't all bad

■ The classes of 2020 and 2021 at Wilberforce University in Ohio got a welcome surprise at graduation. “Because we are in awe of your strengths and perseverance, we wish to give you a fresh start,” said university president Elfred Anthony Pinkard. Wilberforce, a historically Black college, erased more than \$375,000 in student debt owed to the college through funding from nonprofit organizations. “I couldn't believe it when he said it,” said graduating student Rodman Allen. “I can use that money and invest it into my future.”

■ Five strangers banded together to drive 600 miles on a rescue mission: to save an injured pigeon. The plan was coordinated over social media by Mel Tillery, who found the bird sprawled in the middle of the road in Baltimore. Tillery contacted Danielle Ramsey of the Ramsey Loft pigeon advice blog, who suggested the best hope was bringing the pigeon to Ramsey's aviary in Georgia. Tillery set out in the early afternoon for the first leg of the trip to Herndon, Va., where she passed the pigeon to the second driver. Finally, “Passenger” arrived at Ramsey's home at 2 a.m. “When am I going to get another chance to participate in a pigeon rescue caravan?” asked Mae Kwong-Moses, the last driver.



'Passenger' pigeon

■ A Michigan judge's decision to give Edward Martell probation instead of a yearslong prison sentence for drug dealing changed Martell's life forever. In 2005, Judge Bruce Morrow challenged him to instead become a CEO of a Fortune 500 company. “You have greatness within you,” Morrow said as he gave him his number. Martell worked his way up, first enrolling in community college, then graduating from undergraduate and law school, all the while staying in close contact with Morrow. After overcoming many obstacles, Martell, now 43, stood before Morrow again—this time to be sworn in as a lawyer. “I just cried like a baby,” Martell said.

Republicans: Why they blocked the Jan. 6 commission

“American democracy isn’t dead yet,” said Susan Glasser in *NewYorker.com*, “but it’s getting there.” In the aftermath of the Jan. 6 U.S. Capitol riot, when supporters of President Trump stormed the Capitol at his urging to block the certification of Joe Biden’s victory, many Republicans agreed on the need for an independent commission to investigate the attack. Last week, however, a Republican filibuster killed a bill creating such a commission. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell’s justification was that the proposed commission would be “slanted” against Republicans, though it would have featured five Republican and five Democratic appointees. But “the real explanation,” as Sen. John Cornyn of Texas admitted, was that the GOP doesn’t want to give Democrats “a political platform” from which to make the 2022 midterm elections a “referendum on President Trump” and his Big Lie that the election was stolen. We’ve had commissions to investigate “crises large and small,” said Matt Ford in *NewRepublic.com*, from Pearl Harbor to 9/11. For the GOP to block an investigation into the only assault in U.S. history on the peaceful transfer of power is a “grim sign for American democracy, shining among many other blinking warning lights.”



McConnell: ‘Slanted’

What “drama queens” Democrats are, said Eddie Scarry in *WashingtonExaminer.com*. Yes, the Jan. 6 “riot was bad,” but “this wasn’t 9/11,” and “a grand total of five people died,” including unarmed Trump supporter Ashli Babbitt, shot dead by police. With criminal prosecutions of the rioters already underway, do we really need a commission to study a few hours of civil unrest by justifiably “irritated Trump voters”? Democrats are not interested in facts, said Daniel Henninger in *The Wall Street Journal*. Their goal is to keep voters focused on “Trump-related

Jan. 6 realities” just before the 2022 midterms. Why should Republicans “erect a scaffold for their own hanging”?

Hanging—what an interesting choice of metaphor, said Jonathan Chait in *NYMag.com*. The insurrectionists erected a *literal* scaffold on the Capitol grounds, then stormed the building chanting “Hang Mike Pence!” because the vice president refused to block certification of the election. Republicans know any thorough probe “will incriminate them,” said Greg Sargent in *WashingtonPost.com*. It may substantiate reports that some members of Congress and the Trump administration coordinated with the rioters, before and during the attack. Further, it would spotlight the role dozens of Republicans played in voting against certifying the election and fomenting “extreme right-wing radicalization.”

“The partisan aims of the Democrats are obvious,” said Dan McLaughlin in *NationalReview.com*. Nonetheless, the nation deserves to know if members of Congress were involved in planning the Capitol attack, as well as why it took the National Guard more than three hours to respond while members of Congress had to hide. By blocking an independent, bipartisan commission, Senate Republicans have handed the issue back to Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who will now establish a Democrat-run select committee, thus ensuring the probe “will be conducted in the most partisan way possible.” It needn’t be, said Ken Ballen in *CNN.com*. As staff counsel to the 1987 select committee that investigated the Iran-Contra scandal, I’ve seen first-hand how a thorough, fair, transparent probe can “help counter any claims of partisanship.” We need answers to all questions about how Jan. 6 happened, especially with renewed talk among Trump allies of the need for a coup. “Our democracy literally hangs in the balance.”

Only in America

■ Rutgers University President Jonathan Holloway apologized for denouncing “the sharp rise in hostile sentiments and anti-Semitic violence in the United States.” After criticism from pro-Palestinian students, Holloway issued “An Apology,” pledging that future statements would be more “sensitive and balanced.” Then Holloway issued a third statement, clarifying that “we have not, nor would we ever, apologize for standing against anti-Semitism.”

■ As part of its effort to combat “systemic racism,” Princeton University no longer will require students majoring in Classics to study Latin or Greek. Department officials said dropping the requirement will promote “inclusion.” Alumnus J. David Garmon likened the move to “an engineering department abandoning mathematics and physics.”

Good week for:

Thin air, after an unknown buyer paid \$18,350 for “Io Sono [I Am],” an “invisible sculpture” by Italian artist Salvatore Garau. The artist, 67, described the sculpture as a “density of thoughts,” but said in quantum physics even empty space is “full of energy.”

Dog love, after 17-year-old Hailey Morinico of California charged a huge brown bear that was menacing her four barking dogs and pushed it off her backyard wall. “I didn’t know I had it in me, to be honest,” Morinico said. “Who in their right mind pushes a bear?”

Karma, after a boatful of Memorial Day revelers on Washington state’s Moses Lake shouted slurs and gave the finger to another boat that was flying Gay Pride flags. Minutes later, the harassers’ boat exploded, and they swam to the other boat to be rescued while shouting “Help us!”

Bad week for:

Self-deplatforming, after Donald Trump shut down his rambling weblog of rants, *From the Desk of Donald J. Trump*, because so few people were reading it.

Anti-racism, after the Spanish postal service issued a series of “Equality Stamps” in four different skin-color shades but had to withdraw them after customers noticed that they were priced in ascending order of lightness. The 1.60 euro white-skin stamp was worth more than twice as much as the 0.70 euro black-skin stamp.

Recidivism, after Canadian Member of Parliament William Amos, who “accidentally” exposed himself to colleagues during a Zoom meeting in April, this time was seen on camera urinating into a coffee cup. Amos said that he would “seek assistance.”

In other news

Biden ends ‘remain in Mexico’ policy

The Biden administration this week formally ended former President Donald Trump’s “remain in Mexico” policy, which required Central American asylum seekers to wait south of the U.S.-Mexico border. President Biden paused the program shortly after taking office as he dialed back restrictive immigration policies. Since then, the Biden administration has allowed about 11,000 of the 68,000 people sent to Mexico to enter the U.S. to pursue asylum claims. Apprehensions by the Border Patrol reached 178,622 in April, the highest level in at least 20 years. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said the numbers demonstrated that the “remain in Mexico” policy did not “sustainably enhance border management.”



Burbank (l.) and Collins

Tacoma, Wash.
'I can't breathe':
 Washington state Attorney General Bob

Ferguson this week charged two Tacoma police officers with murder and another with manslaughter in the death of Manuel Ellis, a Black man who died after repeatedly telling them he couldn't breathe as he was being restrained. Ellis died Tasered, handcuffed, and hog-tied, with his face covered by a spit hood, in March 2020, two and a half months before George Floyd was killed by a police officer kneeling on his neck in Minneapolis. Ellis' last words, "I can't breathe, sir," were captured on a security camera, as was an officer's reply, "Shut the f--- up, man." Officers Christopher Burbank and Matthew Collins face second-degree murder charges; Timothy Rankine was charged with first-degree manslaughter. Witnesses reported that Burbank and Collins, both white, attacked Ellis unprovoked, and that Rankine, described as Asian in court papers, put pressure on Ellis' back as the 33-year-old man said he was suffocating.

Boise, Idaho

Mask face-off: Idaho Gov. Brad Little this week reversed a ban on local mask mandates that the state's lieutenant governor, Janice McGeachin, had imposed while Little was in Tennessee at the annual Republican Governors Association conference. Under the Idaho Constitution, McGeachin held power as acting governor while her boss and fellow Republican was away, and her order briefly negated all local mask mandates in the state. When Little returned, he called the ban from McGeachin, who is running for governor in Idaho's 2022 race, an "irresponsible, self-serving political stunt" that "amounts to tyranny." Little had resisted a statewide mask requirement, leaving it to cities and counties to set their own policies. Numerous school districts still require facial coverings, as do two Idaho counties and 10 cities. McGeachin claimed she was just fulfilling her "sworn oath" to uphold the U.S. and Idaho constitutions.

Nashville

Nazi echo: A hat store faced protests last week after it announced on Instagram it was selling yellow Star of David patches with the words "NOT VACCINATED" on them, for \$5. The incident followed comments by Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-Ga.) likening mask mandates in the House to Nazi treatment of Jews in the Holocaust. The Jewish Federation & Jewish Foundation of Nashville & Middle Tennessee called the patches, similar to those Nazis forced Jews to wear in World War II, the product of "willful ignorance and craven cruelty" and a "disservice to the memory of the 6 million Jews who were murdered during the Holocaust." Several hat companies, including Stetson, said they would no longer sell their products through the shop, HatWRKS. The store's owner, identified in public records as Gigi Gaskins, initially said people should be "outraged by tyranny," not the patches. She later apologized, posting that she meant no disrespect.



Gaskins



Albuquerque

Bellwether race: Democrat Melanie Stansbury easily won a closely watched special House election in New Mexico this week. Stansbury, a two-term state representative, received 60 percent of



Stansbury

the vote to 36 percent for Republican Mark Moores. Moores made crime, including progressive Democrats' calls to defund police, his campaign focus, turning the race into a test case for a possible Republican strategy to make headway in Democratic-leaning suburbs. The seat in New Mexico's 1st Congressional District, based in Albuquerque, has been held by Democrats since 2009; it was left vacant when Deb Haaland became President Biden's Interior secretary. Democrats took Stansbury's victory as a reassuring sign for their 2022 prospects. Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney (D-N.Y.), chair of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, said the nation was watching "to see if Republican attacks work." Moores said Democrats' big spending showed "how critically scared they were."

Dallas

Coup quip: Michael Flynn, former President Donald Trump's first national security adviser, appeared to suggest at a Dallas QAnon conference this week that a Myanmar-style military coup "should happen" in the United States. Asked why "what happened in Myanmar can't happen here?" Flynn, a retired Army lieutenant general, responded, "No reason. I mean, it should happen here. No reason." The crowd cheered. Participants in the For God & Country Patriot Roundup 2021 conference had praised Myanmar's February coup and touted Trump's false claims that the 2020 election was stolen from him. Lt. Col. Yevgeny Vindman, who was fired by Trump's White House, tweeted that Flynn's remarks were "seditious" and could justify court-martial. Flynn said his words had been twisted, and he meant there was "NO reason whatsoever for any coup in America." Trump himself has reportedly told people around him that he expects to be "reinstated" as president by August.

Miami

Concert shooting: Three masked gunmen opened fire on a crowd outside a Miami-area concert venue this week, killing two people and wounding more than 20 others, several critically. Some concertgoers outside El Mula Banquet Hall returned fire. The three attackers escaped in a white Nissan Pathfinder that had been reported stolen and was found the next day in a canal. Police said the incident appeared gang related. At a news conference, the grieving father of one young victim rushed in front of cameras to shout a message directed at the killers: "You killed a good kid. For no reason." A day earlier, a drive-by shooting 13 miles away in Miami left one dead and six injured. The attacks were the latest of 243 U.S. mass shootings this year, according to the Gun Violence Archive. "This type of gun violence has to stop," said Miami-Dade County Police Director Alfredo Ramirez III. "Every weekend it's the same thing."



After the gunfire



A memorial at the school

Kamloops, British Columbia

Mass grave: First Nations leaders are calling on Canadian officials to investigate every former residential school in the country after the remains of 215 children were found in an unmarked mass grave on one school's grounds. From the late 19th century until 1996, tens of thousands of indigenous children were taken from

their parents and educated in often abusive Catholic institutions. The Kamloops Indian Residential School, where the remains were found, was notorious for harsh treatment. Saa Hiil Thut, who graduated from Kamloops in 1968, said children lived a "paramilitary existence" under teachers and officials who were "monsters." The Canadian government, which took over the schools in the late '60s and closed the last one in 1996, apologized for the abuse in 2008. The Catholic Church has not yet done so.

Havana

Meat firm burned: The state-owned Cuban meat company Prodal has drawn criticism in recent weeks for its tone-deaf social media policy. In April, it initially brushed off tweeted reports that its ham croquettes were exploding when cooked in oil and causing severe burns to people's faces and hands. Prodal eventually admitted its croquettes were prone to "violence" when fried at too high a temperature. Then last week, it suggested on Twitter that Cubans have fun with their food, showing cut-up hot dogs decorated with plastic eyes and ears to look like animals. That post sparked a backlash because Cuba is in the midst of a desperate food shortage and customers must wait in long lines to get any meat product. "Imagine promoting a product while knowing that almost no one has it," one Cuban tweeted, "and that you don't even have it in stock."

Paris

Osaka out: Japanese tennis champ Naomi Osaka pulled out of the French Open this week following a standoff over her decision not to conduct post-match interviews during the tournament. In a statement on social media, the women's No. 2 said being made to answer questions about losses or missed shots amounted to "kicking a person while they're down" and that the process affected her mental health. After skipping a mandatory news conference following her first-round victory, Osaka was fined \$15,000 by the French Open. All four Grand Slam tournaments threatened the 23-year-old with suspensions, saying a continued boycott would give her an unfair advantage over fellow competitors. Osaka then withdrew, saying she did not want to be a distraction to other players.



Not talking

São Paulo

Calls for impeachment: Tens of thousands of Brazilians protested in cities across the country last week, calling for President Jair Bolsonaro to be impeached over his handling of the Covid-19 crisis. Damning revelations from a congressional inquiry into the government's pandemic response have been aired daily on Brazilian TV, including that Pfizer offered Brazil millions of doses of its vaccine last year but got no response from officials. Instead of buying vaccines, Bolsonaro insisted on stockpiling hydroxychloroquine, months after scientific studies had found the antimalarial to be ineffective against Covid. Bolsonaro, who has consistently downplayed a virus that has killed at least 463,000 Brazilians, was defiant. He announced that Brazil would host this summer's Copa América after the soccer tournament's original co-hosts were dropped—Argentina because of surging Covid levels and Colombia due to anti-government protests.



Protesting Bolsonaro

Minsk, Belarus

Suicide attempt in court: A Belarusian activist tried to kill himself in a Minsk courtroom this week to protest the repressive regime of President Alexander Lukashenko. Stsiapan Latypau, 41, shouted that he had been told his family would be persecuted and arrested if he did not plead guilty to various charges—including fraud and organizing riots—and then stabbed a pen into his throat. He was unconscious by the time guards opened the defendant's cage; he is now reportedly in stable condition after undergoing surgery. Latypau was one of thousands of activists arrested last summer during massive protests against Lukashenko's rigged re-election.



Latypau is taken to the hospital.



Rome

Punishing abusive priests:

Pope Francis signed off on a sweeping rewrite of the Catholic Church's laws this week, toughening the punishments for sexual abuse by clerics and laypeople. The new rules state that priests and officials who abuse minors and vulnerable adults will be punished with "deprivation from office," and potentially with defrocking. Previously, such cases only merited "just penalties." In a letter accompanying the revisions, Francis said he wanted to cut the number of cases in which punishments are left to the "discretion of authorities," which for decades allowed bishops and other high-up members of the church to ignore or hide abuse. The laws also target the ordination of women: An attempt to ordain a woman as a priest will now bring automatic excommunication of both the cleric and the woman.

Jerusalem

Anti-Netanyahu government: A hodge-podge “unity” alliance of Israeli parties this week looked likely to end Benjamin Netanyahu’s 12-year stretch as prime minister—so long as it can secure the support of a majority in the 120-seat Knesset. Netanyahu’s right-wing Likud party came in first in the March elections, but he failed to muster a governing coalition. Opposition leader Yair Lapid, whose centrist Yesh Atid party came in second, then began frantic negotiations to forge his own coalition and stave off what would be the country’s fifth election in two years. Lapid clinched an agreement with eight parties from across the political spectrum under which the ultranationalist Naftali Bennett will serve as prime minister first, to be replaced by Lapid at an unspecified date. The deal also requires that an Israeli-Arab party tacitly support the coalition.



Game over for Bibi?

This unlikely alliance—Lapid is known for his staunchly secular positions, Bennett for his championing of the religious right and opposition to a Palestinian state—is united by one principle: that Netanyahu must go. Indicted on charges of bribery, fraud, and breach of trust in 2019, the prime minister has been on trial for the past year, and his critics say that he is more focused on staying out of prison than on governing the country. Netanyahu has lobbied right-wing members of the opposition alliance to abandon Bennett and join his bloc. “This is an opportunistic government,” he said in a speech. “A government of capitulation, a government of fraud, a government of inertia.” If Netanyahu were to be forced from office, he would lose the chance to make any legal changes that would grant him parliamentary immunity. In addition, the new government could pass legislation to bar him from office in the future.

Beijing

Three kids allowed: In a bid to boost its falling birth rate, China announced this week that all married couples can have up to three children. The country scrapped its decades-old one-child policy for a two-kid limit in 2015. But China’s birth rate is still 1.3 children per woman, far below the 2.1 required to stabilize the population. That’s because most Chinese don’t want two kids, much less three.



More children, please.

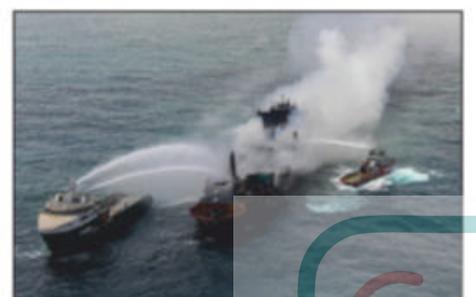
Large swaths of the country lack options for day care, and the cost of educating children is high. “No matter how many babies they open it up to, I’m not going to have any, because children are too troublesome and expensive,” said IT worker Li Shan. In an online poll by state news agency Xinhua, 28,000 out of 31,000 respondents said they “would not consider at all” having three children; the poll was quickly taken down.

Jask, Iran

Warship sinks: The largest ship in Iran’s navy, the *Kharg*, sank this week after catching fire near the mouth of the Persian Gulf. The crew disembarked safely after battling the blaze for more than 20 hours. A training ship in service for more than 40 years, the *Kharg* was in international waters for a naval exercise. Iran gave no cause for the fire, which may have been an accident or sabotage. Iranian and Israeli cargo ships in the region have suffered a string of mysterious explosions over the past two years, and both countries have accused the other of being behind the attacks. Fires and explosions have occurred at other Iranian military and nuclear sites in recent months, as the U.S. and Iran negotiate a possible revival of Tehran’s 2015 nuclear deal with world powers.

Colombo, Sri Lanka

Container ship disaster: Sri Lanka is facing a major ecological disaster after a chemical-laden cargo ship that had been ablaze off the country’s west coast for nearly two weeks sank below the waves. The Singaporean-registered MV *X-Press Pearl* was transporting 25 tons of nitric acid as well as other hazardous material and had some 300 tons of heavy fuel oil in its tanks when it caught fire last month. Millions of micropellets—used to make plastic products—have already washed up on beaches near the capital, Colombo, and hundreds of soldiers have been deployed to clean up the mess. The pellets can kill marine wildlife by getting caught in the gills of fish or being ingested by sea turtles. Now authorities fear that the fuel oil on board the *X-Press Pearl* will spill, contaminating valuable fishing waters.



Before the sinking

Windhoek, Namibia

German apology: Namibian authorities have accepted Germany’s offer of \$1.3 billion in restitution for colonial-era atrocities, and welcomed its recognition of those massacres as genocide. Some 65,000 Herero and 10,000 Nama tribespeople were killed by German settlers between 1904 and 1908, in what was then known



Demanding higher reparations

as German South West Africa, after they rebelled against colonial rule. Herero and Nama leaders said they were excluded from talks over compensation and called the amount offered by the Germans “insulting,” because it is earmarked for water, health care, and energy infrastructure projects over the next 30 years. They are demanding that the German state pay \$585 billion directly to the descendants of those massacred.

Williams' outsider attitude



Wendy Williams had a knack for pushing people's buttons at an early age, said Michael Schulman in *The New Yorker*. When the veteran talk-show host was growing up in New Jersey, her habit of asking nosy, sensitive questions led her teacher parents to develop a code for reeling her in: T.L. (too loud), T.F. (too fast), and T.M. (too much). "I'd come in the kitchen and say, 'Aunt Marilyn, is that new hair? Are you wearing a wig?'" she recalls. "Aunt Marilyn would say, 'As a matter of fact I am.' 'Well, push it up a little. It's too far down on your forehead.'" When Williams gained weight in elementary school, her parents put her on a diet of tuna and mustard—with the occasional side of grapes—imparting a body insecurity that she says led to her midlife embrace of plastic surgery. "Once it's put in your head, that's a lifelong thing." She felt like an oddity in her high school, where she fit in with neither the few Blacks—who called her the "white girl" because of her honking accent—or white classmates who'd use the N-word around Williams, always saying they didn't mean her. "I never went to the prom, because that was before you could ask a Black girl—but I saw the boys looking," she says. "I would say, 'I can't wait to get out of this one-horse town. And I'm coming back to our first reunion and I'm going to give it to 'em good.'"

A drummer's brush with death

Travis Barker knows he's lucky to be alive, said Emma Carmichael in *Men's Health*. In 2008, the drummer with pop-punk band Blink-182 was about to fly out of South Carolina following a show when the private plane he was on skidded off the runway and burst into flames. The two pilots and two of Barker's friends died in the crash; the drummer suffered third-degree burns over much of his body and spent months in the hospital undergoing surgeries and skin grafts. Cheating death, says Barker, was a "wake-up call." He quit smoking marijuana and using prescription opioids. "People are always like, 'Did you go to rehab?' And I [say], 'No, I was in a plane crash.'" Told by doctors he'd probably never run or play drums again, Barker, now 45, took it as a challenge. "As soon as I could walk, I could run. As soon as my hands healed, I was playing drums." Dealing with PTSD and survivor's guilt has been a long road, involving therapy and breath work. "I couldn't walk down the street. If I saw a plane [in the sky], I was determined it was going to crash." He no longer wakes up thinking about the accident—and vows to conquer his fear and fly again. "All I can do is carry on. I'm 100 percent supposed to be here."



Knoxville's painful career

Johnny Knoxville has suffered his last concussion in the name of art, said Sam Schube in *GQ*. With the recent completion of his fourth *Jackass* movie, the 50-year-old is closing the book on his unlikely career as a gonzo stuntman, one that's seen him shot out of a cannon, bit by an anaconda, punched by a 400-pound boxer, mauled by bulls, and launched into the side of a barn by a catapult. "You can only take so many chances before something irreversible happens," Knoxville says. "I've been extremely lucky to take the chances I've taken and still be walking around." Not that he hasn't suffered damage. He's shattered bones, knocked out teeth, torn his urethra, and endured countless concussions. "You wake up, and they're like, 'That was great! You got a good bit when there's seven people standing over you, snapping their fingers.'" At his age, says the father of three, "I can't afford to have any more concussions. I can't put my family through that." Knoxville started seeing a therapist a while back, but laid out a ground rule: He wouldn't talk about what drove him to risk his life repeatedly for viewers' amusement. "I didn't want to break the machine." That conversation is due, he admits, but "it's not something I need to know this second."

In the news



■ **Brad Pitt** was tentatively granted joint custody of five of his kids with **Angelina Jolie** after a bitter, nearly five-year court battle, the *New York Post* reported this week. Attorneys for Jolie, who argued that her ex-husband should be limited to supervised visitation, said the judge "improperly" denied the kids, ages 12 to 17, the chance to testify and "failed to adequately consider" a California law about how "a history of domestic violence" should factor into custody disputes. Jolie, 45, sought divorce in 2016, days after she alleged that Pitt, 57, was abusive toward their then-15-year-old son on a private flight.

Child-welfare officials and the FBI investigated and declined to bring charges against Pitt. His lawyers argued that prolonging the custody dispute would cause "grave harm upon the children, who will be further denied permanence and stability." Pitt has publicly acknowledged abusing alcohol during the marriage and is in recovery.

■ The 19-year-old daughter of author **Michael Lewis** and former MTV reporter **Tabitha Soren** died in a California highway crash last week. Dixie Lewis, a rising sophomore and softball player at Pomona College, was returning from Lake Tahoe in a car driven by her friend Ross Schultz, 20, who also died when their sedan veered into oncoming traffic and collided with a truck. "We loved her so much and are in a kind of pain none of us has experienced," said

Lewis, author of best-sellers *Moneyball*, *The Blind Side*, and *The Big Short*. "Our hearts are so broken they can't find the words to describe the feeling."

■ **Kim Kardashian** is re-evaluating her quest to be a lawyer after flunking a law exam. "I am a failure," the reality-TV star, 40, said last week after she scored a 474 on the first-year law student "baby bar exam," well below the 560 needed to pass. Kardashian is not attending law school, but after doing some advocacy for a woman sentenced to life in prison for a drug offense, she began a four-year legal apprenticeship program that would qualify her to be a lawyer under California law. "I spent six weeks straight, 10 to 12 hours a day studying," she said. "To not pass gets your spirit down and just makes you want to give up."

How the pandemic ends

New cases, hospitalizations, and deaths are plummeting. What will it take to declare victory over Covid-19?

Is the end near?

Virologists are cautiously optimistic that by late summer, Covid-19 cases and deaths in the U.S. will fall so dramatically that life will return to near normal. Today, 135 million Americans—more than half of all adults—have been fully vaccinated, and in 10 states, 70 percent have received at least one dose. The Centers for Disease Control estimates that 100 million Americans gained some immunity by surviving coronavirus infections (including asymptomatic ones). As a result, the pandemic is already exhibiting “exponential decay.” That’s a rapid plunge in transmission that occurs when the virus can find few new vulnerable people. New cases are down more than 90 percent from the January peak of 250,000 per day, and are still dropping. Pfizer’s and Moderna’s vaccines are showing an astonishing real-world effectiveness against serious illness and death of 99 percent, and warm weather is allowing more Americans to spend time outdoors, where transmission is dramatically less likely. By August, average daily Covid deaths, now around 500, may drop below 100—roughly the same daily toll of the seasonal flu. “Things will look very good this summer,” says Christopher Murray, director of the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington. “A lot of people will think that it’s all over. But what happens in the fall is the tricky part.”

Why is that?

The U.S. has growing regional vaccine disparities, so there’s a high risk of Covid flare-ups when the weather turns colder. Fewer than 40 percent of Americans in many Southern states have received at least one shot, compared with 65 to 70 percent of New Englanders. By autumn, kids will return to in-person schooling, many families will hold large indoor gatherings, and immunity developed from previous infections may not provide full protection against variants. There are reports from India and Brazil of people who already had Covid once getting sick again with variants, and the U.K. is having an uptick in cases caused by the Indian strain.

Is herd immunity possible?

It’s not likely for the country as a whole. Because the British variant now circulating in the U.S. is estimated to be 60 percent more infectious, most virologists now believe about 80 percent of Americans will need immunity through prior infections or vaccination to achieve classic herd immunity, where transmission stops. Marc Lipsitch, an epidemiologist at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, cautions that “disease transmission is local” and may



Vaccines are working, but true herd immunity may be elusive.

continue in some areas with lower vaccination rates. “If the coverage is 95 percent in the United States as a whole, but 70 percent in some small town, the virus doesn’t care,” he explained. “It will make its way around the small town.”

Do the variants matter?

The Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson vaccines appear to provide robust protection against the known variants, but studies nonetheless suggest they may be 10 to 20 percent less effective. And as the virus continues to rip through much of

the world, it can develop new mutations and variants that make vaccines less effective. Less than a quarter of the global population has been infected so far, and many poor countries aren’t expected to have widespread access to vaccines until 2023.

Could Covid be eradicated?

Only one infectious disease, smallpox, has ever been eradicated, and that was after two centuries of inoculation and a concerted, 14-year campaign of global vaccination in the 1960s and ’70s. SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid, has proved to mutate rapidly, so epidemiologists say it is hard to predict how long immunity from prior infections and vaccinations will last. Booster shots may be necessary. In a survey by the magazine *Nature*, nearly 90 percent of immunologists, infectious-disease researchers, and virologists believe the disease will become endemic and circulate in pockets of the global population for the foreseeable future.

What does that mean?

“We’re going to defang the virus rather than defeat it,” says Lipsitch. That’s what happened with the Spanish flu, which evolved from a deadly disease to a normal seasonal flu as human immune systems gained experience fighting it off. There’s a good chance Covid-19 will become less lethal over time, since natural selection favors strains of the virus that do not kill their hosts; if infected people are alive and walking around, they can infect more people. Virologists expect Covid-19 to re-emerge among the unvaccinated mostly in winter, but over time to become more like the common cold—causing runny noses, congestion, a run-down feeling. (About 20 percent of colds are caused by four different kinds of coronaviruses that have long been in circulation among humans.) SARS-CoV-2 will likely join a long list of viruses that we just have to live with. “As the old saying goes,” said Dr. Ashish K. Jha of Brown University, “pandemics end with a whimper, not with a bang.”

The Spanish flu isn’t gone

The Spanish flu never really went away. Known as “the mother of all pandemics,” the flu killed up to 100 million people worldwide and infected one-third of the global population in a two-year span, but by the 1920s it had lost most of its virulence. Rather than dying out, the original virus mutated into strains that are the direct ancestor of modern flu viruses. “You can still find the genetic traces of the 1918 virus in the seasonal flus that circulate today,” says researcher Jeffrey Taubenberger. He led a team of scientists who in the late 1990s obtained the Spanish flu’s genetic signature by extracting viral RNA from autopsied lung samples from American soldiers and an Alaskan woman whose body remained preserved in the permafrost. When descendants of the Spanish flu have combined with bird flu or swine flu viruses, creating a new strain, they’ve caused deadly new pandemics, including in 1957 and 1968 (1 million people worldwide died in each) and in the swine flu pandemic of 2009, which killed 300,000. “We’re still living in what I would call the ‘1918 pandemic era’ 102 years later,” says Taubenberger, “and I don’t know how long it will last.”

Alarming talk of a coup—in the U.S.

Charlie Sykes
TheBulwark.com

The idea of a military coup in the United States has always been “unthinkable,” said Charlie Sykes. But an alarming number of Americans are thinking—and talking—about it. Michael Flynn, a former three-star Army general who served as national security adviser to President Trump, was asked at a conference of Trump supporters last week why the U.S. military could not overthrow the government, the way Myanmar’s military had. “No reason,” Flynn said to cheers. “It *should* happen here.” Flynn later claimed his words were twisted, but Flynn has advocated an insurrection to reinstall Trump as president before, saying in November that Trump could declare martial law and use “military capabilities” to “re-run” the election in swing states. Flynn discussed this idea with Trump himself at the White House. Other Trump cronies, including Roger Stone, also advocated invoking martial law. Saner heads prevailed, but a significant number of far-right Trump supporters like the Oath Keepers continue to promote violent overthrow of the government. We saw on Jan. 6 where that can lead. It’s tempting to dismiss crackpots like Flynn with an “eye roll,” but a majority of Trump supporters say “we may need force” to “save” America. “The threat is no joke.”

Why guns are flying off shelves

Kevin Williamson
NationalReview.com

In Fort Worth, prospective customers are forming long lines out the door at gun shops, and “the cash registers are ringing,” said Kevin Williamson. Semiautomatic rifles and handguns are selling out, and ammunition is being sold with a two-box limit, if it’s available at all. The pandemic, political violence, and conspiracy theories—one gun store employee told me to expect “concentration camps for white people”—have created an unprecedented sales boom in firearms and ammo. About 20 percent of all buyers have never before owned a gun, and “that’s a lot of guns in a lot of inexperienced hands.” Not incidentally, African-Americans and Hispanics are buying guns, too. The fiercely independent spirit bred of the American Revolution and the frontier is “an important part of what has kept America free,” but it’s also connected to “the worst aspects of our national character,” including paranoia, “political and religious extremism, and our horrifying addiction to violence.” It feels as if we’re “wobbling on the brink of something awful,” with deep distrust among factions, governmental incompetence, and “widespread simmering rage.” This is a dangerous juncture in our history. “Americans don’t have a well-regulated militia—we don’t have a well-regulated anything.”

Sorry: UFOs are probably not aliens

Marina Koren
TheAtlantic.com

If you’re hoping to get proof that aliens are visiting our planet, said Marina Koren, you’re likely to be disappointed. This month, a Pentagon task force is required by law to reveal what information it’s gathered about numerous “unidentified aerial phenomena” detected by U.S. military aircraft. In one sense, the objects seen by pilots and captured on radar and film “are real,” and merit further study. “But there’s no reason to think they’re alien.” Why not? The space between stars in our galaxy “is unfathomably vast,” and unless extraterrestrials can violate the laws of physics, it would take dozens of years or centuries to reach Earth. Why would they do that, only to zip around in the clouds, playing peekaboo with military pilots? “More boring” explanations are far more likely: visual phenomena, camera glitches, meteors, or surveillance drones from other nations. If we do find extraterrestrial life, it’s far more likely to be in the form of microbes or primitive organisms below the icy surface of moons of Jupiter and Saturn, or in signals detected by astronomers scrutinizing other solar systems and planets. Is E.T. already here, playing hide and seek in the skies? Nah.

Viewpoint

“If the lab-leak theory [about the origins of the Covid pandemic] is finally getting the respectful attention it always deserved, it’s mainly because Joe Biden authorized an inquiry and Anthony Fauci admitted to doubts about the natural-origin claim. In other words, the right president and the right public-health expert have blessed a certain line of inquiry. Yet the lab-leak theory, whether or not it turns out to be right, was *always* credible. Even if the scientific ‘consensus’ disputed it. Even if bigots—who rarely need a pretext—drew bigoted conclusions from it. Good journalism, like good science, should follow evidence, not narratives.”

Bret Stephens in The New York Times

It must be true... I read it in the tabloids

■ A 9-year-old boy in Indiana was cleaning his parent’s recently purchased SUV when he found \$5,000 in cash under a floor mat. The boy’s father, Michael Melvin, initially didn’t believe his son, Landon, when he reported finding a cash-stuffed envelope. “He’s 9,” Melvin said. “I’m thinking it’s probably paperwork of some sort.” The older Melvin returned the very real cash to the people who’d sold him the SUV, and they gave Landon a \$1,000 reward. “I’ve just been thinking and thinking of all the stuff I could buy,” he said.

■ About 100 people rolled up their sleeves, if they were wearing a top, when a Las Vegas strip club offered up Covid-19 vaccinations to patrons and dancers under a spinning disco ball. The walk-in clinic at Larry Flynt’s *Hustler Club* was part of a creative state effort to reach the unvaccinated. “Nothing says vaccinations like a stripper pole,” said George Stoecklin, who showed up with a pair of friends. Several club workers took the opportunity to get jabbed, including dancer JoJo Hamner, who met the needle in a French maid-inspired lingerie costume. “This is just the most Vegas thing I’ve ever seen,” she said.



■ A cheese-loving British drug dealer was jailed after his favorite Stilton gave him away. Carl Stewart used an encrypted messaging service to sell drugs—but also used the service to post a photo of himself holding a small block of blue Stilton. Police who cracked the encrypted platform used the photo to analyze his palm and fingerprints and identify him. Stewart was sentenced to 13 years and six months after admitting to conspiracy to supply various drugs. He “was caught out by his love of Stilton cheese,” said a police official.



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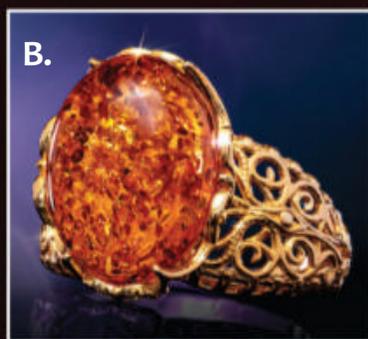


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SWITZERLAND

Independence from the EU is a myth

Doris Kleck
Aargauer Zeitung

Switzerland is pulling away from the European Union because of the xenophobia of our right-wing leaders, said Doris Kleck. We've never been a member of the bloc, but we belong to its open-borders area and have near-total access to its single market, thanks to some 120 bilateral agreements signed over the decades. For seven years, the EU has sought to codify this patchwork arrangement into a formal treaty. Then last week, the Swiss government dropped out of the talks in a political earthquake that some are calling Schwexit. The Swiss Federal Council said the pact would have bound us too closely to EU laws that we would not write.

In reality, the populist Swiss People's Party—the largest party in the legislature—objected to the EU's insistence on making the free movement of people permanent, which would allow Poles, Bulgarians, and other Eastern Europeans to move here. The People's Party says it is maintaining our independence, but that's always been “the lie the Swiss tell themselves.” We are dependent on EU trade, and as bilateral agreements lapse, companies will peel off and relocate. Any treaty would have had drawbacks, but it would have been better than relying on mere “hope” for continued EU goodwill. What will sovereignty mean if the economy withers?

FRANCE

America is erasing our contributions

Raphaëlle Rérolle
Le Monde

American “cancel culture” has come for a Frenchman, said Raphaëlle Rérolle. The U.S. has been undergoing a racial reckoning in the past few years, with Confederate monuments being felled across the South. Even memorials for the early presidents are being reconsidered, because so many of the Founders owned slaves. Now the cancelers are going after Jean Ribault, the first Frenchman to gain a foothold in the New World, in 1562, and a man long revered on both sides of the Atlantic. In 2012, Ribault's descendants—who live in Lyon—traveled from France to Florida to celebrate the 450th anniversary of the French captain's landing in what is now Jacksonville. But today activists

are agitating to remove Ribault's name from a high school and a middle school in Jacksonville, calling him a colonizer who was responsible for the extermination of Native Americans. They have it wrong. Ribault, who hoped to find in the New World “a possible refuge for the persecuted Huguenots,” a Protestant minority, had “peaceful relations” with the indigenous people he encountered. In his memoirs, he described them as kind and said that unlike other Europeans he “refused to deceive them.” If later settlers abused the indigenous population, that is surely not Ribault's fault. Such details, though, may be lost in the “storm” of historical revisionism sweeping the U.S.

United Kingdom: Johnson rebounds with secret wedding

The prime minister “pulled off a charming and clever surprise” by getting married in secret, said Tony Allen-Mills in *The Times*. Boris Johnson, 56, and his partner of three years, 33-year-old Carrie Symonds, had recently sent friends and family save-the-date cards for a July 2022 wedding. But last week the couple quietly summoned guests for a Catholic ceremony at London's Westminster Cathedral—which disregarded Johnson's two divorces—and held a Covid-limited reception for 30 people in the garden of their official Downing Street residence. “The cynics” may regard the timing as suspicious, because the pair had been suffering a spectacularly bad week. In seven hours of testimony before Parliament, Johnson's former top adviser turned political nemesis, Dominic Cummings, had savaged him as a bungler whose chaotic response to the pandemic caused tens of thousands of needless deaths, and her as a meddling conniver who overspent public money and interfered in political appointments.



Symonds and Johnson: A winning partnership?

Cummings' testimony was explosive, said *The Observer* in an editorial. That Johnson “lacks the leadership skills, capability, and integrity to guide the country through a national emergency is not a new insight.” But Cummings—the strategist behind Brexit and Johnson's 2019 election win—gave the gritty details, telling us that the prime minister admitted he ran a chaotic government so that power would rest only with him, and how Johnson repeatedly ignored scientific advice and said last fall he'd rather see “bodies pile high” than order a third lockdown. How many of

Britain's 128,000 Covid deaths might have been prevented? We need a public inquiry into “the gross political failings of Johnson and his ministers.” Yet Cummings is mistaken if he thinks he destroyed the prime minister's reputation, said Nick Ferrari in the *Sunday Express*. Britons lived through last year. They know Johnson's handling of the pandemic “was a shambles.” But that was the case with “every other government” around the world. At this point, more of us want to look forward than look back.

This marriage will be good for Johnson, said Anthony Seldon in *Independent.co.uk*. He has been an incomplete prime minister: “part intuitive brilliance, part shambolic intuitionist, over whom dominant individuals hold disproportionate influence.” Until last November, he was guided by the egotistical Cummings, “a glowering dark presence like Gollum in *The Lord of the Rings*.” The strong-willed yet doting Symonds, though, may complement the prime minister, allowing his strengths “of empathy, optimism, and communication” to blossom. By tying the knot, Johnson is “re-launching himself,” said Anne McElvoy in the *Evening Standard*. Symonds is a Conservative but also an avowed feminist and environmentalist, which allows for “canny repackaging of the Conservative Party” as socially progressive. But a new wife can't turn Johnson into a sober or effective administrator. What drives him “is not so much ideas, of which he has few of much consistency, but sheer kinetic force and will to power.” This new Johnson era “will be as much of a madhouse as the prenuptial one.”

India: Counting the dead as second Covid wave subsides

A surge in deaths of mothers and babies in India shows what happens when a country's health-care system is overwhelmed by Covid-19, said Catherine Davison in *The Daily Telegraph* (U.K.). The United Nations estimates that the number of women in India who died during pregnancy climbed by 18 percent last year—that's an extra 7,750 lives lost—because the pandemic robbed so many of access to care. Stillbirths, meanwhile, went up by 10 percent (an extra 60,179), and deaths of children under 5 by 15 percent (154,020). Those statistics do not include fatalities from the second wave of Covid that has smashed the country in recent months, likely killing more than 1 million people. Among them was Lata Vaishnav, who fell sick with Covid in April when she was eight months pregnant. Vaishnav was turned away from 20 hospitals in New Delhi for lack of a bed; her frantic husband, Chandan, finally drove her to a different state for treatment. By then it was too late, and both mother and baby died. Chandan blames their deaths on the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which failed to stockpile medicines and oxygen and to bolster hospitals ahead of the latest wave. "If I could have got her admitted two days prior, she could have been saved," he said. "It's not a death, it is a murder."



Mourners at the cremation of a coronavirus victim.

are now recording some 185,000 new cases a day, a 44 percent drop in two weeks, and 3,626 deaths, down 10 percent. Those drops are a result of the 40-day lockdowns imposed by many states that "brought almost everything to a standstill." But with Covid under control, we need to reopen businesses to get "the wheels of the economy spinning again." Of course, as we venture out, we must follow all masking and distancing precautions—and here, "the onus is more on the common people than on the administration."

Given that vaccination is slow, we all have to do our part.

Only 12 percent of India's 1.4 billion people have received at least one dose of a Covid vaccine, said Jacob Koshy in *The Hindu* (India), and "fewer doses were administered in May" than in April because of supply issues. If the vaccine rollout continues at this pace, "it could theoretically be years before all those over 18 get their second doses." And who knows when Indian children will get shots, because vaccine trials on the young have only recently been approved. Scientists are now warning that a third wave will strike our country in six to eight months, said the *Dina Thanthi* (India) in an editorial. India has already produced two Covid variants, and even more virulent strains could emerge as the virus spreads and mutates. Unless the government speeds up vaccine production and develops a comprehensive plan to tackle future outbreaks, "India might be in for consecutive waves, from which recovery might be a far-fetched dream."

Fortunately, the rate of infection is "coming down as fast as it shot up," said Bhupendra Singh in *Dainik Jagran* (India). After weeks in which nearly every family lost a loved one and crematoriums worked round the clock, the end is in sight. Authorities

MEXICO

The U.S. won't save us from autocracy

Enrique Quintana
El Financiero

Why would *The Economist* devote an entire cover story to attacking the Mexican president? asked Enrique Quintana. The respected British weekly just proclaimed Andrés Manuel López Obrador, known here as AMLO, a "false messiah" who is leading Mexico down an antidemocratic path. The story details his many power grabs, such as threatening electoral officials and interfering in the judiciary, and AMLO immediately denounced the magazine as "mendacious," accusing it of trying to influence upcoming legislative elections. Yet the real reason for the story can be found in its final paragraph, where it warns the administration of U.S. President

Joe Biden not to ignore "the stealthy authoritarianism in its backyard." *The Economist* is clearly hoping that Vice President Kamala Harris will carry a stern message for AMLO when she visits Mexico next week. But Harris "has other concerns." She has been tasked with ending the migrant crisis at the border, and that will require AMLO's help. If Central American migrants keep pouring into Texas and other border states, Republicans will have the perfect campaign issue with which to bludgeon Democrats in next year's midterms. The Biden administration will happily overlook our president's autocratic streak to protect its own political future.

EGYPT

Helping Gaza or helping themselves?

Sultan Barakat
Aljazeera.com (Qatar)

"On the face of it," it seems generous of Egypt to offer \$500 million to rebuild the Gaza Strip after Israel's latest bombing campaign, said Sultan Barakat. But this gift is driven neither by altruism nor by Arab solidarity. When Turkey and Qatar fund such efforts, they always subcontract the work to "provide employment to the many skilled workers in Gaza and stimulate the territory's beleaguered and battered economy." Cairo, though, wants Egyptian firms to handle the reconstruction, because its true motive is providing jobs for Egyptian workers and "increasing its influence over Palestine." This is no surprise. Egypt under

the brief tenure of democratically elected President Mohammed Morsi was a friend to Gazans. But after army chief Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi deposed the Islamist Morsi in a bloody 2013 coup, Cairo has been "just another obstacle" to Gaza's development. El-Sissi even bombed the border tunnels that Gazans use to smuggle in food and medicine from Egypt. Rather than offering construction workers and materials, foreign nations that genuinely want to help the Palestinians should concentrate on pressuring Israel to lift its brutal blockade. Gaza's reconstruction "can only be truly successful if it is led by the Palestinians themselves."

Noted

■ One in five Americans who bought a gun during a huge surge in sales in 2020 was a first-time gun owner. Thirty-nine percent of American households now own guns, up from 32 percent in 2016, amid fears stoked by the pandemic and protests over policing. The continuing boom in sales is “unlike anything we’ve ever seen,” said University of California, Davis gun researcher Garen Wintemute. *The New York Times*

■ People working from home are putting in 48 minutes more a day on average, according to a Harvard Business School study. But the extra time doesn’t necessarily mean more productivity, according to a second study, from researchers at the University of Chicago and the University of Essex. They found remote workers increased their hours by 30 percent—but with no rise in productivity. *Time.com*



■ The pandemic was a boon for purveyors of legal marijuana,

whose sales soared to \$17.5 billion last year—a 46 percent increase over 2019. So far, 16 states and Washington, D.C., have legalized recreational marijuana and 37 states have legalized medical marijuana.

The New York Times

■ American and Southwest airlines have postponed resuming alcohol sales to coach passengers due to a surge in unruly behavior, mostly caused by people refusing to wear face masks. A Southwest flight attendant recently had two teeth knocked out. “We have just never seen anything like this,” said Sara Nelson, head of the flight attendants’ union. *Slate.com*

DeSantis: The new Trump?

Trumpism will be on the 2024 ballot even if Donald Trump isn’t, said **Julia Manchester** in *TheHill.com*, and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis clearly wants to carry the former president’s banner. DeSantis is “at the top of the list of rising stars within the Republican Party,” and he’s boosting his national profile by tossing new red meat to Trump’s

base every week. He recently ridiculed critical race theory, and signed a law tightening election “security” and another that imposes fines on social media companies that block politicians the same way they did Trump. During the pandemic, the governor delighted conservatives by emphasizing keeping businesses open and overruling mask mandates by local officials. Last week, DeSantis threatened cruise-ship operators with fines if they require passengers to be vaccinated against Covid when ships return to sea this summer. “I have only begun to fight,” he told cheering Republicans on a recent visit to swing-state Pennsylvania.

“Baby Trump,” as some call DeSantis, has learned his mentor’s “authoritarian ways,” said **Melba Pearson** in *The Miami Times*. He has promised to pardon Floridians arrested for violating pandemic restrictions and has championed a law putting strict limits on public protests and granting civil



Does this bill signing look familiar?

immunity to motorists who drive into a crowd of protesters. The ban on cruise ships requiring vaccinations is even more absurd, said **Jonathan Chait** in *NYMag.com*. Cruise ships famously serve as petri dishes for infections, had large outbreaks of Covid last year, and desperately want to require vaccination for the good of the industry. But to troll the libs, DeSantis—supposedly a champion of private businesses—won’t let cruise lines turn away customers who might spread “a deadly virus” on a vessel packed with 3,000 people.

Like Trump, DeSantis wears such criticism from the Left “like a badge of honor,” said **Joe Nocera** in *Bloomberg.com*. He defied critics by keeping schools, offices, bars, and restaurants open for much of the past year—creating “something akin to a gold rush atmosphere”; Florida’s unemployment rate was just 4.7 percent in March. Republicans see liberal governors enforcing lockdowns as the authoritarians and DeSantis as a leader who trusts people to make their own decisions. If Trump doesn’t run, DeSantis will have shiny “pro-Trump bona fides,” said **Rick Moran** in *PJMedia.com*. A re-election victory in 2022 would give him momentum he’ll leverage into a run for the White House. Democrats fear DeSantis, and they should.

Tulsa Massacre: Facing an ugly stain

A century after the fact, America has finally begun to grapple with a long-buried act of stunning racial violence, said **Deepti Hajela** in the *Associated Press*. The Tulsa Race Massacre of May 31, 1921, started when a young Black man in Tulsa, Okla., inadvertently touched a white woman and was accused of sexual assault. A white mob formed, and that night it descended on Greenwood, a “thriving Black community” home to 10,000 residents. In a sustained assault that included the use of machine guns and using crop planes to drop incendiary devices, the mob killed about 300 residents, and torched shops, restaurants, churches, and more than 1,200 homes. The neighborhood was left a smoking ruin—but nobody was ever charged with a crime. The horrific incident went “unremembered and untaught” until recently, when authors, filmmakers, and others “started bringing it into the light.” Last month, three survivors testified in front of Congress; this week, President Biden went to Tulsa to commemorate the centennial.

As a Black child growing up in Oklahoma, I never heard a word about the massacre, said **Hannibal Johnson** in *The New York Times*. “Like a wound left untreated,” the damage it wrought

has been left to fester through “years of silence and neglect.” Though Tulsa’s racial pogrom is “distinguished by its scale,” resentful white vigilantes mass-murdered Blacks numerous times—in Atlanta in 1906, East St. Louis and Chester, Pa., in 1917, Chicago in 1919. “Owning and addressing” that shameful history is crucial if “we are to advance toward racial reconciliation.”

A law signed last month by Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt stands to impede that reckoning, said **Tawnell Hobbes** in *The Wall Street Journal*. It forbids public school lessons that might make children feel guilt or “discomfort” due to their own race or sex. Critics say the law—and many similar bills passed or proposed in Republican-led states—is a clear effort to “stifle lessons” about systemic racism. My fellow conservatives need to understand that “it’s not ‘hating America’ to acknowledge this is part of our story,” said **David French** in *TheDispatch.com*. If we celebrate our proudest moments, we must mourn our darkest ones to truly “understand our own nation”—and be inspired to live up to our ideals. “Thank God that we do not live in the America of 1921.” But we live with its legacy, and “to repair our land” we need to take a hard look at how it’s shaped us.

Tokyo Olympics: Why Japan is going ahead

Japan is still in the throes of a major Covid surge, said Clay Chandler in *Fortune.com*, but its leaders insist they will hold the summer Olympic Games starting July 23—“pandemic and public opinion be damned.” Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) contend that bringing 15,000 athletes, officials, and media from 200-plus



On Covid lockdown, but awaiting visitors

countries to Tokyo will be safe. But Japan has just extended a state of emergency as Covid cases soar, with barely 2 percent of the population vaccinated. Japanese business leaders, newspapers, and athletes have expressed opposition to holding the Games now, and 83 percent of Japanese polled want the event postponed another year or scrapped. But Suga faces an election this fall and wants the Olympics to lift his flagging poll numbers, while the IOC doesn't want to lose billions in broadcast rights.

Let the Games go on, said Henry Olsen in *WashingtonPost.com*. “The world needs a ray of sunshine after the darkness of the past year,” and the Summer Olympics are “virtually the only event that truly unites the globe in friendship.” With other countries' help, Japan can pull this

off safely: Fans from outside Japan won't be allowed, and athletes will be tested daily and confined to their residences and competition venues. Canceling the Olympics would be a huge blow to Japan's economy, said Yoshiaki Nohara in *Bloomberg.com*. The cost of hosting has ballooned to an estimated \$25 billion, and canceling would

cost Japan “a direct economic loss” of about \$13 billion. That would come at a terrible time for an economy “already teetering on the brink of a double-dip recession.”

“Money is the chief reason anyone is even considering going forward with a Summer Games,” said Sally Jenkins in *The Washington Post*. The IOC is pressuring Japan not to “cut its losses” and cancel, despite how outrageously irresponsible it is to divert 10,000 medical workers from hospitals to staff the events. Already, eight Olympic workers tested positive for Covid during the torch-relay ceremony last month. Yes, Japan and the IOC will suffer big losses by postponing, but gathering thousands of people in a country in the midst of a Covid surge could turn out to be a superspreader event. “What might a larger disaster cost?”

Kids and Covid: What is safe?

As vaccinated Americans return to normal life this summer, “one group will be left out,” said Claire Cain Miller in *The New York Times*: kids under 12. They can't be vaccinated yet, and it's left anxious parents confused about what their children can safely do. More than 800 epidemiologists and pediatric infectious disease specialists we surveyed had varying views, but a majority agreed that unvaccinated young kids from different families should avoid congregating indoors—though some said they'd allow it among a limited number of families, “like in a pod.” But only with masks. Three-quarters of experts agreed that “when it comes to indoor activities where masks cannot be worn at all times, children probably can't do them safely this summer.”

Outdoors is a different story, said Robbie Whelan in *The Wall Street Journal*. Last week the CDC relaxed summer-camp guidelines calling for masks during outdoor play, and many experts “now believe that nearly any outdoor activity” is safe even without masks. But the American Academy of Pediatrics still recommends that unvaccinated children mask up outdoors if in groups, and some experts agree, noting that “transmission is still possible if someone gets too close.”

There's reason to be vigilant, said Leana Wen in *The Washington Post*. With adult cases dropping because of vaccination, pediatric infections have risen to 24 percent of new weekly cases. Nearly 49,000 kids were infected in the second week of May. Yes, kids are “unlikely to become severely ill,” but more than 3.9 million have tested positive over the past year, and at least 300 have died and 16,000 have been hospitalized.

Still, as a internist, I tell families to ditch the outdoor masks, said Lucy McBride in *The Atlantic.com*. Outdoor transmission is “extremely rare,” and as overall case rates plummet, kids' risk goes way down. In Israel, where more than 60 percent of adults are fully vaccinated, pediatric cases have dropped 99 percent since January. For isolated kids, “the social and emotional benefits” of being able to play maskless outdoors “greatly outweigh” the risks. “What does all this mean?” asked S.E. Cupp in *CNN.com*. Since the advice is not black and white, parents have to weigh competing opinions, calculate risks and benefits, watch the case data, and adjust as needed. Until kids can get vaccinated, too, we'll have to do what we've done throughout the pandemic: Play it safe and “follow our gut.”

Wit & Wisdom

“The truth isn't always beauty, but the hunger for it is.”
Writer Nadine Gordimer, quoted in GoodReads.com

“Every generation revolts against its fathers and makes friends with its grandfathers.”
Historian Lewis Mumford, quoted in Country Living

“Ideas are like rabbits. You get a couple and learn how to handle them, and pretty soon you have a dozen.”

John Steinbeck, quoted in the Vashon-Maury Island, Wash., Beachcomber

“The real hell of life is that everyone has their reasons.”

Director Jean Renoir, quoted in The New Republic

“At 18 our convictions are hills from which we look; at 45 they are caves in which we hide.”

F. Scott Fitzgerald, quoted in Forbes.com

“The dust of exploded beliefs may make a fine sunset.”
Essayist Geoffrey Madan, quoted in TheBrowser.com

“We call it ‘Nature’; only reluctantly admitting ourselves to be ‘Nature’ too.”
Poet Denise Levertov, quoted in BrainPickings.org

Poll watch

■ Asked which wars from World War I to Iraq they viewed as a mistake, **48%** of Americans said it was a mistake to send troops to fight in Vietnam, **43%** named Iraq, and **36%** cited Afghanistan.
The Economist/YouGov

■ **28%** of Republicans say they believe the QAnon theory that “there is a storm coming soon that will sweep away the elites in power and restore the rightful leaders.”
 Public Religion Research Institute



MONEY TO BURN



COLD, DEAD HANDS



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Streaming: Amazon gives prime billing to video

A deal signed last week to buy MGM for \$8.5 billion shows video is no longer an afterthought at Amazon, said **Lucas Shaw** in *Bloomberg.com*. With 175 million Prime subscribers, Amazon boasts “the second-largest paid streaming service in the world,” behind only Netflix. But because Prime Video is offered “as a freebie,” bundled with its fast-shipping offer, Amazon “often isn’t named as a streaming giant.” It’s also had “only a fraction of the hits” of Netflix; acquiring MGM could change that. The fabled Hollywood studio has a library of more than 4,000 films and 17,000 TV shows, including *Rocky*, *Tomb Raider*, and the James Bond franchise. CEO Jeff Bezos has been “adamant that the way to get” people to keep using Amazon’s services “isn’t via niche shows like *Transparent*,” but rather with “big blockbusters,” said **Peter Kafka** in *Vox.com*. This is likely Bezos’ last hurrah before stepping down as chief executive on July 5. He sees that “the media world is consolidating” and there aren’t many worthwhile targets left.

Amazon still clearly overpaid, said **Felix Salmon** and **Sara Fischer** in *Axios.com*. Many on Wall Street considered the studio “a distressed asset,” and other tech giants, including Netflix, passed it over “for far less money.” On top of that, media acquisitions “almost never work out” as planned anyway. But Amazon is so



James Bond, meet your new boss: Jeff Bezos.

big it almost “doesn’t need to justify any of its spending at this point.” Its shareholders seem happy to take Jeff Bezos’ word on faith. Not every deal Amazon makes, though, is automatically “an industry crusher,” said **Tara Lachapelle** in *Bloomberg.com*. “No buyer causes more of a brouhaha than Amazon as it hahas all the way to the bank.” But “other than cheaper avocados,” its \$13 billion acquisition of Whole Foods in 2017 hasn’t “obviously accomplished a whole lot.”

“Why does Amazon have a streaming video service at all?” asked **Shira Ovide** in *The New York Times*. Amazon executives rarely discuss their goals for Prime Video. When they do, the justification is usually that a video service is “one more reason for people to stick with Amazon’s membership program” and keep buying things through Amazon. However, it’s hard to find much evidence that Prime Video is actually a huge difference maker in “stickiness”; Amazon’s Prime customers seem to find enough value in free shipping. Yes, it could be that “Amazon is playing the long game” and has some grand plan like putting ads on Prime Video to sell more products. But it’s equally possible that Amazon is just “so rich and successful,” it can afford an \$8.5 billion splurge because Jeff Bezos just wanted to be in the entertainment business.

Innovation of the week



It’s not just bringing back a bright color palette that makes Apple’s newest iMac computer feel “especially fresh,” said **Dan Ackerman** in *CNET.com*. The new 24-inch—up from the 21.5 inches of the old base model—all-in-one desktop is “Apple’s first computer designed from the ground up to be an M1 system” since the company shifted away from Intel processors last year. We tested the 8 GPU core version, with 16 gigabytes of RAM and 512 gig storage; with that setup “you can easily work with 4K video footage in apps like DaVinci Resolve or Premiere.” The added performance doesn’t come with added weight—at 9 pounds, the new iMac is less than half the weight of the older 27-inch version. Apple’s chip also allows for better image processing for its webcam, a necessity in these days of endless Zoom calls.

Bytes: What’s new in tech

Wanted: Hackers, the good kind

A long-standing labor shortage in the cybersecurity industry is undercutting companies’ ability to guard against breaches, said **Clare Duffy** in *CNN.com*. “Experts have been tracking the cybersecurity labor shortage for at least a decade.” A 2020 survey found there are “around 879,000 cybersecurity professionals in the U.S. workforce,” but there is a need for 359,000 additional workers, ranging from “entry-level security analysts, who monitor network traffic to identify potential bad actors,” to executive-level leaders who can convince large corporations to bolster their defenses. “The stakes are only growing,” following a number of high-profile attacks in recent weeks, including the SolarWinds breach and the shutdown of the Colonial Pipeline. One area of focus in recruiting is diversity: Just 25 percent of cybersecurity professionals are women.

Test prep tools reveal nuclear secrets

Online flash cards used by U.S. soldiers to memorize nuclear security secrets can be accessed on the web, said **Matthew Gault** in *Vice.com*. A report from the U.K.-based investigative group Bellingcat found that “doing a routine Google search for acronyms related to nuclear operations” combined with the pub-

licly available names of European bases known to hold U.S. nuclear weapons quickly led to “flash-card platforms such as Chegg, Quizlet, and Cram.” One set of flash cards “detailed the exact locations of modems that connect to vaults, the procedures for duress signals on base, and the locations of cameras and where they pointed.” Bellingcat informed the Pentagon of its discovery, but last week at least two of the 50 flash-card sets were still online on the Internet Archive’s Wayback Machine.

Facebook lifts ban on lab-leak theory

Facebook last week ended a ban on posts suggesting Covid-19 was man-made or manufactured, said **Newley Purnell** in *The Wall Street Journal*. In February, the social network included such “lab-leak theories” on “a list of misleading health claims that aren’t allowed” on the platform. But the debate about the origins of the pandemic has deepened in recent weeks, and President Biden ordered a U.S. intelligence inquiry after “a group of 18 prominent scientists called for a deeper investigation into the possibility that a laboratory accident released the virus.” While Facebook has been under pressure to remove misleading content, it has also been accused of applying standards that are “opaque, inconsistent, and unfair.”

No 'safe' level of drinking

You might think there's no harm in relaxing with a single glass of wine or a beer in the evening. But when it comes to brain health, a new study suggests that the only "safe" level of alcohol consumption is zero. Researchers from the University of Oxford looked at the brain scans of 25,000 people who had also self-reported their alcohol intake. The scientists found that drinking had a clear effect on gray matter—important regions of the brain where information gets processed. "The more people drank, the less the volume of their gray matter," lead author

Anya Topiwala tells *CNN.com*. "Brain volume reduces with age and more severely with dementia. Smaller brain volume also predicts worse performance on memory testing." Alcohol consumption accounted for up to a 0.8 percent change in gray matter volume. That might seem like a low figure, but it is a greater contribution than other "modifiable" risk factors—lifestyle decisions that people can change, unlike the process of aging. The contribution of smoking or a high BMI, for example, was four times lower. And contrary to previous studies that indicated there is a benefit to



Just one glass can shrink your gray matter.

drinking wine in moderation compared with beer or spirits, the study found that the type of drink made no difference to the damage done to the brain.



Testing the volunteer's algae-enhanced eye

Restoring vision in the blind

Scientists have used gene therapy and a pair of high-tech goggles to partially restore the sight of a man blinded by an inherited eye disease. The research is still at an early stage: The 58-year-old man could see only the faint outline of objects. But the trial could lead to more-effective treatments, reports *The New York Times*. When light enters an eye, it is normally captured by photoreceptor cells, which send an electrical signal to motion-detecting ganglion cells. They in turn transmit signals to the brain via the optic nerve. Retinitis pigmentosa, the disease suffered by the volunteer, causes photoreceptors to decay and can result in complete blindness. For the new treatment, scientists inserted genes from light-sensitive algae into ganglion cells in one of the man's eyes. He then put on a pair of goggles able to detect changes in light intensity and convert that information into pulses of red and amber light to activate the treated cells. In trials, the volunteer was able to reach out and touch a notebook on a table. When researchers presented him with two or three tumblers, he counted them correctly 12 out of 19 times. "It's obviously not the end of the road," says lead author José-Alain Sahel, from the University of Pittsburgh. "But it's a major milestone."

Few 'breakthrough' infections

Of the 130 million people in the U.S. who have been fully vaccinated against Covid-19,

only 10,262—less than 0.01 percent—have experienced "breakthrough infections," the Centers for Disease Control has found. A breakthrough infection is defined as someone testing positive for the coronavirus more than 14 days after the second shot of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine or the single Johnson & Johnson dose, reports *NBCNews.com*. At least 955 fully vaccinated people have been hospitalized, and 160 have died, but not all of Covid. A majority of breakthrough infections were in women, and most of the patients were 40 to 74 years old. The agency cautioned that breakthrough numbers were likely an underestimate, because few vaccinated people are regularly tested. The CDC will no longer log mild breakthrough infections but is continuing to monitor whether virus variants can pierce the vaccines' defenses. "Vaccines are not 100 percent effective," says Carlos del Rio, a professor of medicine at the Emory University School of Medicine, so "breakthrough infections will happen."

Zombie wildfires

Forest fires in the Arctic Circle are smolder-

ing on through the region's freezing, snowy winters and then re-emerging in the spring. That's the finding of a new study into so-called zombie or holdover fires, reports *The Guardian* (U.K.). Researchers created an AI algorithm to analyze satellite images, lightning-strike records, and data for human presence and infrastructure. They found that zombie fires remain rare overall, accounting for only 0.8 percent of the total burned area in Arctic-boreal forests between 2002 and 2018. But individual fires can be devastating: One 2008 blaze accounted for 38 percent of the area burned in Alaska that year. To survive winter rain and snows, the fires have to burn deep into the carbon-rich, peaty soil, which then releases large amounts of global warming pollutants. The researchers worry that as temperatures rise—which is happening twice as fast in the Arctic as elsewhere—zombie fires will become ever more common. "We know that fires can start in the fire season by lightning and humans," says co-author Sander Veraverbeke, from Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. "Now we can have another cause of burned area."

How wolves help drivers

Fairy tales have given wolves a bad rep. But new research in Wisconsin suggests that the animals may have inadvertently saved dozens of human lives—by killing deer. Just under 20,000 Wisconsinites crash into deer each year, resulting in about 500 injuries and eight deaths. But that toll would likely be higher without wolves, which tend to prowl along roads and trails, attacking and scaring away deer. After analyzing 22 years of data, the researchers concluded



Keeping deer off the roads

that wolves have cut the frequency of deer-vehicle collisions in Wisconsin by a quarter. The state's wolf populations started to grow in the 1990s, and that rise correlated with a fall in both deer numbers and deer-related road accidents. Accidents involving other animals didn't decline, reports *The Atlantic*, further suggesting the deer-eating wolves are responsible.

"Wolves do this work all year long at their own expense," says Liana Zanette, an ecologist at Western University, in Canada, who was not involved in the study. "It all seems like a win-win."

Review of reviews: Books

Book of the week

The Ground Breaking: An American City and Its Search for Justice

by Scott Ellsworth (Dutton, \$28)

Scott Ellsworth's riveting new book "presents us with a chance for atonement for one of our darkest hours as a nation," said **Jeff Rowe** in the *Associated Press*. The historian, a white Tulsa native, helped spark an overdue national conversation nearly 40 years ago when he published *Death in a Promised Land*, a detailed account of Tulsa's 1921 race massacre. He has returned to the subject to examine the cover-up that followed. Many basic facts about the two-day pogrom remain elusive; "how many were killed may never be known." But on May 31, 1921, the city's Greenwood district was one of the most prosperous Black neighborhoods in America. Over the next two days, thousands of white Oklahomans participated in a rampage that left bullet-riddled bodies on the streets and burned the 35-block district to the ground.



Tulsa on fire, June 1, 1921

"Ellsworth grabs the reader's attention early in the book with his portrait of the district," said **Keisha Blain** in *The Washington Post*. Tulsa in 1921 was the oil capital of the world, and Greenwood, "America's Black Wall Street," was a vibrant community that nurtured Black economic power. The violence began with an attempt to lynch a 19-year-old Black shoeshiner on "the flimsiest of excuses," said **Stuart Miller** in the *Los Angeles Times*. Armed Black war veterans gathered outside Tulsa's courthouse to defend him, and after a first shot was fired, a rolling nighttime battle ensued. When the sun rose, the assault escalated,

said **Josh Glancy** in *The Sunday Times* (U.K.). "The witness testimony is simply staggering": Machine guns swept Greenwood's main avenue. Small planes flew overhead dropping incendiary devices. Some 1,200 homes, commercial buildings, and churches were burned down. The death toll may have reached 300.

In part, *The Ground Breaking* is about Ellsworth's "own lifetime of discovery," said **Jennifer Szalai** in *The New York Times*. He was 12

when he found a newspaper story on microfilm that revealed that "the riot" he'd heard whispered about was real. Here he details how many records were intentionally destroyed, while also spotlighting the many witnesses he spoke with across decades to piece the truth together. Their testimony "makes for sobering reading," but Ellsworth's book "also sheds light, and some of it is hopeful." Thanks in part to his efforts, Tulsa, a city in the reddest of states, is working to locate unmarked mass graves in order to fully come to terms with its past. This, Ellsworth writes, is "something new."

Novel of the week

The Atmospherians

by Alex McElroy (Atria, \$27)

Though "satire is a difficult balancing act," said **Sarah Neilson** in *The Seattle Times*, Alex McElroy's brilliant debut novel "manages it beautifully." In a surreal scenario that lampoons the way the internet warps behavior, men are spontaneously massing in hordes and doing manly things like murdering and mowing lawns when our protagonist, Sasha Marcus, finds herself a target of male rights activists. Her friend Dyson persuades her to counter toxic masculinity by founding a cult, called the Atmospherians, which offers men workshops on how to be background characters. In McElroy's world, if anything can go wrong, it will, and it will also be both strange and strangely relevant, said **Bethanne Patrick** in *The Washington Post*. *The Atmospherians* would be better if it spent less time on the cult's origins and more on its growth. Still, it sharply dramatizes the costs of society's fraught gender dynamics. By the time Sasha and Dyson cook up an even grander scheme, "readers will understand that anyone, of any gender, can be divorced from a true, compassionate self."

Zero Fail: The Rise and Fall of the Secret Service

by Carol Leonnig (Random House, \$30)



You probably think of the Secret Service as a band of sunglasses-wearing professionals who've compiled a nearly spotless record as presidential bodyguards, said **Chris Whipple** in *The New York Times*. "Think again." Carol Leonnig's new history of the agency is "a devastating catalog of jaw-dropping incompetence, ham-fisted mismanagement, and frat-boy bacchanalia." In the eyes of the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Washington Post* reporter, the Secret Service has been lucky that no president has been harmed since Ronald Reagan. Though many individual agents serve honorably, the agency has been consistently stretched thin, abused by its overseers, and tactically a step or more behind the times.

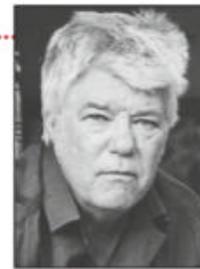
When you think about it, "the modern Secret Service was born out of failure," said **Rosa Brooks** in *The Washington Post*.

Originally created to investigate counterfeiting, the agency began protecting presidents only after the 1901 assassination of William McKinley—the third president killed in less than 40 years. The force remained modest in size, though, until the assassination of John F. Kennedy. Since then, the head count has climbed from 300 agents to 7,000. "But as the Secret Service's budget and mission have grown, so, too, have its flaws," among them its party-boy culture. Drugs, alcohol, and prostitutes figure in numerous scandals, while security lapses have piled up year after year. At times, "Leonnig struggles to bring life to what can feel like an unending chronicle of failures and missteps."

"There are heroes in this book," said **Peggy Noonan** in *The Wall Street Journal*. One of them is a uniformed officer who wrote a 2005 memo detailing exactly what was wrong with the agency—and lost his job for doing so. The scandals have dinged the Secret Service's reputation; this book reveals the decline in the way the agency actually operates. Almost every issue that Congress and the White House handle is presented as needing urgent attention, but this one can't be put off. Leonnig has done well to bring that truth to light. This is "journalism as a true and honest public service."

Best books...chosen by Chris Offutt

Novelist, memoirist, and short-story writer Chris Offutt is the author of *Kentucky Straight*, *The Good Brother*, and *Country Dark*. His new novel, *The Killing Hills*, follows a military detective as he pursues a murder case in his native eastern Kentucky.



Dead City by Shane Stevens (1973). Most gangster narratives feature the people on top trying to hold on to power. *Dead City* is about a journeyman hitman on the way out and a young fellow trying to break into the hitman racket. Great dialogue and very funny at times. This is a book that deserves to be back in print.

Crooked Letter, Crooked Letter by Tom Franklin (2010). Another favorite, Franklin's novel offers deep, honest characterizations of Southern people without the all-too-standard judgment and exotification. These small-town Mississippians go about their days in a direct fashion: running errands, talking to one another, solving a murder along the way. Franklin's prose style is just as direct and beautiful.

The Harlem Detective Series by Chester Himes (1957–83). The nine books of the Harlem Detective Series, which began with *A Rage in Harlem* and concluded with *Plan B*, were a great influence on me—unpredictable events, funny, brutal, and real. There is great compassion in the depiction of tough people in hard situations. Himes wrote from deep within an urban culture

that's mysterious to outsiders—and what they think they know is wrong.

Laidlaw by William McIlvanney (1977). This is the first book by the father of "Tartan Noir." I've read it so often that I tried to follow *Laidlaw*'s structure in my own work. I failed, of course. But I learned from McIlvanney to show a world without explaining. What he did for Glasgow in the '70s I attempted with eastern Kentucky today.

Death's Dark Abyss by Massimo Carlotto (2004). My favorite book by one of my top five living writers. Any one of Carlotto's novels is like a gateway drug to the rest. I've read and reread them all. His understanding of the so-called criminal mind is the best in literature.

The Marseilles Trilogy by Jean-Claude Izzo (1995–98). Jean-Claude Izzo's only three novels, *Total Chaos*, *Chourmo*, and *Solea* are remarkable for their narratives, their pace, and the Marseilles native's deftness with sociopolitical commentary. The prose has a remarkable lyric quality that comes through in translation. But it's also worth learning French to read the original.

Author of the week

Zakiya Dalila Harris

Zakiya Dalila Harris is having the last laugh at the expense of the industry she walked away from two years ago, said Elizabeth Harris in *The New York Times*. Harris, 28, had frequently been the only Black person in the room at



publishing giant Knopf Doubleday when she began writing a novel at her desk to lampoon the industry's

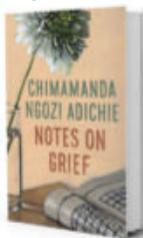
tokenism. A mere year later, 14 publishers bid on Harris' horror thriller, with the winner, Atria, paying more than \$1 million for a book now expected to be one of the hits of the summer. The plot of *The Other Black Girl* centers on a rivalry that arises between a character like Harris and a second young Black woman hired into a similar position. From the start, the pair modify how they speak and interact because they are occupying a white world. "Of course there's code switching," Harris says. "But it's not just that."

Harris' novel, which is already being adapted for a Hulu series, is "best described as *The Devil Wears Prada* meets *Get Out*," said Seija Rankin in *EW.com*. The competition between the protagonist and the new hire takes a sinister turn early on, but the horror ultimately is rooted in the work environment. "I was also really happy with the way that publishing reacted to the book," Harris says. "Because I didn't know if the industry was going to be ready to really look at themselves." She had been careful to ensure that none of the white characters closely resembled any real-life individuals. But that was less an effort to be polite than to help white readers see themselves. "I didn't want readers to be like, 'Oh, that's definitely that person, and I never would do anything like that.'"

Also of interest...in strong emotions

Notes on Grief

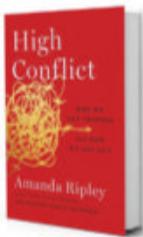
by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (Knopf, \$16)



Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's father didn't die from Covid-19, said Nilanjana Roy in the *Financial Times*. Yet "more than any other piece I've read recently," Adichie's slim memoir "captures the harshness of mourning in a time of pandemic." The celebrated novelist, living in the U.S., couldn't grieve with family in Nigeria and had to coordinate funeral arrangements via Zoom. It was all shattering, yet Adichie's words "bring comfort to all of us who've suffered loss in this most loss-filled of years."

High Conflict

by Amanda Ripley (Simon & Schuster, \$28)



There's a big difference between healthy conflict and what Amanda Ripley calls high conflict, said Jonathan Marks in *The Wall Street Journal*. High conflict is an ugly divorce or U.S. politics since 2016. It's when both sides see the other as an enemy that needs to be defeated. Ripley, a journalist, argues that a slide into high conflict is natural, and she "reports engagingly on, among other figures, a Chicago gang leader turned peacemaker." She also has ideas on how to break out of war mode.

Crying in H Mart

by Michelle Zauner (Knopf, \$27)



Michelle Zauner, lead singer of the band Japanese Breakfast, previously wrote an album that addressed the death of her mother, said Zack Ruskin in the *San Francisco Chronicle*. But "one medium is not always sufficient when it comes to dealing with loss." In her new memoir, Zauner recounts returning home to care for her cancer-stricken mother and using Korean cooking to try to mend their relationship. With its mix of humor and heart, the book "caters to all appetites and doesn't skimp on the kimchi."

Why We Are Restless

by Benjamin and Jenna Storey (Princeton, \$28)



Whenever Americans are unhappy, the most astute observers look past the ways we fall short of our goals to what those goals are, said Yuval Levin in *NationalReview.com*. This new book from a pair of husband-and-wife political philosophers is "an education in the irony and complexity of the modern quest for contentment," in how contentment is elusive when defined as life's greatest good. The book is proof that there exist "some islands of sanity" in academia. "I can't recommend it enough."

The Spotify revolt: Music streaming at a crossroads

“Artists’ complaints about streaming are as old as streaming itself,” said **Ben Sisario** in *The New York Times*. But an outright rebellion is now brewing among musicians and songwriters that may force the next revolution in how popular music reaches listeners. A year ago, “musicians everywhere” watched their concert dates vanish, and the resulting loss of the bulk of their income refocused attention on how poorly they’ve been paid for years by Spotify, Apple Music, and the other streaming services that currently generate 83 percent of all recorded-music revenues in the U.S. A new advocacy group, the Union of Musicians and Allied Workers, has been waging a guerrilla campaign against Spotify, which currently pays artists “fractions of a penny.” One study claims that the bottom 99 percent of artists receive an average of \$26 a year in royalties from the service. At numbers like that, “it has become nearly impossible for any artist who is not a star to earn a living wage.”

Much of the fight concerns how royalties are divided, said **Tim Ingham** in *Rolling Stone*. Spotify currently distributes payments based on artist popularity, which means that if Drake generates 5 percent of all Spotify streams in a month, his record label gets 5 percent of all royalties generated by the fees paid by subscribers—including those who don’t listen to Drake at all. In the U.K., where a parliamentary inquiry is underway that may prompt reforms



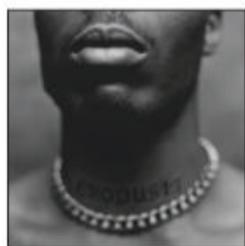
A musician protests outside Spotify's Madrid headquarters.

worldwide, lawmakers have weighed several alternatives, including a system that would divide each user’s monthly contribution among the artists they actually listen to. Still, such proposals “miss the most important answer to musicians’ money woes.” Though music revenues have rebounded in the streaming era, the industry must now find ways to recoup the billions it lost when music’s “superfans”—the ones who used to spend hundreds a month on CDs or vinyl—switched to streaming for roughly \$10 a month.

As long as corporate power goes unchecked, “the music industry’s deep inequity will persist,” said **Ron Knox** in *Wired.com*. Three major record labels (Universal, Sony, and Warner Music) now produce two-thirds of all music consumed in America, and four tech companies (Spotify, Google, Apple, and Amazon) have “a near-total stranglehold” on the streaming market. “Decades of bad policy got us here,” because “time and again,” antitrust agencies rubber-stamped corporate mergers. Today, independent artists and labels “must rely on—and increasingly pay—monopolists for access to fans.” Fortunately, because Congress seems increasingly willing to take on the tech titans, it’s becoming possible to imagine a better future. “There are more bands, artists, and music today than ever before. Distribution is drastically simplified. The money is flowing. It can all work, if monopoly power in the industry is brought to heel.”

DMX Exodus

★★★★★



It’s a shame that this posthumous album “can’t escape the reality it exists in,” said **Jeff Ihaza** in *Rolling Stone*. DMX was poised for a comeback when he died at 50 in April, but

the album that the charismatic New York rapper had been working on “feels cold in its new context,” because it’s a commercial product more than an artistic statement. Guest features abound, with Jay-Z, Nas, Snoop Dogg, Usher, Alicia Keys, and U2’s Bono among them. Taken on their own terms, many tracks are strong, as longtime collaborator Swizz Beatz “offers up some of the most dynamic production of his career,” while DMX “seems genuinely energized.” As on previous DMX releases, the music “still layers his gruff, chant-like vocals over hard-knocking beats smeared with vaguely gothic overtones,” said **Mikael Wood** in the *Los Angeles Times*. “It’s heartening to hear how much belief DMX had left in his signature approach.” And though “not every track connects,” the late rapper “sounds remarkably driven—a man with life, not death, heavy on his mind.”

Bachelor Doomin’ Sun

★★★★★



Melina Duterte and Ellen Kempner “sing like sisters who know each other’s secrets,” said **Jon Pareles** in *The New York Times*. Duterte, who records bedroom pop as

Jay Som, might seem an odd partner for Kempner, who fronts the guitar band Palehound. But their new indie-rock alliance works because both 20-somethings are “breathy-voiced” songwriters whose music “can be fragile or bruising, offering both vulnerability and resolve.” On this first Bachelor album, “each song builds its own soundscape, by turns transparent, dense, introverted, and clamorous.” Some sound like Palehound: “unassuming but affecting,” said **Ben Salmon** in *PasteMagazine.com*. Other tracks make full use of Duterte’s “lush” production work. “Spin Out,” for example, “unfurls in shimmering slow motion.” The album shines most, though, “when Bachelor sounds most like Bachelor.” Just listen to the rhythmic opener, “Back of My Hand.” Or to “Stay in the Car,” which “veers back and forth between bouncy pop-rock and Pixies-style guitar squalls.”

Oliver Wood Always Smilin’

★★★★★



Oliver Wood’s first solo album “will be welcomed by Wood Brothers fans, and may even create new ones,” said **Hal Horowitz** in *AmericanSongwriter.com*. Before the

pandemic, the “wryly humorous” singer-songwriter seldom took time off from touring with the Wood Brothers, a roots trio whose eight “consistently delightful” albums blend folk, blues, pop, gospel, and country. Forced off the road, Wood spent most of 2020 gathering songs he’d written and also hosting jam sessions in Nashville. On the 12-track record that resulted, “the fun he’s having playing with assorted friends shines through.” Susan Tedeschi, Phil Madeira, John Medeski, and Freda McCrary are among the featured guests, said **Henry Carrigan** in *FolkAlley.com*. On “Roots,” a gospel tune awash with churchy organ and rollicking piano melodies, “it’s as if Leon Russell met up with Gregg Allman.” Filled with other “funky, bluesy, soulful” songs, *Always Smilin’* “invites us into Wood’s musical circle for an evening of hand clapping, foot stomping, singing, and dancing.”



Stone: *Everything but the evil streak*

Cruella



Maybe Cruella de Vil isn't really worth getting to know, said **Ann Hornaday** in *The Washington Post*. "One of Disney's most durable villains," the greedy fashionista who wanted to skin puppies for their fur in 1961's *One Hundred and One Dalmatians* has been given an origin story in Disney's new live-action spin-off. But despite a game performance by Emma Stone, the title character "never becomes more interesting than just a nasty-natured person awash in self-pity and revenge." What's more, the movie, in aiming to be naughty fun, "achieves the dubious feat of being tedious, transgressive, chaotic, and inert at the same time." Actually, "*Cruella* is much better than it needs to be," said **Karen Han**

in *Slate.com*. Set mostly in 1970s London, it flaunts glam-punk fashions that are "to die for" and a crate-diving pop soundtrack that's electrifying. Those surface pleasures "go a long way toward concealing the blemishes." Unfortunately, the movie "can't let go of the idea that this dog murderer must be likable," and so it recasts Cruella as a mischievous former street orphan who turns theatrically cruel when she begins apprenticing under an imperious older fashion designer. Emma Thompson proves so magnetic as that monstrously narcissistic couturier that she becomes the villain to watch, said **Justin Chang** in the *Los Angeles Times*. "Few can do withering arrogance with more offhand conviction than Thompson. She's a total hoot." (In theaters or \$30 on Disney+) PG-13

Other new movies

The Conjuring: The Devil Made Me Do It

The *Conjuring* series is "an impressive case study on how to turn very little into a lot," said Benjamin Lee in *TheGuardian.com*. The lucrative horror franchise's latest installment once again casts Vera Farmiga and Patrick Wilson as a pair of married real-life paranormal investigators. This time, they're out to prove a murder suspect's claims of demonic possession. Though the tale's solemn tone becomes "almost laughable," *Devil* succeeds as a date-night roller-coaster ride, mostly because it's "handsomely made." (In theaters or via HBO Max) R

Paddington's fall from grace

Nobody's perfect—not even a certain cuddly and duffle coat-clad bear, said **James Hibberd** in *HollywoodReporter.com*. Just a month after *Paddington II* replaced *Citizen Kane* atop Rotten Tomatoes' list of the best-reviewed films of all time, the heart-warming 2017 sequel and its unassuming ursine hero have been knocked down a branch. Like Orson Welles' masterpiece, *Paddington II* was dethroned by a newly discovered negative review that ended its showing on the popular website of 100 percent critical approval. Perusing the remaining unassailed films, readers quickly claimed that *Toy Story 2* or the little-known 2018 drama *Leave No Trace* now holds the Rotten Tomatoes crown. But "all of this is increasingly silly." Not to critic Eddie Harrison, said **Halle Kiefer** in *NYPMag.com*. The man whose review shifted the rankings seems to genuinely dislike *Paddington II*, even labeling the title character "overconfident, snide, and sullen." Those words will outrage fans. But the unflappably polite Paddington? "He'd probably just nod and treat himself to some more delicious marmalade."



Imperfectly cute

Exhibit of the week

Each/Other: Marie Watt and Cannupa Hanska Luger

Denver Art Museum, through Aug. 22

"Museum shows are always collaborations to some degree," said Ted Loos in *The New York Times*. But a new exhibition in Denver that pairs the work of two renowned Native American artists "reflects the work of more hands than usual." Marie Watt and Cannupa Hanska Luger both produce "social practice" art, a new concept that describes a long tradition of engaging many collaborators. Watt, who is part Seneca, has led hundreds of sewing circles. Luger, who was born on the Standing Rock Sioux Indian Reservation, is best known for persuading protesters of the Keystone oil pipeline to construct and carry "mirror shields," which forced armed officers aligned against them to view their own reflections. A Denver Art Museum curator suggested that Watt and Luger combine their talents, and when the pandemic intervened, the pair made the crisis part of the title piece.

The more than two dozen other works in the show often convey a desire to connect communities across tribal or cultural lines,



The show's title piece: From many faces, one wolf

said **Philip Clapham** in Denver's *5280.com*. Lyrics from a Marvin Gaye protest song appear alongside Iroquois teachings in one of Watts' tapestries. To create his installation *Every One*, Luger circulated video instructions on how to make clay beads so that members of an array of North American tribes would contribute to the work: a 12-foot-high, pixelated portrait of a woman, composed of strings of 4,096 beads. Each bead represents an indigenous woman, girl, or trans or queer person reported as murdered or missing. Much of Luger's other work focuses on the environ-

ment, "and the new show includes one of his most complex pieces on the theme," said **Peter Saenger** in *The Wall Street Journal*. Six years ago, Luger began constructing a large serpent from oil drums, ammunition cans, and tires. With fangs that resemble gas-pump handles, the serpent menaces two Mandan warrior figures dressed in regalia featuring beadwork by the artist's mother, Kathy Elkwoman Whitman.

Another imposing creature awaits at the end of the exhibition, said **Hilal Bahcetepe** in Denver's *303Magazine.com*. Last September, Watts and Luger spread the word that they were creating a collective artwork from bandannas on which each contributor was to embroider a visual expression of their response to the events of the pandemic year. More than 850 such face coverings, from several countries, were submitted, and from them Watts and Luger have constructed *Each/Other*, a seated but towering she-wolf. With her head cocked to one side and her rainbow-colored coat, she looks anything but vicious. Instead, she's a symbol of "kinship, vulnerability, and connection," and proof that process and product can be equally beautiful.

Streaming tips

Of myths and monsters...

Blood of Zeus

Hollywood has done a mostly terrible job depicting the Greek gods. The best attempt yet might be this animated series, now one season old. Great voice work and grandiloquently violent action scenes tell the tale of Heron, a demigod son of Zeus. *Netflix*

Monty Python and the Holy Grail

The tales of King Arthur haven't screened well, either. It says something that cinema's best adaptation of Arthurian legend is this comedy classic. *Netflix*

Clash of the Titans

At first glance, this 1981 feature film looks horribly dated. But the stop-motion effects by Ray Harryhausen, from his rendering of the Kraken to an unforgettable depiction of Medusa, are wondrous. And if you don't like Harry Hamlin as Perseus, look for supporting players Maggie Smith, Burgess Meredith, and Laurence Olivier. *HBO Max or \$4 on demand*

Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth

This series of conversations between PBS host Bill Moyers and Campbell, a onetime titan of comparative mythology, remains a treasure for anyone seeking insight into the stories humans tell. *\$2 via Amazon Prime*

American Gods

It's the old gods vs. the new in this superbly stylized adaptation of a Neil Gaiman novel. Before the series finds itself a few episodes in, Ian McShane and others keep things interesting enough. *Starz*

Ragnarok

No, not the 2017 Marvel Comics movie. This is a Danish series that takes a unique approach to climate change, positing it as a harbinger of Norse mythology's Armageddon. It's up to Magne, a teen who is the embodiment of Thor, to prevent the calamity. *Netflix*

The Week's guide to what's worth watching**The Amusement Park**

Like a zombie from one of his own films, a lost George Romero horror classic has risen from the grave. In 1973, the *Night of the Living Dead* director was taking any work he could when he accepted a commission from a Pittsburgh-based Lutheran group to make a movie dramatizing the indignities of aging. His patrons recoiled when they saw the 52-minute dark fable Romero produced, but the rediscovered film remains a blisteringly relevant indictment of how little society cares for the weak. And it's all packaged in one elderly man's nightmare visit to an amusement park. *Available Tuesday, June 8, Shudder*

Awake

Chaos erupts worldwide in this feature-length thriller when a mysterious event causes a total global power outage while robbing humans of the ability to sleep. Gina Rodriguez stars as a mother and war veteran who has the skills to survive amid the violence of a world turning mad. She also has a preteen daughter who could be key to saving civilization. *Available Wednesday, June 9, Netflix*

Lupin

The French-made heist series that highjacked Netflix's ratings in early 2021 is back. Omar Sy returns as Assane Diop, a man on a revenge mission who models himself after fictional gentleman thief Arsène Lupin. Diop has become a much-wanted man as the stakes ratchet up: His son has been kidnapped by the billionaire aristocrat whose crimes he seeks to expose. *Available Friday, June 11, Netflix*

Blindspotting

Blindspotting the movie was a prescient take on gentrification and double-standard policing in Oakland. This spin-off series doesn't have Daveed Diggs, but it brings back Jasmine Cephas Jones and gives the Emmy winner and original *Hamilton* cast member room to deliver a star turn. Jones plays Ashley, a young mother whose man Miles is in jail. To stay afloat, she and the couple's school-age son agree to move in with Miles' mother, played by Helen Hunt. But it's



Blindspotting's Jones: Motherhood today

Miles' half-sister who proves harder to live with. *Sunday, June 13, at 9 p.m., Starz*

Tuca & Bertie

A curious cancellation by Netflix becomes a boon for Adult Swim, which picked up this gut-busting animated series for its Season 2. Tiffany Haddish and Ali Wong again supply the voices of Tuca and Bertie, a toucan and a song thrush who are odd-couple best friends. The new episodes begin with Bertie trying to exorcise old demons in therapy sessions and wild-girl Tuca creating a "Sex Bus" to score herself a mate. *Sunday, June 13, at 11:30 p.m., Adult Swim*

Other highlights**2021 CMT Music Awards**

Maren Morris, Mickey Guyton, and Chris Stapleton will be among the performers at country music's second big awards show of the season. Nominees Kane Brown and Kelsea Ballerini will co-host. *Wednesday, June 9, CMT*

In the Heights

Lin-Manuel Miranda's new movie musical could be summer's first big hit in theaters, but it's arriving concurrently on HBO's streaming service. *Available Friday, June 11, HBO Max*

Betty

The skater girls of *Betty* get back on their boards for a second season, which covers the season of Covid lockdowns in New York City. *Friday, June 11, at 11 p.m., HBO Max*



Hiddleston, briefly bound

Show of the week**Loki**

The God of Mischief has some work to do. In Disney's latest Marvel series, fan favorite Tom Hiddleston reprises his role as Loki, brother of Thor and all-around havoc wrecker from the *Avengers* films. But now he's been pulled in by a bureaucratic agency called the Time Variance Authority, and the TVA needs Loki to do some time traveling and shape-shifting to iron out some wrinkles in the space-time continuum. Predictably, Loki pursues his own agenda, and Hiddleston makes his evildoing amusing, playing off new co-stars Owen Wilson and Gugu Mbatha-Raw. *Available Wednesday, June 9, Disney+*

Carolina fried chicken: When it has to be done right

“I need to get real here,” said Matthew Raiford in *Bress ’n’ Nyam: Gullah Geechee Recipes From a Sixth-Generation Farmer* (Countryman Press). Fried chicken is not typical of the food I cook or that my family cooked when I was growing up on a coastal South Carolina farm that my great-great-great grandfather assembled after being freed from slavery. On most nights, I prefer to serve spatchcocked chicken from a cast-iron pan because it’s quicker to the table and healthier, too.

Fried chicken has always been a special-occasion dish; “it takes two days to get it right.” But I mastered a method when I returned to Little St. Simons Island to work as a chef and to take ownership of the farm.

One tip: For the best fried chicken, you want to use an older hen. “It will have denser meat that can withstand the high heat of frying.” In any case, make sure you give the project two days. “The time it takes to infuse the chicken with the spices and seasonings and to get that sharp crackle in the crust is so worth it.”

Recipe of the week Two-day fried chicken

Two 4-lb to 6-lb whole chickens, cut into 8 pieces each
Pink Himalayan salt



Crackling skin, tender meat, and big flavor

- Freshly ground black pepper
- ¼ cup smoked paprika
- 2 quarts heavy cream
- 1 cup fermented pepper sauce (such as Tabasco)
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- 2 cups arrowroot or all-purpose flour
- 1 tbsp garlic powder
- Frying oil (peanut, vegetable, avocado, or coconut)

Day 1: Wash and pat dry chicken pieces; set

aside. Blend ¼ cup salt and 1 tbsp pepper; combine with paprika in a large sealable plastic bag. Place chicken pieces in bag and shake to coat all over.

In a large glass or ceramic bowl, mix cream, pepper sauce, and lemon juice until just combined. Remove chicken from plastic bag and submerge in cream bath. Cover with plastic wrap and set in refrigerator to marinate for 24 hours.

Day 2: Mix together 1 tbsp salt and ⅛ tsp pepper. In a large bowl, combine with arrowroot and garlic powder. Set aside.

Place a colander in the sink. Pour in chicken and let drain 15 minutes.

Fill a large, deep cast-iron pan or skillet with oil, at least 3 inches deep but no more than halfway up sides of pan. Turn burner to medium high and heat oil to 375.

Meanwhile, start coating chicken pieces with seasoning blend. Cook in stages, coating and frying all thighs, then all wings, and so on, so you don’t crowd the pan and chicken cooks evenly. Fry pieces until golden brown and crispy all over and internal temperature reaches 165, 13 to 16 minutes for legs, thighs, and wings, 17 to 20 for breasts. Serves 6 to 8.

Dining’s resurgence: In spots, the Roaring ‘20s have arrived



In Miami, a big party gathers to feast.

With more than half of Americans vaccinated and many more sick of their own cooking, restaurant traffic is “rocketing back,” said Laura Reiley and Andrew Van Dam in *The Washington Post*. In some dining capitals, such as New York City and San Francisco, business hasn’t yet returned to pre-pandemic levels. But Miami, Las Vegas, and other cities have already blown well past that benchmark. By late May, dining in several states, including Oklahoma, Nevada, Texas, and Florida—had already fully recovered. Below, three cities where the post-lockdown boom has arrived.

Miami High-profile New York City spots are finding second homes in Miami, where dining reservations are up roughly 50 percent over 2019 numbers. Cote, a Michelin-starred Korean barbecue house known for its 45-day, dry-aged beef, has taken up residence in the Design District. Carbone, a throwback red-sauce joint acclaimed for its spicy rigatoni in vodka sauce, is making waves in South Beach.

Las Vegas Sin City is having a Mediterranean moment, per *Eater.com*’s heat maps. Greek fine-dining stalwart Estiatorio Milos has casino-hopped from the Cosmopolitan to vast new digs at the Venetian, while Bobby Flay is working coastal Italian magic at Amalfi, in Caesars Palace. Another hot table: the new outpost of L.A.’s Night+Market, located at the Virgin Hotels Las Vegas and featuring chef Kris Yenbamroong’s Thai street food.

Houston Fine-dining newcomer Le Jardinier, in the city’s Museum of Fine Arts, opened to high demand, with its tables fully booked 60 days out. Meanwhile, at the renovated La Colombe d’Or hotel, Tonight & Tomorrow is bouncing from breakfast to dinner, thanks to chef Jonathan Wicks’ European-meets-Southern fare.

Wine: Txakolina

“Twenty years ago, txakolina was virtually unknown outside Spanish Basque country,” said Eric Asimov in *The New York Times*. But the effervescent white wine, like so many once local wine treasures, has since gone global and found scattered fans everywhere. Made from grapes grown near the chilly Atlantic, txakolina (chok-oh-LEE-nah) can be “as bracing as a plunge in cold saltwater.” These three are produced near the town of Getaria.

2020 Ameztoi (\$22). “Steely and stony, with herbal and citrus undertones,” this Getariako txakolina has a light effervescence that make it “joyous to drink.”

2020 Antxiola (\$19). “Similarly light, vivacious, and stony,” this local rival has “a suggestion of lime zest” and delivers “a refreshing bitter note” on the finish.

2019 Ulacia (\$20). A year older, the Ulacia offers “rounder flavors of citrus and green apple,” yet it’s “even more effervescent than the others.”



Starting over: How to preserve the lockdown's slower pace

The pandemic challenged parents everywhere, but there was a silver lining, said **Anne Marie Chaker** in *The Wall Street Journal*. The last 15 months forced a slowdown in families' often-crazed pace as "carpools, sports, after-school activities, birthday parties, and playdates all but disappeared in 2020." Now, as communities reopen and calendars fill with summer plans, "some parents are determined to hold on to the more-relaxed tempo." In a recent CivicScience poll, 31 percent of families said that they plan to take part in fewer extracurriculars going forward. Megan van Riet, a mother of two teenagers, learned how stressful a crowded schedule can be. "Before, it felt like home was a pit stop on the way to something else," she says. Now, with less running around to soccer games and chorus practices, both van Riet and her children are enjoying the simple things in life, like spending time together outdoors and even at the dining table. "I make better dinners," van Riet says. "I saw how happy it made them. They stay and hang out."



Family time: Because schedules are so 2019

The chance to change mindsets isn't just for parents, said **Christine Koh** in *The Washington Post*. All of us "now have a unique opportunity to tune in to what we care about and to be intentional about our time." To do so, "make a list of the pros and cons of your life right now," and refer to that list as your

calendar fills up. It's crucial to "identify and establish boundaries to help preserve the pros," so set up reminders to pare down your schedule periodically. Add speed bumps by scheduling "do-nothing time," and "hold tight to those boundaries." Erin Loechner, the author of *Chasing Slow*, recommends being intentional about everyday tasks, taking time, for example, to use a hand grinder when you prepare your coffee each morning. "Do one thing a day that makes your home feel like less of an assembly line," Loechner says. "There are so many stud-

ies that suggest working with your hands offers a slower, more meditative start to your day."

When drafting your list of pros and cons, "commit to complete honesty," especially regarding any people in your life who drag you down, said **Arthur Brooks** in *The Atlantic*. "Be specific about any of your daily interactions that were toxic, relationships that were unproductive, and the life patterns that made you unhappy." Yes, phasing a toxic person out of your life can be trickier than setting aside a hobby. "But in truth, we all have relationships that are simply not mutually beneficial. If the pandemic has been a welcome furlough from these relationships, you should ask yourself whether you can make that break permanent. This moment is the best chance you might ever have to do so."

Transition season: Snapshots from America's reopening

The view from the airports

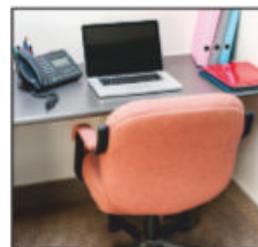
"Flying's back, baby, and so is everything you used to hate about it," said Natalie Compton in *The Washington Post*. Two weeks after being vaccinated, I flew across the country to celebrate my dad's birthday, and the airports—Reagan National, Dallas, Fresno—looked like 2019. "I'm talking crowds swarming the gate; lines at every Starbucks; barefoot passengers sprinting to their connecting flights, sandals in hand." On the first leg, a couple seated near me bickered loudly, masks down. On flight two, the AC nearly gave my feet frostbite. Baggage claim took forever. But as I watched other travelers joyfully reuniting with loved ones, I remembered: "It's a privilege to experience *all* of travel again—not just the postcard-worthy moments but the uncomfortable parts, too."



The view from the office

The first day back at the office "might feel weird," said Laurence Darmiento in the *Los Angeles Times*. Think of it like the first day of school: "no sweat for some" but

butterfly-inducing for others. Jessica Kubinec has been back in her small office and noticed "a distinctly stale smell." Emmett Shoemaker has been back to his and can't shake the memory of what he found in a desk drawer months earlier: a perfect-looking apple that hadn't moved since March and had liquefied inside. Shoemaker, a university administrator, called it "surreal" to sit at his desk again: "I immediately felt as if I was there a week ago."



The view from the prom

"Of all the signs that things are getting back to normal," said Pat Muir in the Yakima, Wash., *Herald-Republic*, "the one that really got me was seeing high school kids in formal wear at the grocery store." Because the rite vanished last spring, "when I saw some girl in a sequin dress in the Safeway, it jolted me." At Wapato High School's May 22 event, promgoers had to wear masks and line up for temperature



checks. Otherwise, the 175 attendees enjoyed the full prom experience. "The first hour, no one was dancing," said Principal David Blakney. "But an hour in, they started dancing and getting pictures taken. It really did feel like a normal high school dance."

The view from a local bar

"When was the last time you thought to yourself that you were happy to be standing on aged carpet in a dive bar?" asked Peter-Astrid Kane in *SFGate.com*. At Aunt Charlie's Lounge in San Francisco, every customer on last month's reopening day seemed to have that thought. Aunt Charlie's is historic: It's the oldest queer bar in the Tenderloin District now that the many others have vanished. Yet it's also "very much a working-class neighborhood joint," with a cast of regulars and a \$7.75 bourbon and ginger. On that first afternoon, there was no drag queen show. The bartender, though, was enjoying getting to repeat a joke every time he checked a customer's temperature. "You're normal," he told each of us.



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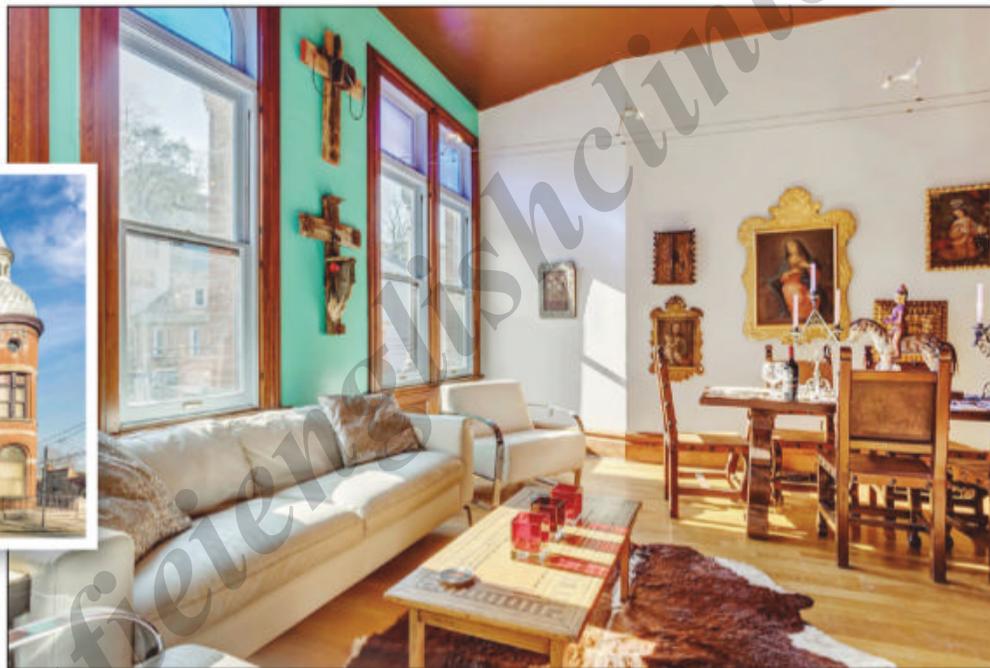
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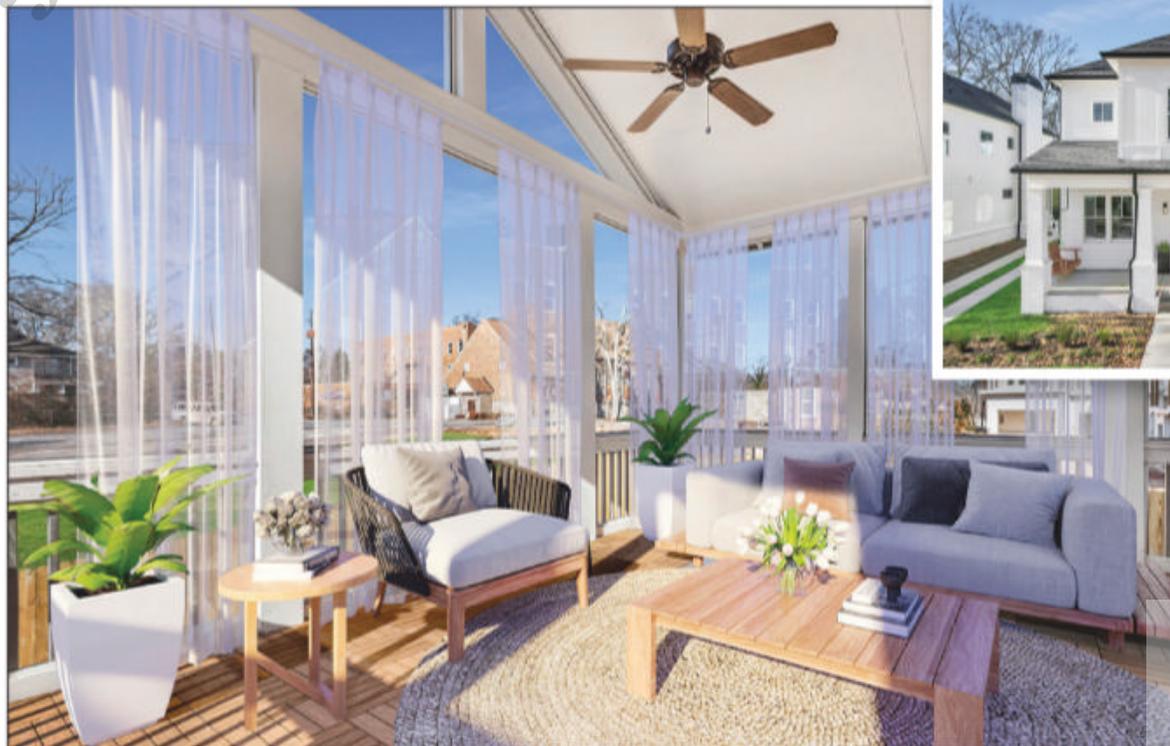
This week: Homes for less than \$1 million

1 ▶ Hilo, Hawaii The oversize lanai of this three-bedroom home on the Big Island looks out on Hilo Bay and the Pacific Ocean. The 1998 house features vaulted ceilings, an open kitchen, a built-out basement with bath and wet bar convertible to a separate apartment, and an enclosed garage with flex space for a workshop or storage. The 6.7-acre property has pasture for animals, room for fruit and vegetable gardens, and a lychee orchard. \$998,750. James Francis Hanley, Venture Sotheby's International Realty, (808) 652-0500



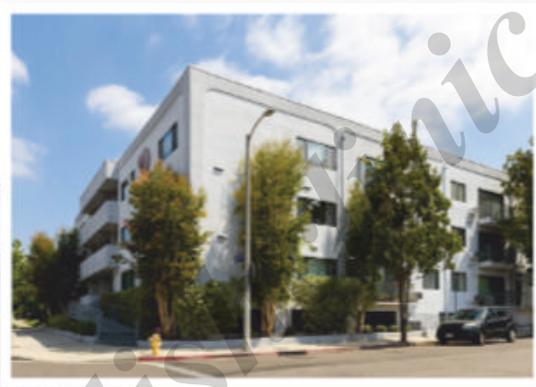
2 ◀ Pittsburgh This three-bedroom duplex condo is in the converted rectory of an 1861 Catholic church. The home has three levels connected by spiral staircases, lofted ceilings, an open layout, a family room with wood-burning fireplace, and a private roof deck with city and river views, and includes parking and storage. Outside is a large common area with a lawn and trees; shops, restaurants, and two parks are in walking distance. \$744,000. Amanda Singleton-Kaliszewski, Coldwell Banker Real Estate Services—Shadyside, (412) 855-7042

3 ▶ Decatur, Ga. The homes of the new Elle at Oakhurst development were designed to fit into the early-20th-century district of this historic Atlanta suburb. This five-bedroom Craftsman-style bungalow features farmhouse details, an open living room with gas-starter fireplace, a chef's kitchen with butler's pantry and breakfast room, an owner's suite with sitting room, and front and upstairs porches. The lot includes a yard, driveway, and two-car garage; central Oakhurst is three blocks away. \$999,900. Tristain O'Donnell, Engel & Völkers Buckhead Atlanta, (678) 683-2849

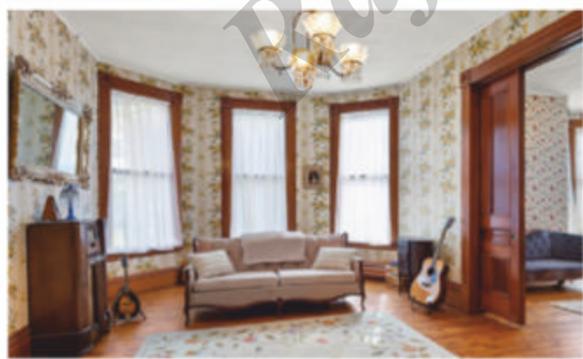




4 ▲ Lopez Island, Wash. Perched on Humphrey Head, this two-bedroom furnished home has views of the Lopez Sound from wraparound picture windows and a large front deck. Built in 1973 in midcentury-modern style, Bridge House retains its original wood paneling, parquet floors, lofted cedar ceiling, and stone fireplace. The wooded 0.9-acre property includes 148 feet of waterfront, an outbuilding housing a small studio, and access to a community beach and trails; the ferry is a short drive away. \$850,000. Alan Roberson, Windermere Lopez Island, (360) 969-4230



5 ◀ Los Angeles This top-floor unit in a 1964 Los Feliz condominium has been completely renovated. The one-bedroom home features oak floors laid over acoustic cork; oversized windows with solar blinds, an open kitchen with built-in wine refrigerator and breakfast area, and a bathroom with quartz counters and brass fixtures, and comes with a parking spot. The neighborhood offers restaurants, shopping, and nightlife and is 5 minutes by car from Griffith Park and 15 from central Hollywood. \$575,000. Lauren Kinkade-Wong, Sotheby's International Realty/Pasadena Brokerage, (323) 314-2614



6 ▶ Morrisville, Vt. Part of Morrisville Village, a district on the National Register of Historic Places, this Queen Anne Victorian dates to 1885. The five-bedroom home has the original tin ceilings, fireplace tiles, carved wood, pocket doors, stained glass, and main staircase; an updated kitchen; dining and living rooms; a parlor with bay windows; and a covered porch. The 0.8-acre lot includes lawns, mature trees, and garage and carriage barn, and is steps from the village center. \$450,000. Krista Lacroix, Coldwell Banker/Hickok & Boardman, (802) 846-9551



Steal of the week

BUSINESS

The news at a glance

The bottom line

■ Median pay reached \$13.4 million for chief executives of the biggest U.S. companies in 2020, a fifth straight annual record. Paycom Software founder Chad Richison, whose pay package was valued at more than \$200 million, was the highest-paid CEO. Seven CEOs received compensation valued at more than \$50 million last year, compared with two in 2019 and three in 2018.

The Wall Street Journal

■ U.S. small-cap value stocks returned 76.8 percent in the half year to March 31, way ahead of the 14.4 percent posted by large growth companies. The 62.4 percentage point difference is the largest for any six months since the first half of 1943.

Financial Times



■ An average DoorDash order during the second quarter of 2020 cost the customer \$35.55. Out of this, the restaurant receives \$19.97, the delivery driver gets \$8.91, and

DoorDash takes the remaining \$4.85. Minus refunds, promotions, advertising, and other costs, the company earns an average of 90 cents per order.

The Wall Street Journal

■ More than \$10 billion this year has been spent on buildings used for life sciences and other research. Amid a decline in other office spending, labs are booming. The buyout firm KKR in March paid \$1.1 billion for a San Francisco office complex it plans to repurpose for life sciences research.

Bloomberg.com

■ U.S. gas prices hit their highest level in seven years during the Memorial Day weekend. put the national average at \$3.05 per gallon, up from \$2.90 one month ago and \$1.98 a year ago.

CNN.com

AMC: A popcorn movie at the stock market

So-called meme stocks are rallying again, and AMC is leaning into the frenzy, said Sarah Whitten in *CNBC.com*. “Analysts have been warning that the debt-burdened theater chain could go bankrupt” even as it emerges from the pandemic. “Fans of the stock,” who call themselves apes (after the “apes strong together” line in *Rise of the Planet of the Apes*), have organized on social media forums like Reddit to drive up the price of shares. That has pushed shares up 1,400 percent this year. AMC’s CEO, Adam Aron, has embraced the retail crowd, offering popcorn to shareholders. And he’s leveraged the interest to raise money with a \$230.5 million stock sale last week.



The action is outside the theater.

“An ability to corral neophyte investors has become an essential skill in the meme-stock era,” said Chris Bryant in *Bloomberg.com*, and Aron has proven to be an expert at charming the speculators. He has followed Elon Musk’s model, posting ape-themed memes to Twitter and donating \$100,000 to a gorilla-protection charity. But the company still carries more than \$5 billion in debt, and the long-term future of cinemas remains dim. The business realities, though, might hardly matter. Hitching the “company’s fate to the whims of the Reddit crowd” has kept AMC afloat. What happens when the stock loses momentum and the day traders lose interest?

Arbitration: Amazon says you can go ahead and sue

Amazon quietly changed its terms of service after being flooded with 75,000 arbitration demands, said Sara Randazzo in *The Wall Street Journal*. “Companies have spent more than a decade forcing employees and customers” into dispute resolutions outside the traditional court system. But “mass-arbitration filings” have hit companies with the potential for tens of millions of dollars in fees, and Amazon essentially said, “Fine, sue us.” The decision to let customers file lawsuits potentially opens the door to “three proposed class actions alleging the company’s Echo devices recorded people without permission.”

Oil: U.S. suspends Alaska drilling leases

The Biden administration this week suspended oil and gas leases in Alaska’s Arctic National Wildlife Refuge issued just before President Trump left office, said Adam Federman in *Politico.com*. Though Republicans and the oil industry campaigned for years to open up ANWR for drilling, when the Trump administration offered leases in January, “the sale flopped and generated only \$14.4 million in revenue and bids from only three players, none of which were major oil and gas operators.” Most of the leases went to a state-owned corporation, which bid the minimum \$25 an acre. The Biden administration disappointing environmental groups, however, by lending support last week to a ConocoPhillips project to the west of the ANWR.

Hackers: Russia-linked attack shuts meat plants

A cyberattack and ransom demand “from a criminal organization likely based in Russia” shut down nine U.S. beef plants this week, said Julie Creswell in *The New York Times*. JBS, which “accounts for one-fifth of the daily U.S. cattle harvest,” managed to reopen the majority of its affected plants after just one day of disruption. But the incident raised new fears about Russia-based hackers, who just last month shut down oil deliveries in the Colonial Pipeline attack.

Lawsuits: SCOTUS turns away Johnson & Johnson

Johnson & Johnson must pay a \$2.1 billion award to “20 women who alleged the company’s talcum baby powder caused ovarian cancer,” said Brent Kendall and Peter Loftus in *The Wall Street Journal*. The Supreme Court this week declined to consider J&J’s appeal, leaving in place a Missouri appeals-court ruling that had reduced the total judgment from \$4.7 billion following a 2018 jury trial that found J&J “liable on all of the plaintiffs’ claims.” Justice Brett Kavanaugh, whose father was a cosmetic-industry lobbyist, didn’t participate in the deliberations.

Many contests, oddly few winners

Instagram influencers seem to offer a lot of prizes, but it’s rarely clear that anybody actually wins them, said Allie Jones in *Vox.com*. Last year, Kris Jenner, the matriarch of the Kardashian family, gave her 41 million followers the chance to win “a 20k USD preloaded credit card” and Louis Vuitton luggage. All entrants had to do “was follow a few dozen other accounts” and leave a comment. Thousands did, but Jenner never announced a winner. It was a classic example of a “loop” giveaway created by a marketing firm that charges smaller influencers and brands to get on a “must-follow list” that a larger influencer, such as Jenner, will share. Curated Businesses, a marketing company that organizes contests for the Kardashians, occasionally shares “photos of people who have allegedly won those prepaid Visas and designer bags.” *Vox* tried to contact a dozen of those, but “no one responded.”

House hunters: A high-stakes game of musical chairs

“House hunting in 2021 is not for the fainthearted,” said Olivia Christensen in *Insider.com*. My husband and I agreed to “get serious about finding a new home” this spring. But soon after we started searching, “it began to feel like every day came with a new warning” about the craziness of the real estate market. Our own house—bought for \$113,000 in 2014—sold for \$220,000 in two days. But that left us with “an actual move-out date” and no home to move into. We liked one house but lost to “a cash offer of \$30,000 over asking.” Our parents and friends encouraged us to “wait it out” and rent, but finally we got an offer accepted. It was “\$10,000 over asking with escalators”—a promise to match higher offers—“up to \$30,000,” and we waived inspections and appraisals. We’re thrilled, but this market has “obliterated my impulse for excitement.” It’s truly “the Wild West out there.”



Many buyers waive inspections and contingencies.

Adding to the torrid market are housing “wholesalers,” said Michael Sasso in *Bloomberg.com*. “Unlike fix-and-flip investors, who take title to homes, renovate them, and put them back on the market, wholesalers typically negotiate with homeowners just to put homes under contract and sell those contracts to flippers.” Motivated by record-low interest rates and the tight housing supply, they have flooded the market, and some employ tactics to “dupe sellers with lowball offers.” The city of Philadel-

phia recently passed regulations “after neighborhoods were overrun with ‘We Buy Houses’ signs.” Realtors are also selling more “whisper listings,” said Nicole Friedman in *The Wall Street Journal*. These are unlisted properties shown exclusively to “a small circle of buyers.” The National Association of Realtors “discourages the practice” and requires that listings be added to their local database if they are publicly advertised. But listings can still be hidden “if they are only shared within one brokerage, called an ‘office exclusive.’”

“Can a boom like this last?” asked Bonnie Kristian in *TheWeek.com*. We’re selling, and our real estate agent “says our house will likely be listed on a Wednesday, host dozens if not hundreds of potential buyers in a two-day open house on Friday and Saturday, and go under contract by Monday.” That doesn’t feel sustainable. But unlike in 2008, there aren’t tales of “tiny down payments and subprime loans,” so there seems less chance of an overnight collapse. That doesn’t mean bad decisions aren’t being made, said Aly Yale in *Money.com*, and some pandemic-market buyers are already having regrets. Sabrina Beaumont admits “feeling stupid” about settling for a “house that was smaller and more expensive” than ones she was considering before the pandemic. FOMO—or fear of missing out—“took over,” she said. In this feverish market, that feeling is increasingly common.

What the experts say

An insurer’s AI blunder

The makers of the insurance app Lemonade had to walk back claims it made on Twitter about its use of artificial intelligence to analyze claims, said Sara Morrison in *Vox.com*. The \$6 billion online insurance company “prides itself on largely replacing human brokers and actuaries with bots and AI,” by collecting massive amounts of data on its users. But in a series of tweets last week, Lemonade said it uses machine learning to “carefully analyze” videos that claimants send in for “signs of fraud,” including through “nonverbal clues.” Users were not pleased to hear that Lemonade “gathers more than 1,600 ‘data points’” about them. The thread “prompted people to ask if their claims would be denied because of the color of their skin,” and how a bot could “decide they looked like they were lying.” Lemonade later deleted the tweets and apologized.

‘Plus-up’ stimulus payments

More than 7 million Americans are getting a “supplemental” check in addition to their third stimulus payment, said Rocky Mengle in *Kiplinger.com*. The Internal Revenue Service is issuing so-called plus-up payments to people who received less in their third stimulus check based on their 2019 returns than they “would

have gotten if the IRS had based it on their 2020 returns.” Plus-up payments are being sent to people who reported less income in 2020 than in 2019, as well as others who have had life changes—such as a new baby—that would increase their payments. One warning for those who got an extension on their taxes: Your 2020 return must be filed *and* processed by the IRS before Aug. 16, 2021, if you want to get a plus-up payment—so don’t wait until the October late-filing deadline.

Trump appointees get tax bill

Some of former President Donald Trump’s political appointees have been “ordered to repay months of payroll taxes,” said Brian Faler and Daniel Lippman in *Politico.com*, levies that Trump “had assured them would later be forgiven.” Last fall, Trump issued an executive order “allowing employers to put off paying their workers’ share of the 12.4 percent Social Security tax.” Most private-sector employers rejected the initiative, but it was mandatory for federal employees making less than \$4,000 per biweekly paycheck. Ultimately, those taxes were not forgiven. Most federal workers have a year to repay, but those who have left the government—including political appointees—are stuck with bills that have to be paid now.

Charity of the week

SIGN Fracture Care (signfracturecare.org) helps medical practitioners around the world



treat fractures using tools and training designed for hospitals with limited resources and access to real-time X-ray machines. In low- and middle-income countries, a fracture can be devastating to a worker’s economic prospects, and many hospitals aren’t equipped to give safe treatment that will help patients heal quickly. SIGN’s instruments and implants are as effective as tools used in the United States, and with the SIGN surgery a fracture victim can typically walk the next day, leave the hospital within one week, and return to work in a month. Since its inception, SIGN has worked with hundreds of hospitals across 54 countries and has helped change the lives of more than 350,000 patients.

Each charity we feature has earned a four-star overall rating from Charity Navigator, which rates not-for-profit organizations on the strength of their finances, their governance practices, and the transparency of their operations. Four stars is the group’s highest rating.

Oil: Activists get a seat at Exxon's boardroom table

A historically bad day for Big Oil could turn into a “watershed moment” in the climate crisis, said **Sam Meredith** in *CNBC.com*. A stunning “confluence of events” last week saw a string of boardroom and courtroom defeats for three oil giants within hours of each other. The first came when a tiny activist hedge fund that has been pushing ExxonMobil to pivot away from fossil fuels managed to unseat at least two board members of the company. The long-shot victory for Engine No. 1, which holds just a 0.02 percent stake in Exxon, was not the only sign of the “waning patience of investors pushing for much faster action” on climate change. Shareholders of Chevron also voted overwhelmingly to “push the company to reduce its carbon footprint.” The same day, “a Dutch court ruled that Shell must reduce its carbon emissions by 45 percent by 2030.” This is “the first time in history a company has been legally obliged to align its policies with the Paris Agreement.”



What comes after Engine No. 1's victory?

The Exxon vote was a “bombshell,” said *The Economist*. It is “extremely rare for a company the size of ExxonMobil to elect even one dissident director, let alone two or three.” But Engine No. 1's campaign succeeded, thanks to the backing of BlackRock, the asset management giant that holds 6.6 percent of Exxon's shares, as well as four large pension funds representing workers in California and New York. Shell's loss requires it to take “measurable, concrete steps toward decarbonization,” said **Gernot Wagner** in *Bloomberg.com*. For Exxon, by contrast, “what comes next is more open-ended.” The difficulty here is

figuring out what the next steps will be for a company whose core competency is “handling liquid fuel.” It's up to the climate activists to translate their victory into policies and “find a new role for Exxon in a carbon-constrained world.” This wasn't the Waterloo for fossil fuels that the Left claims it is, said *The Wall Street Journal* in an editorial. “Engine No. 1 saw an opening with the pandemic and took it.” Its main backer, BlackRock, is “trying to get in the good graces of the anti-fossil fuel crowd who run Washington.” In effect, this “was a progressive political coup.” Worldwide, climate activists prefer “corporatist stitch-ups” to the ballot box, said **Andrew Stuttaford** in *National Review.com*. One survey found that 35 percent of U.K. residents would not spend even \$1 a month to “mitigate climate change.” Meanwhile, the British government is weighing a ban on gas boilers that would cost 8 million homeowners around \$28,000 each.

The tension between reducing emissions and lifting profits is impossible to ignore, said **Peter Eavis** and **Clifford Krauss** in *The New York Times*. Getting Exxon “to switch to cleaner energy will be a yearslong effort.” The question is how long the big investment firms will be willing to “keep the pressure on.” Investors haven't always rewarded companies for their climate actions. Exxon's shares have fallen by about a third in the past five years—but Exxon has still done considerably better than BP and Shell, two European companies that are investing a lot in cleaner sources of energy.

A tool kit for the extortion professional

Joshua Yaffa
The New Yorker

There's a new cloud-based enterprise that's taking Silicon Valley's business ideas and applying them to crime, said Joshua Yaffa. Call it “ransomware as a service.” That's essentially the pitch from DarkSide, the world's most high-profile hacking group. Surprisingly, DarkSide doesn't actually carry out cyberattacks; its business is providing “affiliated hackers with a range of services, from handling negotiations to processing payments.” When DarkSide debuted on Russian-language cybercrime forums, it promoted its offerings as tech entrepreneurs do—complete with a sliding fee scale. In the Colonial Pipeline system breach, DarkSide managed

the parts requiring social skill, such as determining the ransom value, communicating with the victim, and arranging the payment. It's a perfect business model for a country like Russia, which has loads of young people trained in computer science and mathematics “but few outlets to realize those talents.” And Russia, which is nonchalant about hacking and turns a blind eye to attacks against foreign targets, has largely given DarkSide free rein to ply its trade. DarkSide's site went down on May 14, possibly as a result of U.S. retaliation. But you can count on it “to regroup and rebrand as a new product—a very tech-world sort of recovery from a public flameout.”

Who does the DEI industry really help?

Bridget Read
New York magazine

If you work in an office, chances are you've taken a diversity-related training course in the past year, said Bridget Read. After the murder of George Floyd last May, diversity consultants who had been jobless days earlier were receiving calls from CEOs “looking to spend tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars publicly and fast.” Since then the “amorphous industry of diversity consulting” has exploded. Practitioners of DEI, which stands for diversity, equity, and inclusion, may generally share a worldview that “workplaces can become more humane and just.” However, they are also “rivals in a for-profit industry,” with the same incentives as marketers and salespeople. A

popular trend at Fortune 500 companies is requiring employees to take “unconscious-bias training,” a generalized lesson in how bias can affect behavior. Many long-time DEI practitioners don't offer it, because “they suspect it doesn't really work.” But it's profitable for those who do. Some firms have stretched into new lines of business. One consultant pitches psychedelics to CEOs as an easier way to “open their minds to accelerated change.” There is now DEI.AI, which reads emails for sensitivity, and DEI virtual reality. As more money pours in, “the products and services for sale are becoming ever more abstracted away from actual workers in pain.”

The illustrator who hatched a hungry caterpillar

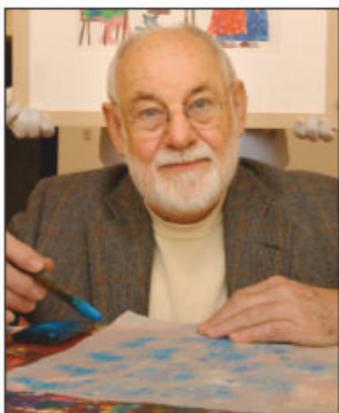
Eric Carle

1929–2021

Eric Carle's masterpiece, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, is deceptively simple. The

beloved 16-page children's book tells the story of a seemingly insatiable bug that munches its way through one apple, two pears, three plums, four strawberries, five oranges, and a series of treats including an ice cream cone, a lollipop, and a cupcake. After suffering a bout of indigestion, the now not-so-tiny caterpillar retreats into a cocoon and emerges as a magnificent butterfly. With its radiant collage illustrations—which Carle created by layering hand-painted tissue paper—and playful nibble holes punched in its pages, the book has delighted generations of kids, and since its 1969 publication has sold more than 55 million copies worldwide. “I think it is a book of hope,” said Carle, who wrote and illustrated some 70 children's books. “You, little insignificant caterpillar, can grow up into a beautiful butterfly and fly into the world with your talent.”

Carle was born in Syracuse, N.Y., to German immigrant parents, said *The Washington Post*. His father, a frustrated artist, instilled in his son “the love of nature that later infused his books.” His mother struggled with homesickness, and so when Carle was 6 years old, the family moved to her native Stuttgart.



The young Eric loathed his authoritarian school; the one joy was an enlightened teacher who secretly showed him the work of Nazi-designated “degenerate” artists such as Wassily Kandinsky and Henri Matisse. With the outbreak of World War II, “his father was drafted into the German army and soon became a prisoner of war in Russia,” said *The New York Times*. The teenage Carle was conscripted to dig trenches alongside the

river Rhine. When his father returned from a Soviet prison camp in 1947, he weighed only 85 pounds and was, Carle recalled, “a broken man.”

After studying graphic art in Stuttgart, Carle moved to New York City in 1952 and worked in advertising. “Serendipity played a role in kick-starting Carle's career in children's books,” said *Publisher's Weekly*. Author Bill Martin Jr. admired one of Carle's advertising illustrations—“depicting a big red lobster”—in a doctor's waiting room and hired him to illustrate 1967's *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* Carle experimented with many inventive design elements in his books—the holes in *Caterpillar*, a flickering light in 1995's *The Very Lonely Firefly*—but his use of colorful collage remained a constant. “Some children have said to me, ‘Oh, I can do that,’” Carle said of his illustrations. “I consider that the highest compliment.”

The Mary Tyler Moore actor who captained *The Love Boat*

Gavin MacLeod

1931–2021

When Gavin MacLeod was invited to audition for the pilot of *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* in 1970, he was almost 40 and still looking for his breakout role after some 15 years of taking bit parts

on stage, film, and TV. The audition was for the role of Lou Grant, the growly TV newsroom boss of Moore's Mary Richards, but MacLeod asked instead if he could read for the wise-cracking news writer Murray Slaughter, who always seemed to be in the grip of a midlife crisis. He got the job, becoming part of one of the most celebrated sitcoms in TV history. “Murray represented all the brown baggers,” said MacLeod, “Not just in newsrooms, but in all sorts of professions. People felt they knew me.”

He was born in Mount Kisco, N.Y., to a hardworking mother and an alcoholic father “who died of cancer when MacLeod was 13,” said *The Hollywood Reporter*. Having gone bald at 18, MacLeod initially struggled to win parts as a young actor. But with a second-hand toupee—he couldn't afford a new one—and some luck, he found a niche playing drug pushers, thugs, and malevolent cops in TV series such as *Peter Gunn* and *Hawaii Five-O*.

When *Mary Tyler Moore* ended after seven seasons, MacLeod achieved “even bigger fame as the cheerful Capt. Stubing on *The Love Boat*,” said the Associated Press. Critics mauled the ABC comedy, about the adventures of a cruise ship's crew and passengers, as formulaic fare. But audiences lapped it up, and *The Love Boat* remained on air from 1977 to 1986. “I don't care if it reflects life or not,” MacLeod said. “I love happy endings. Life's so heavy these days that people want to escape.”

The GOP senator who had an independent streak

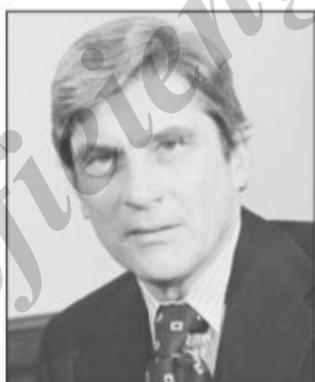
John Warner

1927–2021

When he arrived in the Senate in 1978, John Warner faced some harsh critics. They

said he'd ridden to wealth on the back of his first wife—banking heiress Catherine Mellon, who gave him an estimated \$7 million in their 1973 divorce—and won a Virginia Senate seat thanks to the star power of his second, actress Elizabeth Taylor. His chiseled good looks earned the Republican the title “the senator from central casting.” But over 30 years in the Senate, Warner earned bipartisan respect for his diligence, consensus building, military expertise, and willingness to buck his party. He supported gun control and legal abortion and angered many Republicans by opposing Oliver North's 1994 run for Virginia's second Senate seat, citing the former White House aide's role in the Iran-Contra scandal. “I sure risked my political future,” Warner said. “But I'd rather the voters of this state remember that I stood on my principle.”

Warner was born in Washington, D.C., to an obstetrician father and a homemaker mother, said *The Times* (U.K.). He left high school at age 17 “to enlist in the Navy for the final months” of World War II. As a law student at the University



of Virginia, he again interrupted his education to enroll in the Marine Corps during the Korean War. Warner finished his studies in 1953 and then worked as a U.S. attorney in Washington before joining a private law firm. By now married to Mellon, he gave “time and money” to Richard Nixon's 1968 presidential campaign, and “was rewarded with the job of undersecretary of the Navy.” Three years later he became Navy secretary.

When Warner ran for the Senate, “his principal claim to fame” was his marriage to Taylor, whom he'd met at a British embassy luncheon, said *The Washington Post*. On the campaign trail in Virginia, he played down his “taste for Savile Row suits, squash, and fox hunting” and presented himself as a “farmer and cattleman.” Warner, who separated from Taylor in 1981, won the election by 4,721 votes—“the closest Senate race in Virginia history.” He reached “the peak of his power” in 1999, when he became chairman of the Armed Services Committee, said *The New York Times*, and “evolved into a Republican force on military issues.” Citing advancing age, he announced his retirement in 2007. “How fortunate,” he said, “how blessed I have been.”

A year without rent

Eviction moratoriums have saved renters from homelessness in the pandemic, said journalist Eli Saslow in The Washington Post. But now small landlords, too, are desperately holding on to their livelihoods.

THE LANDLORD HAD highlighted the first of the month on his office calendar and marked it as “Pay Day,” but now the first had come and gone, the one-week grace period was ending, and for the 13th consecutive month, Romeo Budhoo had collected less than half of his total rent. “Time to try begging for it,” he said, and he grabbed his booklet of receipts and walked out to his car.

He drove through the low-income neighborhoods of Schenectady, N.Y., stopping at a half-dozen small homes that accounted for most of his income and all of his family’s savings. He cajoled \$75 in cash from a laid-off hairdresser who owed him more than \$7,000. “Thanks for at least trying to work with me,” he wrote on the rental receipt. He collected \$200 from a renter who was \$1,600 behind. “I’ll come back tomorrow,” Budhoo said, and then he continued up the street to his oldest property, a three-story home that had helped lift him into the middle class and was now sending him closer to bankruptcy.

Budhoo parked in front and flipped through his receipts. The tenant owed more than \$12,000, and on the porch Budhoo saw a pile of warnings and eviction notices dating back almost a year.

“No more grace periods,” read one from last fall. “Pay now or leave.”

In the Covid economy of 2021, the federal government has created an ongoing grace period for renters until at least July, banning all evictions in an effort to hold back a historic housing crisis that is already underway. More than 8 million rental properties across the country are behind on payments by an average of \$5,600, according to census data. Nearly half of those rental properties are owned not by banks or big corporations but instead by what the government classifies as “small landlords”—and a third of small landlords are at risk of bankruptcy or foreclosure as the pandemic continues into its second year.

For Budhoo, the essence of his problems came down to one house: 1042 Cutler St., a three-story square box built in 1901, with faded green siding and fresh graffiti spray-painted on the windows. The house



Budhoo: ‘It’s a disaster, but what can we do?’

had been sold four times out of foreclosure, condemned by the city, and scheduled for demolition when Budhoo first saw it after immigrating to New York from Guyana in the early 2000s. He’d worked at a nearby pick-and-pack warehouse for \$8 an hour and saved up a small down payment toward a \$79,000 purchase price. He’d rewired the electricity, gutted the plumbing, installed granite countertops, and begun renting it out for up to \$950 per month. Gradually those profits had paid for more distressed properties, for his daughter’s college degree, and for a small home of his own where her diploma now hung above the entryway. He’d spent two decades growing his business on the first of each month until the pandemic hit upstate New York.

“Just a friendly reminder,” he’d written to the tenant, after the first missed payment in April 2020. “Good morning! Are you able to pay rent?” he’d written after the second month. “Please. I am willing to work with you,” he wrote after the government announced its first national eviction moratorium in September. “Really? You’re still not going to pay ANYTHING?” he

wrote after he read about the billions of government dollars being spent in rental assistance, for which his tenant never applied.

Now it had been a full year without payment, and Budhoo had maxed his credit cards, applied for a secondary loan on his 2015 Mercedes-Benz, defaulted on \$13,000 in property taxes, and started taking medication for panic attacks and stomach ulcers. “Final collection notice,” read one of the bills that had been delivered to his own front door, and he’d begun mowing people’s lawns and selling eggplants out of his garden to neighbors for a couple dollars each.

“This is robbery,” Budhoo had written. “What you’re doing now is stealing from me.” He got out of the car and walked around the outside of the house. He didn’t dare to knock, because the tenant had accused him of harassment and police had warned him about tenants’ rights and trespassing on his own property.

The yard was littered with a few empty cigarette packs, wrappers, and beer cans. Budhoo kicked a beer can

across the yard but then walked over to pick it up. Even if he no longer had control over his properties, he was still legally responsible for their upkeep, and he’d been fined four times for his tenants’ trash violations. He took a trash bag out of his car and started cleaning up the yard.

ALFRONZO HILL WATCHED from inside the house until the landlord walked back to his car. “Yeah, like you need my money,” Hill said after he watched the landlord drive his Mercedes up the block, and then he came outside, lit a cigarette, and sat on the porch.

He resented many things about life at 1042 Cutler: the 2-foot hole in the bathroom ceiling, the lingering smell of the previous tenants’ dogs, the toilet that flushed only after he poured in a bucket of water. The broken furnace that had left the house so cold that the city had condemned it as unlivable. But what bothered him most was always having to repeat the same humiliations to the landlord about why he hadn’t paid, couldn’t pay, didn’t have any money to pay.

“Look, I don’t want to be living here, either,” Hill had told Budhoo at one point,

but he also believed the pandemic had given him no choice. He'd been paying rent on time for several months before the pandemic, living at 1042 Cutler with his 13-year-old daughter and his girlfriend and cooking at a Brick House Tavern for \$700 a week until New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo banned indoor dining, on March 16, 2020. Hill had lost his job the next day, and then, a few months later, he'd lost his girlfriend after arguments about the bills they couldn't pay.

Now he was 38, unemployed, broke, and living alone with his daughter and her two guinea pigs. She was attending sixth grade virtually in their living room, but Hill believed the best way to educate a child during a pandemic was to prepare her for reality by teaching her some hard truths. Life wasn't a Disney movie, he told her. They were down to less than a few hundred dollars in savings. The pandemic was far from over. They were more likely to get Covid-19 and more likely to die of it because they were poor and Black. And now the harsh reality he told her about the landlord was this:

"He's basically the exterminator and we're the rats. Do you understand that?"

"Kind of," she said. "I guess so."

"What I'm saying is he wants to get rid of us. It doesn't matter what we're dealing with. We're not human to him. We're money. It's all a big game."

So Hill had taught himself the rules, researching on the internet about tenant rights, rent strikes in New York, and the eviction moratorium. He listened during the presidential campaign as Joe Biden said, "There should be rent forgiveness... Not paid later—forgiveness." And so when Hill finally received some small unemployment payments and a four-figure stimulus check from the government, he used the money to fix the engine in his broken-down minivan, buy a little extra food, purchase some basic furniture, pay down his credit card, and surprise his daughter with a decent laptop for her virtual classes, because why would he spend what little money he had on rent that he didn't actually have to pay?

A FEW DAYS later, Budhoo got an invitation from another small landlord. "Going broke? It's time for landlords to unite," the message read, and a few hours later, Budhoo was sitting in a small office with 15 other property owners.

He knew everyone in the room, and their stories were similar to his: Most of them were immigrants who had arrived in Schenectady at its lowest point in the early 2000s, after it had lost half of its manu-

facturing jobs and a third of its population. The city at that time was blighted by thousands of vacant homes, and instead of spending \$18,000 to demolish each one, the mayor had come up with a plan to go to New York City and recruit Guyanese immigrants who had built a reputation for fixing up derelict property. The mayor handed out his cellphone number and offered to sell houses for as little as \$1, and more than 5,000 Guyanese began to move. They bought cheap homes, rehabbed them, rented them out, and then started paying property taxes that helped revive the city.



Hill: For landlords, 'we're not human.'

Now those same landlords were operating at a loss, and the city was trying to survive its own pandemic budget crisis by increasing their trash fees and raising property taxes for the first time in five years. "It's a disaster, but what can we do?" Budhoo said, and the other landlords started talking about how they dealt with delinquent tenants. Some were trading cash for keys, offering to pay delinquent tenants more than \$500 in cash and forgive all overdue rent if the tenant agreed to move out. Some were cutting off their own heat or vandalizing their houses, hoping to make them so uninhabitable that tenants would leave.

Then one of the landlords started to tell the story of what he called an "involuntary eviction" that had happened a few weeks earlier in Albany, where a landlord had become incensed after trying and failing to evict his tenants for months. The landlord broke into his own apartment early on a Sunday morning, held the tenants at gunpoint, restrained them with zip ties, hauled them out of his apartment, and deposited them at a cemetery 30 miles from the property.

"When you kick a dog, eventually it's going to bite," one of the landlords said. "That guy's a hero," said another.

"It's not a real solution," Budhoo said. The

only immediate solution Budhoo could think of was also the most unlikely, to collect the rent, so one morning he drove back to 1042 Cutler to try again. He parked his car and watched the front door. He sent a text message to his wife: "Nothing yet." He listened to music and played a game on his phone until he'd been sitting in the car for almost half an hour. "Pathetic," he said. "More time wasted, wasted, wasted." He couldn't go inside the house. He couldn't demand rent. He couldn't kick the tenant out. He couldn't do much of anything but sit and wait and hope, until eventually out the windshield he noticed something happening a few blocks down the street.

A woman was throwing clothing out of a house and onto the lawn. She carried a chair down the front stairs and put it on the sidewalk. It looked to Budhoo like an eviction, so he drove closer, parked, and walked up to the house.

"Are you the landlord?" he asked the woman, and she nodded. "Wow. Congratulations," he said, gesturing at the trash piled up on the sidewalk. "I've been trying to get one of my houses back for more than a year. How'd you do it?"

"It's not what you think," the landlord said. "I didn't evict. They just left."

"Yeah, come on," Budhoo said.

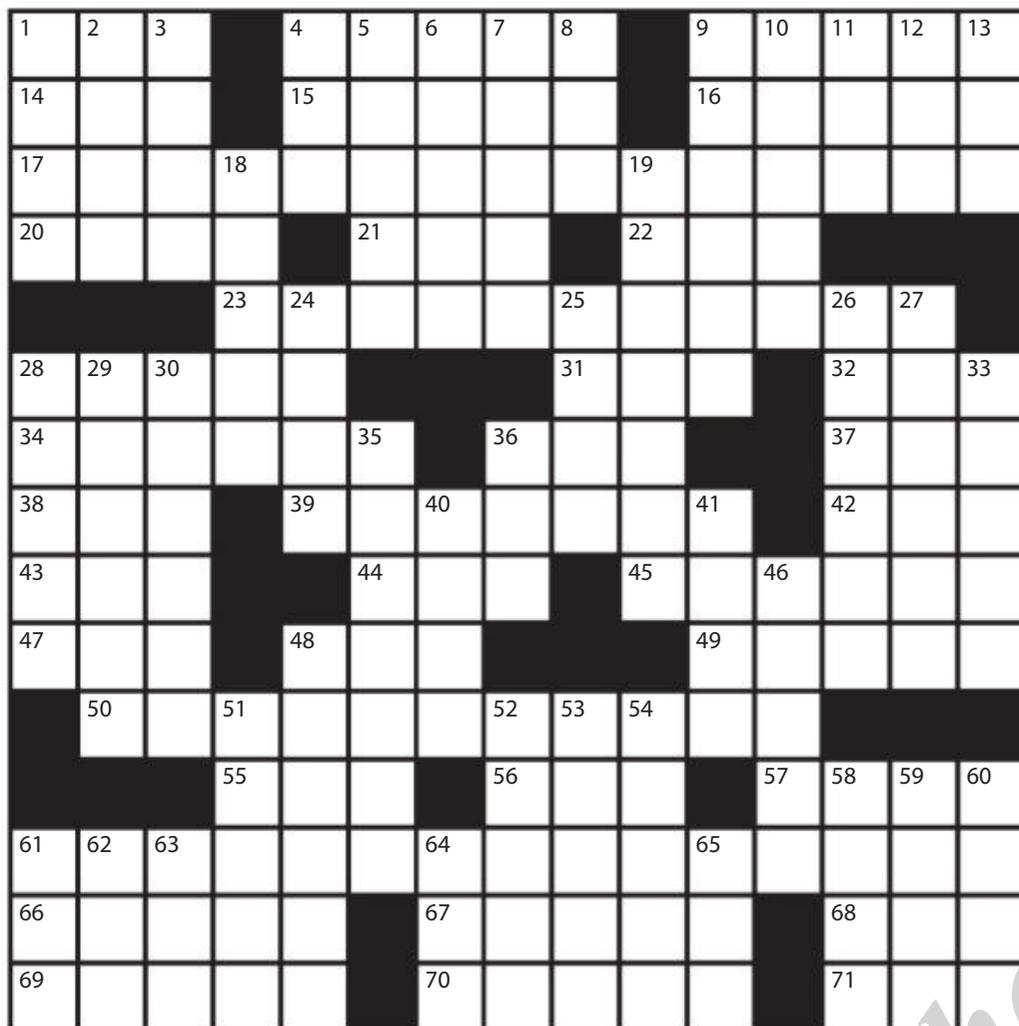
She laughed and then began to tell him about the ways she'd dealt with derelict tenants in the past year—how she applied pressure through eviction paperwork, stopped making repairs, filed suit in small claims court, and threatened to garnish wages until a few tenants chose to vacate on their own. "I like to be reasonable, but eventually it's either my house or theirs," she said, and this is what victory looked like: an empty house, a family that had disappeared overnight, 28 garbage bags piled high on the sidewalk, an overturned dresser with initials carved into its side, a child's mattress soaked through by rain, and thousands of grains of rice scattered across the street.

"I've been lucky," she said. "I only rent to good people, and most have paid. It seems like every other landlord is going under, but I'm actually trying to invest. I'm looking to buy."

Budhoo helped her pick up trash bags and then tossed them into an industrial dumpster. "I might have an opportunity for you," he said, already feeling defeated by what he was about to suggest. "You know 1042 Cutler? It's a good house. I can give you a good price."

A version of this story originally appeared in The Washington Post. Used with permission.

Crossword No. 603: Finally Off the Island by Matt Gaffney



The Week Contest

This week's question: Having spent 17 years growing underground, trillions of cicadas are starting to hatch across the East Coast and Midwest. The members of Brood X will spend four to six weeks chirping and mating before dying in droves. If Disney were to make an animated movie about a cicada's brief and noisy hunt for love, what rated-PG title could it have?

Last week's contest: A Ukrainian couple has spent 100 days chained at the wrist after going through a rocky patch in which they broke up every week, and they have pledged to remain bound until they're wed. If the couple were to write a relationships book on the joys and struggles of being handcuffed to your loved one, what should it be titled?

THE WINNER: "Happily Tethered After"
Rebecca Burgan, Petaluma, Calif.

SECOND PLACE: "Stand by Your Man-acle"
William Montgomery, Lookout Mountain, Tenn.

THIRD PLACE: "Terms of Entrapment"
Jon Longacre, Wooster, Ohio

For runners-up and complete contest rules, please go to theweek.com/contest.

How to enter: Submissions should be emailed to contest@theweek.com. Please include your name, address, and daytime telephone number for verification; this week, type "Love bug" in the subject line. Entries are due by noon, Eastern Time, Tuesday, June 8. Winners will appear on the Puzzle Page next issue and at theweek.com/puzzles on Friday, June 11. In the case of identical or similar entries, the first one received gets credit.



◀ **The winner gets a one-year subscription to *The Week*.**

ACROSS

- 1 Gift box feature
- 4 "Fire and Ice" poet, 1920
- 9 Unnecessary conflict and hassle
- 14 Dec. 24 or 31, e.g.
- 15 *Inferno* poet
- 16 Harold who directed *Groundhog Day*
- 17 For the first time in 3,000 years, a litter of these creatures was born last month in mainland Australia, rather than on the island for which they're named
- 20 Voice below soprano
- 21 Whippet or Weimaraner, e.g.
- 22 Lamb deliverer
- 23 Classic Warner Bros. series that starred a 17-Across named "Taz"
- 28 Shut-eye
- 31 Alley- ___ (play with a pass)
- 32 ___ Brunswick (Canadian province)
- 34 Speculators flip them
- 36 College address ending
- 37 "My good man"
- 38 "Is there something more?"
- 39 17-Across have been found in this Aboriginal medium going back several millennia
- 42 *Raid on Entebbe* weapon
- 43 Huge cat only seen at night
- 44 Abbr. on a receipt

- 45 Buffalo's NHL team
- 47 Blow it
- 48 Auditing org.
- 49 Maker of Star Wars Bubblegum Toothpaste
- 50 This American institution was one of the first to receive 17-Across in 2013 as "insurance populations" against extinction
- 55 12,000,000,000-month period
- 56 *Midsommar* director ___ Aster
- 57 Very, to be dramatic about it
- 61 Like koalas, skunks, and platypuses, 17-Across are this type of creature
- 66 Tierra del ___ (South American island)
- 67 Tim, Debbie, or Steve
- 68 "You're hilarious!"
- 69 Prefix meaning "correct"
- 70 Actress Thompson of *Selma*
- 71 Tango requirement

DOWN

- 1 Early software version
- 2 Shape of a tennis racket's head
- 3 Toward the sunset
- 4 Pesticide-banning org.
- 5 Stranger who creepily tries to interact with you
- 6 Hibachi veggie
- 7 Theater feature
- 8 Royal flush card
- 9 Wrote, as a contract
- 10 Baltimore punter or linebacker
- 11 Paris pal
- 12 "Cool" amount of money
- 13 Fool
- 18 Long-term spies
- 19 Some are scenic
- 24 Oil group, for short
- 25 Movie character who lived to be about 900 years old
- 26 Leave no doubt about
- 27 Takes by force
- 28 Rock that flakes
- 29 No social butterflies
- 30 *Optimist's Daughter* novelist Welty
- 33 Body part often sprained
- 35 Teenage witch of TV
- 36 Fish often smoked
- 40 Carnation container
- 41 Food that may be soft
- 46 *Wizard of Oz* prop
- 48 "Same with me!"
- 51 Disagreement from a horse?
- 52 King of the news
- 53 Paperless exams
- 54 Mags
- 58 Command to stop
- 59 Vague road sign
- 60 City that's about an hour's drive from the Swedish border
- 61 Airport west-southwest of SLC
- 62 "We'll do ___ best"
- 63 Be a landlord
- 64 Plague carrier
- 65 ___ rush (low on time)

Sudoku

Fill in all the boxes so that each row, column, and outlined square includes all the numbers from 1 through 9.

Difficulty: medium

		4	7	3	1	6		
		9				7		
		5				2		
		3	9	7	8	1		
	2						4	
		7				5		
1			2		5			8
	7			1			6	
		8				4		

Find the solutions to all *The Week's* puzzles online: www.theweek.com/puzzle.

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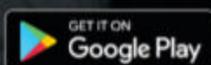
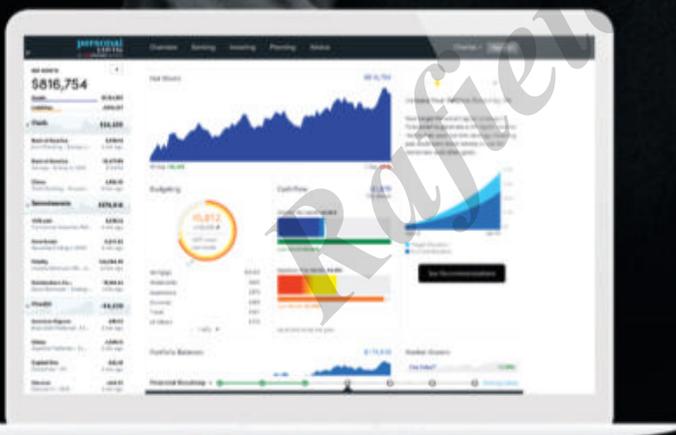
–Deepak Chopra™, MD
Founder, Chopra Global

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