

**INTERNATIONAL**  
**NAVALNY'S**  
**RUSSIAN**  
**UPRISING**  
p.15



**TALKING POINTS**  
What do  
QAnon fans  
believe now?  
p.16



**BOOKS**  
How a poet  
became  
a superstar  
p.23



# THE WEEK

THE BEST OF THE U.S. AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA

## Meet in the middle?

Why Biden's call for 'unity' may go nowhere

Pages 4, 16, 17



FEBRUARY 5, 2021 VOLUME 21 ISSUE 1012

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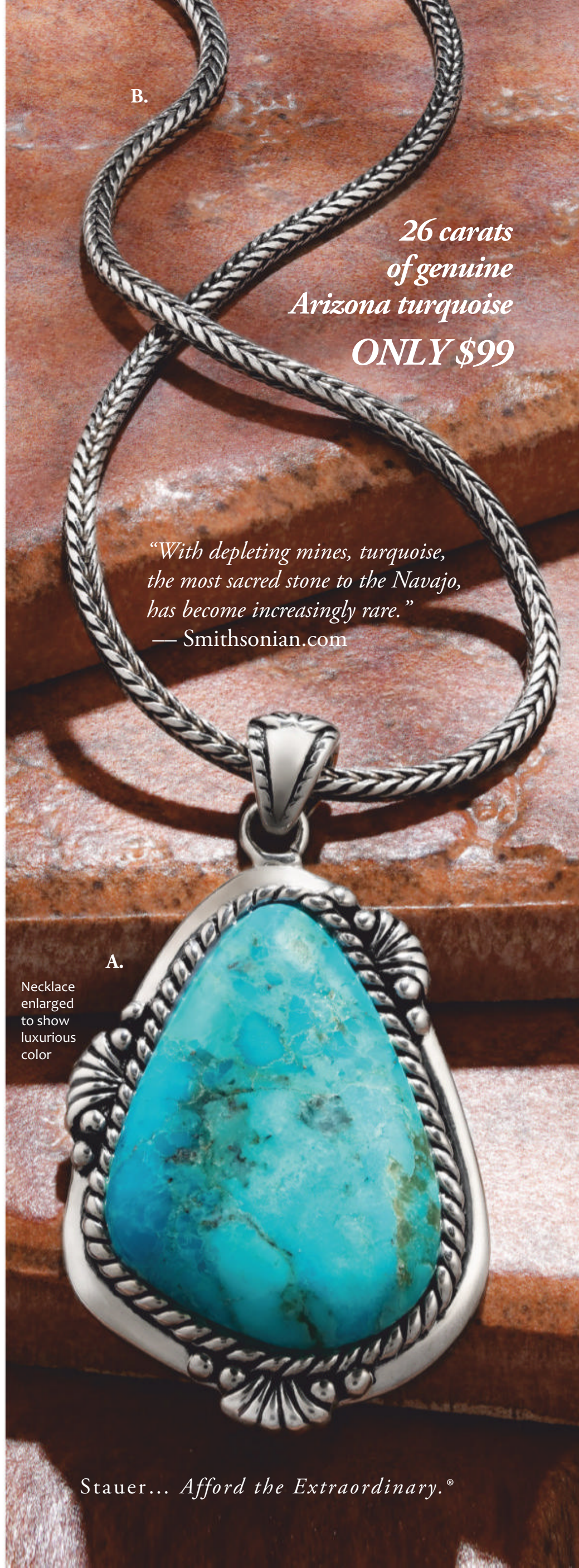
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## Editor's letter

It's rare that a news week hands over an example of courage as admirable as that of Alexei Navalny. Poisoned in the summer by a Russian nerve agent—a favorite and increasingly brazen tool of Vladimir Putin's state—Navalny barely survived that assassination attempt after treatment in Germany. Then, last week, he returned to Russia, where he was immediately arrested, as he knew he would be. So, too, were more than 3,000 other Russians, who came out to support him in the bitter cold, knowing what the outcome would be (see Best Columns: International). Incredibly, the day after his arrest, Navalny's foundation released an investigation into Putin's billion-dollar Black Sea palace, knowing that in Russia (as in other dictatorships), the leader's personal corruption is absolutely the most radioactive of all possible subjects. Navalny understands where this leads: Boris Nemtsov, once Russia's leading opposition politician, was gunned down on a Moscow street in 2015. Navalny is more than tempting fate. He is defying it.

In *The New York Times* this week, Bret Stephens called for the U.S. to put support for dissidents such as Navalny and Hong Kong's Joshua Wong at the center of American foreign policy (see Best Columns: U.S.). As a Russian immigrant who marched as a child for the release of Soviet-era dissidents, I support that wholeheartedly and viscerally. Yet I worry about how at the moment autocrats are gloating over the scenes at the Capitol, happily telling their citizens, "See, now Washington has its own 'color revolution.'" Authoritarians have peddled this kind of false equivalence for years, but a democratic crisis at home and several years of cozying up to dictators abroad make it harder for the U.S. to brush it off. Our credibility has been tarnished, and we need to clearly align ourselves with democrats around the globe to restore it. Dissidents worldwide have long looked to the United States for inspiration. Now we must look to them.

**Mark Gimein**  
Managing editor

### NEWS

- 4 Main stories**  
Doubts over President Biden's push for "unity"; the new administration's plan to boost vaccine production
- 6 Controversy of the week**  
Will Trumpism triumph in the GOP's civil war?
- 7 The U.S. at a glance**  
Biden's first phone call with Vladimir Putin; Rudy Giuliani hit with \$1.3 billion lawsuit
- 8 The world at a glance**  
Mexico's president catches Covid-19; "Asia's El Chapo" arrested
- 10 People**  
Dua Lipa's life as a refugee; a property mogul's "interdimensional" quest
- 11 Briefing**  
What Britain has gained and lost from Brexit
- 12 Best U.S. columns**  
Fix social media by ending anonymity; why we must champion foreign dissidents
- 15 Best international columns**  
Mass protests in Russia after opposition leader Alexei Navalny arrested
- 16 Talking points**  
QAnon's disappointed devotees; Biden's executive order on LGBTQ rights; is it time to scrap the filibuster?



Police clash with Navalny supporters in St. Petersburg, Russia. (p.15)

### ARTS

- 22 Books**  
How work came to take over our lives
- 23 Author of the week**  
Amanda Gorman on becoming a superstar poet
- 24 Art & Music**  
Painter Salman Toor's explorations of identity
- 25 Film & Home Media**  
Divine devilry in the horror movie *Saint Maud*



Dua Lipa (p.10)

### LEISURE

- 27 Food & Drink**  
How to make egg foo yung at home; a Michelin-starred vegan chef
- 28 Coping**  
What Covid vaccines mean for travel in 2021; why you should be double masking

### BUSINESS

- 32 News at a glance**  
The nonsensical GameStop stock surge; a new climate goal from BlackRock boss
- 33 Making money**  
What Biden's tax plans mean for your finances; the rising cost of fitness apps
- 34 Best columns**  
Real U.S.-China tensions at virtual Davos; Miami lures the tech bros

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## A bipartisan battle over ‘unity’

### What happened

President Joe Biden’s aggressive pursuit of a progressive agenda sparked growing opposition from Republicans this week, as both conservatives and liberals accused each other of souring any chance for “unity.” Biden came out swinging with an unprecedented flurry of executive orders and actions, signing more than three dozen in his first seven days. Many were aimed at overturning Donald Trump’s policies on the environment and immigration, including orders that ceased border wall construction, rejoined the Paris climate accord, and revoked the Keystone XL pipeline permit. Others focused on social justice and delivering aid to the needy, including measures to expand food assistance and extend legal protections for transgender people. Biden’s ambitious agenda—including a proposed immigration bill that would offer millions of undocumented residents a pathway to legal status and citizenship—drew fire from Republicans, who said its sharp progressive bent belied the president’s plea for bipartisan unity. “He may use the language, the rhetoric, even the demeanor of a centrist,” said Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), “but so far his policies don’t seem to represent that.”

Republican opposition hardened against Biden’s \$1.9 trillion coronavirus rescue/stimulus plan, which the president has cast as crucial aid for suffering Americans and an economy hammered by the pandemic. Many GOP lawmakers called the bill too big. They targeted a provision to send \$1,400 stimulus checks to most Americans, which Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell said would “direct huge sums” toward many people who are still working.

Biden expressed willingness to negotiate, including on the stimulus checks. But he faced pressure from some Democrats to push the bill through the 50-50 Senate without Republican support, even if it means using a process called budget reconciliation. “It’s important that Democrats deliver for America,” said Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts. “If Republicans want to cut back to the point that we’re not delivering what needs to be done, then we need to be prepared to fight them.”

### What the editorials said

“No, President Biden has not already renounced ‘unity,’” said *The Washington Post*. Biden is exercising “the usual powers of the presidency” by advancing policies he campaigned on, including climate change, immigration reform, and LGBTQ rights—all of which enjoy broad popular support. If Republicans want a voice in these policies, they should engage “in good-faith negotiation.” Their demands for centrism are “cynical and self-serving,” especially after they spent four years enabling a president “who at every turn sought to divide the country for political gain.”



Biden: A flurry of dozens of executive orders

Biden seems to think Americans should “unite” around “one point of view,” said *The Wall Street Journal*. The words in his inaugural address that seemed to cast his political opponents as “racists and nativists” brought to mind the condescending way Barack Obama cast ideological differences “as divisions between enlightenment and bigotry.” If Biden’s vision of social justice means blaming “every inequity in American life on racism,” and he casts climate change dissenters as “deniers” who are happy to destroy the planet, “he will alienate millions.”

### What the columnists said

“Democrats worked long and hard to gain power,” said Eugene Robinson in *The Washington Post*, and they should use it “with determination and without fear.” Republicans’ “laughable” idea of unity is to steer clear of anything they oppose. Negotiation over the details is fine, but citizens voted in record numbers to give Democrats a mandate to act decisively on climate change and the pandemic, and to rescue a broken economy that’s left the poor and working class facing “hunger and fear.”

Biden’s call to unity is “more fig leaf than honest invitation,” said Michael Goodwin in the *New York Post*. His blitzkrieg of overreaching executive actions—including “economically disastrous” environmental policies and an immigration bill that would flood the border with new migrants—make clear the only common ground he seeks is with his party’s far-left fringe.

Republican insistence that Biden meet them “in the middle” is a farce, said Tim Miller in *TheBulwark.com*. Consider Sen. John Cornyn’s complaint that by lifting Trump’s transgender ban in the military, Biden is being divisive. Polls show 71 percent of Americans opposed that pointless, mean-spirited ban, which the military also opposed. “How warped do you have to be to think that the ‘unifying’ political position is banning patriotic Americans from volunteering to serve their country?”

Biden faces a choice “between fighting for a bold agenda and forging bipartisan agreements,” said Sahil Kapur in *NBCNews.com*. For Republican leaders, “unity” means avoiding “actions that antagonize their base.” And there’s no way to reconcile that with “a progressive agenda that includes trillions of dollars in new investments and an overhaul of the country’s health-care and immigration systems.” Which way Biden goes “will carry high stakes,” not only for “the lives of millions of Americans,” but for the short-term future of Democrats, whose fragile hold on power will face the verdict of voters in the 2022 congressional elections.

### What next?

If Republicans try to block President Biden’s \$1.9 trillion relief bill, Democratic leaders will try to push it through without their support, said Lauren Fox in *CNN.com*. Majority Leader Chuck Schumer says the Senate “could move as soon as next week to pass a budget resolution,” the first step in writing a bill that under Senate rules can be passed with a simple majority—rather than a filibuster-proof 60 votes that would require buy-in from 10 Republicans. It would be “just the first step” in the technical process known as reconciliation, which requires crafting the bill’s language along specific guidelines and undergoing “a rigorous review process.” While it may ease passage, “reconciliation comes with its own headaches for Democrats,” said Jacob Pramuk in *CNBC.com*. The narrow reconciliation rules restrict what lawmakers can include, and a narrowing of eligibility for the \$1,400 checks may be needed “to avoid defections” among moderate Democrats.



# Biden aims to boost vaccine supply

## What happened

With states complaining of severe shortages of Covid-19 vaccines, President Biden announced plans this week to ramp up deliveries and to buy enough doses to vaccinate 300 million Americans by the end of summer. The shortfall “is unacceptable,” Biden said. “Lives are at stake.” For the next three weeks, he said, vaccine deliveries to states will increase by 16 percent to about 10 million a week. About 21 million Americans have received a shot so far. The administration is also utilizing a contract option to purchase 100 million more doses from both Pfizer and Moderna. Together, the firms had already committed to deliver 220 million doses by late March and another 180 million by July. The additional 200 million doses, which won’t be ready until summer, will raise the total supply to 600 million, meaning the U.S. will have two shots of Pfizer and Moderna vaccines for almost every American. Biden also increased the number of doses he hopes to deliver in his first 100 days in office, from 100 million to 150 million. “This is a wartime effort,” he said.

The U.S. is now averaging 167,000 new Covid cases a day, down 33 percent from two weeks ago. Deaths remain near peak levels, at about 3,000 a day, pushing the U.S. death toll above 425,000. Experts are worried that the limited progress the country has made in recent weeks could be erased as more contagious variants of the virus from the U.K. and South Africa start to take hold. Pfizer and Moderna reported that their vaccines are effective against the two strains but are slightly less protective against the South African variant. Both firms are now developing booster shots aimed at new variants.

## What the editorials said

Biden is cleaning up the logistical mess he inherited from the Trump administration, said *Bloomberg.com*. Tens of thousands of vaccine appointments have been canceled because states didn’t know week to week how many shots they’d be getting. To fix that, Biden has pledged to give governors delivery projections three weeks out. He also intends to order up syringes that can draw an extra one or two doses from vaccine vials, and is pushing “suppliers to shrink minimum shipment sizes so that rural hospitals aren’t left to discard surplus doses.”



Waiting for the Covid-19 vaccine in Paterson, N.J.

Getting shots to states is one thing, said *The Wall Street Journal*, getting them into arms is another entirely. North Dakota and West Virginia have administered about 85 percent of their vaccine supply, far better than California (45 percent) and most other states, because they “departed from overly prescriptive federal rules.” North Dakota chose to distribute vaccines to all health-care providers statewide, not simply to hospitals and public-health systems. West Virginia used 250 local pharmacies to vaccinate nursing-home residents, opting out of the federal program that has CVS and Walgreens doing the job “at a turtle’s pace.”

## What the columnists said

The vaccine rollout is exacerbating “built-in inequities” across the U.S., said Michael Hiltzik in the *Los Angeles Times*. My wife and I got shots recently, after I signed up online at the moment registrations opened, completed a complex form, and drove 20 minutes to Disneyland’s mass-vaccination site. Had I lacked the time, internet access, or savvy, “I’d still be waiting, like millions of Californians.”

Biden must aim “stronger, higher, faster—now,” said Megan McArdle in *The Washington Post*. His revised target of 150 million doses in 100 days is pitifully low when you realize the U.S. is already averaging 1.25 million shots a day. Much more must be done if we’re going to neutralize the threat posed by the new variants. The U.K. strain, now identified in 20 states, is potentially deadlier than first thought, and research suggests the South African strain “might be able to reinfect people who have already had Covid-19.”

The president can do only so much, said Liz Szabo in *The Daily Beast.com*. Vaccines are not “widgets” that can be quickly churned out. They’re produced by highly trained scientists and engineers in finely tuned factories; speed up the process and you’ll jeopardize safety. Our best hope to meet demand is for new vaccines to be approved: Johnson & Johnson is expected to apply for emergency authorization for its one-shot vaccine in February and is aiming to produce 100 million doses by June. As hard as it is, getting every American vaccinated “will require patience.”

## It wasn’t all bad

■ While Sgt. Jacob Kohut was working 12-hour shifts in the U.S. Capitol to protect it from further attacks, he also carried out another important role: teaching music classes via Zoom. Each morning, the National Guardsman continued to teach band classes to kids at two Virginia schools from inside a military truck. The pandemic has been hard on his students, so Kohut insisted on reliably being available for them. “If I can be there for the kids even though I’m down here,” Kohut said, “that’s what I’m going to do.”

■ Robbie Pruitt’s mountain bike was stolen last September, leaving him angry at the unknown thief and searching among limited pandemic options for a replacement at his local bike store. That’s when it occurred to the Virginia pastor that his bike may have been stolen by someone who



Good will comes around.

truly needed transportation. So Pruitt put out a call on Facebook asking for broken and unwanted bicycles he could fix and donate to those in need. By the end of last year, he had repaired 140 bikes. “The feeling you get when somebody rides off with a bike that didn’t have one,” Pruitt said, “there’s a lot of gratification.”

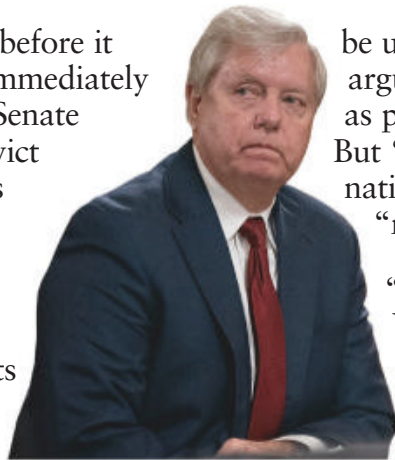
■ After high school student Jayden Sutton, 18, finished classes, he would walk 7 miles to work and do a six- to eight-hour shift. The lack of transportation often meant Sutton got home near midnight. During one of his walks, Lavonda Wright was driving by with her son, a classmate of Sutton, and saw him by the side of the road. Wright offered Sutton a ride and learned on the way that Sutton’s mother had lost her job and her car had been totaled. Wright quickly raised \$7,000 to buy him a new car. “Making a difference in this world,” Wright said, “is truly needed right now!”



## Impeachment: GOP circles the wagons around Trump

The much-anticipated “Republican civil war is over before it even began,” said Jonathan Chait in *NYMag.com*. Immediately after the Jan. 6 Capitol riot, it seemed possible that Senate Republicans would join Democrats in voting to convict Donald Trump of “incitement of insurrection” at his second impeachment trial. Even loyalists like Sens. Lindsey Graham and Mitch McConnell expressed their disgust with the outgoing president after he whipped a MAGA mob into a frenzy. “Count me out, enough is enough,” Graham said after Trumpists and white-supremacist groups rampaged through the Capitol, killing a police officer as they hunted for Vice President Mike Pence and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. But after the damage and bloodstains were cleaned up, Trump’s iron grip on the GOP quickly returned. State Republican organizations rushed to censure the 10 House Republicans who voted to impeach—with Oregon’s GOP even claiming the Capitol riot was a “false flag” operation by unspecified “leftist forces”—and congressional Republicans quickly fell back into line. In the House, at least 107 GOP members are now calling for Rep. Liz Cheney, chair of the Republican caucus, to be demoted for having voted to impeach. In the Senate this week, 45 of the 50 GOP senators—including Graham—voted to dismiss the charges against Trump on the grounds that he’s already left office. The writing is on the wall, said Jim Newell in *Slate.com*. Once again, elected Republicans are “ready to let Trump off the hook.”

Republicans have the Constitution on their side, said Robert Delahunty and John Yoo in *NationalReview.com*. As the Framers wrote in Article II, impeachment is a tool for removing “the President, Vice President, and all civil Officers of the United States.” Donald Trump is now a private citizen roaming the fairways and greens of South Florida, and impeaching him would



Graham: Never mind

be unconstitutional. Democrats insist there are good legal arguments for impeaching an ex-president for his actions as president, said J.T. Young in *WashingtonExaminer.com*. But “the rest of America” sees no point in dragging the nation through another divisive impeachment trial just to “remove from office a man who is no longer in office.”

“Yes, ex-presidents can be impeached,” said *The Washington Post* in an editorial. This is the view of most constitutional scholars, and “common sense” backs them up. If Congress could only impeach sitting officials, “those officials could simply resign to escape any consequences.” In 1876, Secretary of War William Belknap resigned as impeachment loomed.

Congress impeached him anyway. The Senate not only can convict Trump, said Jessica Levinson in *NBCNews.com*, “it has a constitutional duty to do so.” If it’s not a violation of a president’s oath to ask a mob to stop Congress from certifying his opponent’s victory, what is? A conviction will enable the Senate to bar Trump from ever holding office again, and would send an essential message “to future authoritarian politicians.”

Republican senators might consider their “long-term interests” before giving Trump another pass, said Adam Serwer in *TheAtlantic.com*. Yes, the base still identifies with the disgraced ex-president, but Trumpism has already cost the GOP dearly. Does the party really want to double down on the cultlike extremism that filled the Capitol with rioters, and turned once-red “Arizona and Georgia into states with two Democratic senators?” Sadly, Republicans no longer have any shame, said Michael Gerson in *The Washington Post*. If they acquit Trump of his blatant assault on democracy, far-right violent extremists will be exultant, and “January 6!” will be strengthened as a radical rallying cry.”

### Only in America

■ Oklahoma is trying to return its \$2 million purchase of hydroxychloroquine and get a refund from the manufacturer. Republican Gov. Kevin Stitt ordered the purchase of the malaria drug in April, when President Trump was touting it as a “miracle” treatment for Covid-19. Studies have found the drug totally useless in treating Covid. Stitt’s spokeswoman said he made the purchase “with the health and lives of Oklahomans in mind.”

■ Makers of traditional Hawaiian “aloha shirts” are pushing back against their adoption by the “Boogaloo bois.” That far-right movement hopes to provoke a second U.S. civil war known as “the Boogaloo” or “the Big Luau,” which inspired followers to don Hawaiian shirts. Hawaiian shirt maker Dale Hope says the “bois” are desecrating a symbol of “love and compassion.”

### Good week for:

**A peaceful transition**, after President Biden decided to keep Donald Trump’s “Diet Coke button” on the Resolute Desk and use it for other purposes, perhaps to summon Orange Gatorade. Trump liked to push the button and tell guests it launched a nuclear strike; a butler would then bring a fresh Diet Coke on a silver platter.

**Fleeing the gullible**, after Oklahoma lawmaker Justin Humphrey proposed creating a Bigfoot hunting season as “a revenue creator,” complete with permits, fees, and a \$25,000 reward for anyone who manages to “trap a live Bigfoot.”

**Cancel culture**, after One America News Network deleted articles from its website claiming Dominion Voting Systems had rigged its voting machines to steal votes from President Trump. The deletions came after the company sued Rudy Giuliani for \$1.3 billion.

### Bad week for:

**Creative legal defenses**, after Houston police officer Tam Dinh Pham was charged with participating in the deadly Jan. 6 storming of the U.S. Capitol, despite his claim that he entered the building to take pictures of “historical art.”

**Mistaken identity**, after a middle-aged woman in Mexico stabbed her husband after finding photos of him having sex with a younger woman on his cellphone. The images were actually photos of the husband and wife from decades ago that he uploaded.

**Having no place to hide**, with the first confirmed case of Covid-19 in Hawaii’s Kalawao County—an isolated, tiny island (population: 70) formerly used as a leper colony. It had been the only U.S. county free from coronavirus infection.

### In other news

#### Senate confirms Biden’s State, Defense heads

The Senate confirmed President Biden’s choices to run the State and Defense departments, overwhelmingly approving Lloyd Austin as the nation’s first black secretary of defense. Austin, a onetime four-star general, retired from the military in 2016. He was confirmed last week on a vote of 93-2 after receiving a waiver from a rule that requires active-duty officers must wait seven years before heading the Pentagon. He is the third general to receive such a waiver in history and the second in four years. Antony Blinken, a longtime Biden aide, was confirmed this week as secretary of state, on a 78-22 vote. He began his tenure by ordering a review of several Trump-era policies, including a record-low cap on refugees allowed into the U.S.





Watkins

## Woodstock, Ohio and Berryville, Va.

### Coordinated attack:

Federal conspiracy charges filed last week allege that members of the far-right Oath Keepers group planned the Jan. 6 assault on the Capitol in advance, organizing rioters, stockpiling weapons, and hinting at killing lawmakers. An FBI investigation shows a previously undisclosed level of coordination among members of the mob who traveled to Washington, D.C. Jessica Watkins, an Army veteran from Woodstock, Ohio, and Thomas Edward Caldwell, an Oath Keeper leader from Virginia, were among several alleged attackers who stayed in touch via a two-way radio app. Messages from Watkins, recovered by the FBI, show her reminding her team, “We have about 30-40 of us. We are sticking together and sticking to the plan.” “Get it, Jess,” a man replied, adding, “This is... everything we f---ing trained for!” Another message shows how the group hunted lawmakers—and suggests deadly intentions. “All members are in the tunnels under capital seal them in. Turn on gas,” it read.

## Denver

**Post-election lawsuit:** Dominion Voting Systems filed a \$1.3 billion defamation lawsuit against former President Trump’s personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani this week, accusing him of orchestrating “a viral disinformation campaign” about the company. Giuliani, the company says, promoted a conspiracy theory that the developer of voting machines and software was founded in Venezuela to rig elections for deceased strongman Hugo Chavez, and later rigged the U.S. vote to deliver the 2020 presidential election to President Biden. The 107-page suit cites more than 50 instances in which the former New York City mayor peddled the theory. Dominion has also sued onetime Trump attorney Sidney Powell, and sent cease-and-desist letters to other Trump associates. Giuliani said the lawsuit would let him investigate the company more fully. Dominion CEO John Poulos, who has not ruled out a suit against Trump himself, said Giuliani not only damaged his company but also “undermined trust in American democratic institutions.”



Back in court

## New York

**Candid thoughts:** Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation’s top infectious-disease expert, described the “liberating feeling” of letting the evidence and science about the pandemic speak for itself during his first press briefing last week since President Biden took office. Fauci said in an interview with *The New York Times* that former President Trump called him up “a couple times” after pessimistic statements and urged him to be “more positive.” He said he never considered quitting, because his absence would have left “a void.” “Someone’s got to not be afraid to speak out the truth,” he said. Meanwhile, Dr. Deborah Birx, Trump’s White House pandemic response coordinator, defended her tenure in a CBS interview. Frequently criticized for letting the Trump administration minimize the pandemic, Birx explained that she was “censored” by other officials and that the president was given “parallel” data understating the severity of the crisis.



## Little Rock, Ark.

**Seeking office:** Former White House press secretary Sarah Sanders joined the race for governor of Arkansas this week, looking to capitalize on former President Trump’s enduring popularity in the state. Sanders, the daughter of former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee, joined a Republican primary field that also includes Lt. Gov. Tim Griffin and state Attorney General Leslie Rutledge. Asa Hutchinson, the current governor, cannot seek reelection in 2022 because of term limits. Sanders, who repeatedly clashed with the press she often derided as “fake news,” seeks to turn her history with Trump into an asset, telling voters that she took on “the media, the radical left, and their ‘cancel culture.’” In 2019, she signaled she was planning a run for office. “There are two types of people who run for office,” she said. “People that are called and people that just want to be a senator or governor. I feel like I’ve been called.”

## Washington, D.C.

### War inside the DOJ:

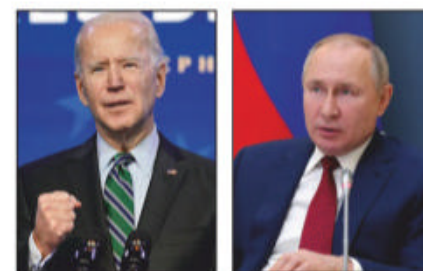
The Senate Judiciary Committee and the Justice Department’s top watchdog opened dual investigations this week into reports that a senior Justice Department lawyer plotted with former President Trump to oust his acting Attorney General, Jeffrey Rosen, in the last days of the administration. The lawyer, Jeffrey Clark, who heads the civil division, had for days unsuccessfully lobbied Rosen to announce an investigation into President Biden’s electoral win in Georgia—and void the results, there. On Jan. 3, Trump summoned Clark and Rosen to the White House to make their opposing cases in a meeting that two officials described as an episode of Trump’s reality show *The Apprentice*. Ultimately, Trump was persuaded not to fire Rosen because the Justice Department’s remaining leadership had made a pact to resign en masse should Trump replace him with Clark. Clark denied the existence of a plot and called the Jan. 3 meeting merely “a candid discussion.”



A last bulwark

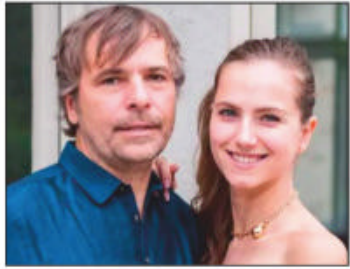
## Washington, D.C.

**First call with Putin:** President Joe Biden confronted Russian President Vladimir Putin on a series of issues during their first phone call this week, including the SolarWinds cyberattack, reports of Russians placing bounties on American soldiers in Afghanistan, and the poisoning of Russian dissident Alexei Navalny. The call, which came at Russia’s request, also touched on Ukrainian sovereignty and Russian election meddling, representing a hard shift from prior calls between former President Donald Trump and the Russian leader. Biden has been fiercely critical of Trump’s posture toward Putin, calling him “Putin’s puppy.” In addition, Biden and Putin discussed the New START nuclear arms treaty, which expires on Feb 5. Both men signaled that they were willing to extend the pact. A day before the call, Biden said there was room for both countries to operate in “mutual self-interest,” but he wanted to “make it clear to Russia that we are very concerned about their behavior.”



Tense dialogue





The Bakers

### Beaver Creek, Yukon Territory

**Jumping the line:** A Canadian casino executive has lost his job after he and his wife chartered a flight from Vancouver to a remote Yukon village and allegedly claimed to be locals to get Covid vaccinations meant for vulnerable First Nations communities. Rod Baker, CEO of Great Canadian Gaming Corp., and his actress wife,

Ekaterina, told the clinic they had just been hired as motel workers in Beaver Creek. The pair raised suspicions when they asked for a ride to the airport after getting their shots; clinic employees checked with the motel and then told police about the scam. The husband and wife were fined \$900 each for failing to self-isolate after travel, but the local White River First Nation says the punishment is “essentially meaningless” for such wealthy individuals. Before resigning this week, Baker earned about \$10 million a year.

### Brussels

**Where's the vaccine?** The European Union is in a spat with British-Swedish drugmaker AstraZeneca—and, by extension, with the U.K.—after the firm announced it would ship “considerably fewer” doses of its Covid vaccine to the bloc. The company is cutting its first EU delivery from 80 million doses to 31 million because of manufacturing issues. “Our contract is not a contractual commitment,” said AstraZeneca CEO Pascal Soriot. “Basically we said we’re going to try our best, but we can’t guarantee.” EU leaders, though, suspect that AstraZeneca diverted doses to the U.K., where the firm is headquartered. Brussels is now threatening legal action, including slapping export controls on vaccine makers. That could slow the delivery of Britain’s pre-purchased doses of Pfizer’s shot, which is produced in a Belgian plant. The U.K. has so far vaccinated 10 percent of its population, and the EU 2 percent.

### Mexico City

**President infected:** Mexico’s Covid-skeptical president announced this week that he has tested positive for the coronavirus—just hours after stepping off a commercial flight. Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who has consistently downplayed a disease that is killing 1,000 Mexicans a day, had just returned from a three-day trip to central Mexico, where he attended numerous meetings and public events unmasked. “How irresponsible and careless of him just to get onto a flight knowing that he might be infected,” said politician Jesús Ortega, a former ally of the president. López Obrador, who is 67 and has a history of heart problems, said he was being treated for mild symptoms. Mexico has recorded at least 150,000 Covid deaths to date, the fourth-highest toll in the world, but López Obrador has maintained a roughly 60 percent approval rating amid the pandemic.



López Obrador: Covid skeptic

### Tegucigalpa, Honduras

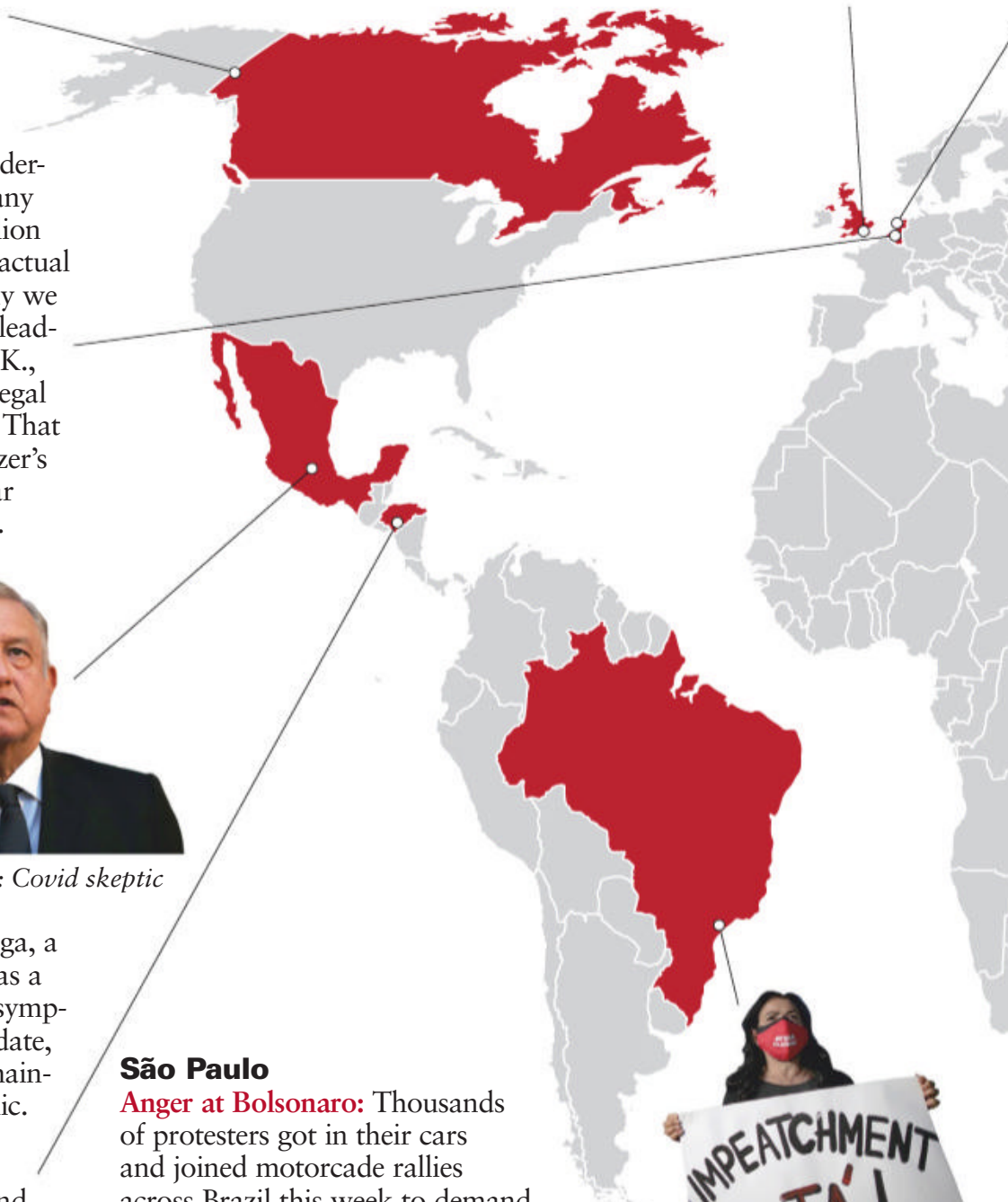
**Abortion ban:** Honduran lawmakers are attempting to amend the constitution and lock in the country’s bans on abortion and same-sex marriage. Honduras already has one of the world’s strictest abortion laws. Since 1985, terminations have been banned in all circumstances—including in cases of rape and incest, or when the mother’s life is at risk—and both patient and doctor can face three to 10 years in prison. Now the legislature is trying add the ban to the constitution, with an amendment that says the prohibitions on abortion and gay marriage can be changed only with the support of three-quarters of Congress—not a simple majority—an almost impossible bar to clear. Lawmakers said the changes were a response to Argentina’s legalization of abortion in December.

### London

**Deadlier variant:** British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has warned that the new Covid-19 strain ripping across the U.K. could be 30 percent more deadly than earlier variants of the disease. Researchers had already concluded that the strain, known as B.1.1.7, was up to 70 percent more infectious, and last week Johnson said it is also “associated with a higher degree of mortality.” Early evidence suggests that where the previous variant led to the deaths of 10 in 1,000 men in their 60s who caught the virus, the new strain might kill 13 or 14 in 1,000. Preliminary data indicate the new strain is also causing more women and younger people to be hospitalized. By March, B.1.1.7 is expected to be the dominant strain in the U.S.



Hospitalizations are up.



### São Paulo

**Anger at Bolsonaro:** Thousands of protesters got in their cars and joined motorcade rallies across Brazil this week to demand the impeachment of President Jair Bolsonaro over his chronic mishandling of the pandemic. Criticism of the far-right president has mounted in recent weeks, as a new, more contagious local Covid variant has caused infections to explode, the overwhelmed health-care system in Amazonas state has all but collapsed, and the nation’s vaccination plan has proved woefully insufficient. In one week, Bolsonaro’s approval rating plummeted from 37 percent to 26 percent. Hospitals in the Amazonas capital of Manaus have repeatedly run out of oxygen, leaving scores of patients to suffocate to death. “What we’re watching is a complete massacre, a desperate situation, a horror film,” said one health worker.

Opposing the president





Putting out a blaze

## The Hague

**Covid riots:** The Netherlands was shaken this week by its worst unrest in at least four decades, as people angry at the imposition of a 9 p.m. coronavirus curfew rioted in cities and towns across the country. In Amsterdam, the mostly teenage rioters smashed store windows,

looted shops, and set cars on fire; in Rotterdam and the Hague, gangs pelted police with rocks and fireworks. Police broke up the crowds with water cannons and tear gas and arrested several hundred people. The curfew, the Netherlands' first since World War II, was imposed to curb the spread of the new, more contagious U.K. Covid variant. Dutch criminologist Henk Ferwerda said the rioters included "virus deniers, political protesters, and kids who just saw the chance to go completely wild."

## Hangzhou, China

**Is Jack Ma OK?** The billionaire founder of Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba, who has been mysteriously out of sight for three months, was finally glimpsed in public last week. The normally publicity-hungry Jack Ma vanished in October, shortly after giving a speech at a Shanghai financial forum in which he accused Chinese Communist authorities of stifling innovation. Within days, Chinese regulators summoned Ma and executives from his Ant Group to a closed-door meeting, canceled Ant's \$37 billion initial public offering, and opened an investigation into "monopolistic practices" at Alibaba. Last week, Ma spoke briefly during an online ceremony to honor rural teachers, saying he and his colleagues had become "determined to devote ourselves to education and public welfare." Speculation is rife in China and abroad that Ma is under some form of detention.



Ma: On video

## Bangkok

**Princess assaulted?** The king of Thailand crowned his consort as a co-queen this week, giving her the same status as his wife—allegedly bestowing the gift after a violent altercation with his sister, Princess Sirindhorn. Andrew MacGregor Marshall, a journalist with deep connections in Thai political circles, reported that the 65-year-old princess went to King Maha Vajiralongkorn two weeks ago in an attempt to persuade him not to crown his 36-year-old consort, Sineenat Wongvajirapakdi. During their argument, Marshall says, one of the king's dogs knocked the princess down, and the 68-year-old king "either stamped on her ankles or struck them with a cane, shattering both of them." There has been no coverage of the alleged incident in the Thai press, which is muzzled by strict laws barring criticism of the monarchy, and the royal family has not commented on the reports.



Royal siblings

## New Delhi

**Sikhs storm the Red Fort:** Thousands of tractor-riding farmers smashed through police barricades in New Delhi this week and stormed the capital's historic Red Fort. The farmers, mostly Sikhs, have camped on the edge of New Delhi for two months, protesting farm reforms that they fear will leave them at the mercy of big agricultural corporations. To draw attention to their movement, the farmers went on the offensive during the Republic Day national holiday and hoisted a Sikh flag over the 17th-century fort. Dozens of protesters and police were injured in clashes, and at least one farmer died. Prime Minister Narendra Modi says the agricultural reforms will free up the sector. The Supreme Court has suspended the new laws until the farmers and the government can come to an agreement.



Hoisting the flag

## Kampala, Uganda

**Wine free:** A Ugandan court this week lifted the house arrest of opposition politician and presidential challenger Bobi Wine, whose home had been surrounded by security forces since the country's Jan. 14 elections. A pop singer turned politician, Wine plans to appeal the result of a vote that he says was riddled with fraud, and which longtime President Yoweri Museveni claims to have won 58 percent to 35 percent.



Wine: Unrings the vote

Wine's National Unity Platform is now the largest opposition party in parliament, replacing that of the ineffective Kizza Besigye, 64, who has lost to Museveni in every election for the past 20 years. Museveni, 76, felt threatened by the 38-year-old Wine, and the run-up to the vote this year was bloody and brutal. Security forces violently arrested scores of people, including Wine, journalists, and activists, and killed at least 54.



## Kaplan's dream of deposing Trump



Attorney Roberta Kaplan already has her black Armani outfit picked out for her day in court with former President Trump, said Karen Heller in *The Washington Post*. Kaplan represents three clients who've sued Trump for defamation and fraud: E. Jean Carroll, the writer who sued Trump for saying she was "totally lying" about her rape allegation; Trump's niece Mary, who says Trump and his siblings deprived her of an inheritance worth millions; and a group of clients suing Trump and his three oldest children for promoting a sketchy marketing company on *The Celebrity Apprentice*. Kaplan, who hopes to depose Trump in all three cases, is in many ways the ex-president's antithesis: a lesbian, Jewish, die-hard Democrat for whom 12 hours at her law firm constitutes a light workday. Kaplan, 54, made her name handling the case that led the Supreme Court to strike down the Defense of Marriage Act in 2013, then co-founded the Time's Up Legal Defense Fund for #MeToo plaintiffs. "My maternal grandmother always hated a bully," Kaplan says. "One really good job for going after bullies is to be a lawyer." She thinks the Carroll case could be a major symbolic victory. "It's for all the women in the country who have been harassed or assaulted by powerful men," she says, "and feel helpless to do anything about it."

## Bigelow's metaphysical explorations

Robert Bigelow has spent his life hunting for extraterrestrials and proof of an afterlife, said Ralph Blumenthal in *The New York Times*. The Las Vegas real estate mogul, 75, believes these "Holy Grail" pursuits are related, with an "interdimensional" explanation. "If we see a shadow going through one wall and through another," he says, "we don't know for sure if it was a discarnate human spirit or E.T." Growing up in Nevada, Bigelow became "hooked" on UFOs and aliens, after his grandparents had a close encounter with a glowing object. He vowed to get rich so he could research UFOs. His booming long-term rentals business, Budget Suites, allowed him to sink more than \$350 million into Bigelow Aerospace, whose secret collaboration with the Pentagon to study UFOs was revealed in 2017. Bigelow's dueling obsession, the afterlife, began after the 1992 death by suicide of his 24-year-old son, Rod Lee. After his wife of 55 years, Diane, died last June, Bigelow founded the Institute for Consciousness Studies to research life after death. Bigelow's institute is giving \$1 million in prizes this year for research offering the best evidence that consciousness persists after death. "I am personally totally convinced of it," he says.



## Lipa's life as a refugee

Dua Lipa's personality was forged in Kosovo, said Alex Morris in *Rolling Stone*. The pop superstar inherited fearlessness from her Kosovar Albanian grandfather, a historian. When the Balkan wars broke out, "Serbian forces wanted him to rewrite history. He refused and lost his job," says Lipa, 25. "So it's part of who I am to stand by the things I believe in." Her parents fled the violence for London, where Lipa was born. They lived among Kosovo refugees, with her parents holding multiple jobs and taking classes at night. Lipa saw Britain as her home but not her homeland. "People don't understand," she says. "[Refugees] wouldn't leave their country unless there was a need for it." Her family returned to Kosovo when Lipa was 11. "I got there," she says, "and I was the Albanian girl speaking in an English accent." At 15, she returned to London to live with a family friend, and spent her teen years largely unsupervised, learning to take care of herself. Her experiences have given her strong views about British, U.S., and international politics. "Online people are like, 'Just shut up and sing. What do you know? Why do you care so much?'" she says. "But I think people forget how small our world is. And it's getting smaller all the time."

## In the news



■ President Trump's flurry of eleventh-hour pardons last week included rap star **Lil Wayne**, who had shocked hip-hop fans by endorsing Trump days before November's election. Wayne, 38, faced years behind bars for felony gun possession after federal agents seized a gold-plated Glock from his private jet. Wayne, barred from owning a firearm after a previous weapons conviction, pleaded guilty to the charge. Trump also commuted the sentence of rapper **Kodak Black**, 23, who shares a lawyer with Wayne and was sentenced to 46 months in prison for lying on applications to

buy multiple guns. Fox News host **Jeanine Pirro**, a vehement Trump defender, obtained a pardon for her ex-husband, Al, who'd been convicted in 2000 of deducting \$1.2 million in personal expenses as business write-offs. Al Pirro had been left off the pardon list, but Jeanine Pirro successfully made a personal plea to include her ex just 45 minutes before Trump's term was done.

■ **Ana de Armas** and **Ben Affleck** have broken up, after the *Deep Water* co-stars couldn't agree on whether to have kids. Affleck, 48, lives in Los Angeles near his three children with ex-wife Jennifer Garner, while Armas, 32, has a home and family in Cuba and has no children. The couple were inseparable for months and were frequently photographed by paparazzi kissing, hugging, and laughing, but Affleck's commitment to his children

became an issue. "He would not commit to having more kids," a source told the *New York Post*. "It was a deal breaker." After the split, a photographer snapped someone throwing out a life-size cardboard cutout of Armas that had been inside Affleck's home.

■ **Phil Collins** sold his Miami Beach mansion listed for \$40 million last week, after finally getting ex-wife **Oriane Cevey** and her new husband to leave the property. Cevey, 46, got a reported \$47 million settlement after divorcing Collins in 2008, but claimed she was owed half of the Miami mansion, which Collins, 69, bought in 2015. Cevey and her new beau eloped last year, then moved into Collins' mansion under the protection of armed guards. Cevey finally agreed to leave after a judge rejected her claim to \$20 million or half the property.



## The reality of Brexit

*The EU trade deal is finally done, and Britain is now post-Brexit. What will that mean?*

### Why did Brexit occur?

Resentment of European Union bureaucracy, tensions over immigration, and a yearning for British independence. When British voters went to the polls in 2016 to decide whether to remain in the EU or split from it, the Vote Leave campaign led by Boris Johnson made big promises. Johnson, who is now prime minister, led rallies around the country in a red bus emblazoned with the slogan “We send the EU 350 million pounds a week, let’s fund our NHS instead.” This was a claim that the U.K. transferred \$455 million to the EU every week and that all that money would be saved under Brexit and diverted to the struggling National Health Service. Vote Leave told voters that the U.K. would keep its tariff-free trade with the EU. The U.K. would no longer be subject to EU law and could “take back control” of immigration. Wages would be higher. Most important, the U.K. could sign new trade deals with other countries on its own terms. Brexit, in other words, would bring great benefits with minimal costs.



*Free at last! Johnson after signing the final agreement*

### How much of that came true?

Only some. Instead of a “soft Brexit,” which would have kept the U.K. in the EU’s customs union and closely tied to Brussels, Johnson delivered a “hard Brexit” that is more of a divorce. The 1,200-page trade deal clinched just before the end of last year does provide for tariff-free trade in goods. But that comes with a big catch: Companies that import and export goods face a raft of new paperwork, including customs declarations and border checks, that will cost them millions of pounds a year. The deal, meanwhile, does not cover the services sector, which makes up 80 percent of Britain’s economy and includes financial companies, tech and data companies, entertainment, tourism, and health care. What access that sector will have to the EU market won’t be known until a separate agreement is made later this year. As for the financial savings, the true net amount that the U.K. paid to the EU was \$208 million a week, less than half of what was claimed, and little of that money is going to the NHS, which remains strapped for cash. While the border between EU member Ireland and Northern Ireland will remain open, there will be customs checks.

### Is the U.K. free of EU dictates?

To a degree. The U.K. is free to make its own laws as long as they don’t undercut the trade deal with the EU. But that deal contains a key clause that says the U.K. gets tariff-free access only as long as both sides have a “level playing field.” The EU wanted to make sure that the U.K. didn’t gut its labor or environ-

mental protections in order to be able to undersell EU farmers or manufacturers. Any disputes that arise between the two entities will be settled not by the European Court of Justice—which was seen by the Leave camp as a monstrous infringement on British sovereignty—but by an independent arbitration panel. The panel’s oversight will still constrain the U.K.’s decisions.

### What about the economy?

The U.K. Office for Budget Responsibility predicts that Brexit will cost Britain about 4 percentage points of its gross domestic product over the next 15 years. Unemployment, inflation, and public borrowing will all likely rise, and many of the immigrant workers who have long staffed the NHS and provided low-paid labor to business now feel like unwanted foreigners and may go home or find work elsewhere in Europe. “Britain has punched itself in the face,” says Stanford economist Nicholas Bloom. “It imports goods and exports services, and it’s lost the freedom of services.” Johnson counters that the U.K. will strike new, more lucrative bilateral trade deals with non-EU countries, such as Canada and the U.S.

### What have Britons lost?

The “freedom of movement” that enabled them to travel to, live, and work without paperwork in the rest of Europe. The 250,000 Britons who retired to sunny Spain or other EU countries must now apply for residency, while business travelers may need visas. In foreign policy, the U.K. has lost the clout that comes from being part of the third-largest economy in the world, after China and the U.S., and now stands alone as a relatively small nation of 66 million people.

### What have they gained?

Sovereignty. The U.K. now has total say over whom it lets in as an immigrant, and it no longer has to bow to laws enacted in Brussels. “British laws will be made solely by the British Parliament,” said Johnson, and will be “interpreted by British judges, sitting in the U.K. courts.” Further gains, Johnson says, lie in the future. The newfound ability to “set our own standards, to innovate in the way that we want,” he said, will allow the U.K. to become a world leader in the industries of the future, such as biosciences and artificial intelligence. European allies, though, still view the departure as a mistake. “Brexit,” said French President Emmanuel Macron, “was the child of European malaise and lots of lies and false promises.”

### Scotland eyeing independence

Brexit could cause Northern Ireland and Scotland to split from London. In a February 2020 poll, 48 percent of Northern Irish said they’d support reunification with Ireland if it meant regaining EU membership, while 45 percent opposed it. The Scots are even more restless. In 2016, Scotland voted strongly to remain in the EU—62 percent Remain to 38 percent Leave—and Brexit has only served to bolster support for Scottish independence. In a 2014 referendum, 55 percent of Scots opted to stay in the U.K., but now polls show an even larger minority want to go it alone and rejoin the EU. Given that the vast majority of Scottish trade is with the rest of Britain, not with the EU, such a leap might be more costly than many Scots imagine. Still, after Brexit was complete, the country’s pro-independence First Minister Nicola Sturgeon tweeted, “Scotland will be back soon, Europe. Keep the light on.”



## The real divide in politics

William Saletan  
*Slate.com*

American politics is longer a conventional fight “between the Left and Right,” said William Saletan. “Politics has become a fight between those who are willing to respect evidence and those who aren’t.” Donald Trump’s radical presidency ushered in a new era of “ruthless, relentless, denialist propaganda at a scale we used to see only in dictatorships.” He persuaded tens of millions of Americans that Covid-19 was nothing to fear, that masks were useless, and finally that the election was stolen—inciting a violent insurrection. To regain sanity, address our nation’s many problems, and resolve political debates, we need “a common standard for judging truth.” That standard must be evidence. Science has used the evidence standard with spectacular success—to devise vaccines, cure diseases, and unravel many of the mysteries of the universe. It requires revising your theories and beliefs when the evidence shows they’re wrong. Politicians prefer to deny reality rather than admit they are wrong, but for our country to remain a functioning democracy, the press, the public, and rational conservatives and progressives must create “a fact-based alliance that crosses party lines.” Relying on evidence is our only way to solve our problems and escape paralyzing polarization.

## How to fix social media

Andy Kessler  
*The Wall Street Journal*

With former President Trump banned from Twitter, Facebook, and several other sites, “the siren calls” for social media regulation will soon “become deafening,” said Andy Kessler. Most would-be reformers want to rewrite Section 230 of the 1996 Communications Decency Act, which largely exempts social media companies from legal liability for what users post on their sites. But attempts “to ‘fix’” Section 230 would massively backfire, forcing Twitter, Facebook, et al. to heavily censor on their sites *all* controversial posts, lest they be sued into oblivion. We often forget, however, that Section 230 doesn’t forbid suing *users* of social media for libel or holding them accountable. The problem is anonymity: The nastiest and most irresponsible posters hide behind fake names and handles. Forcing users to register with, say, a credit card or other ID and use their real names might cut the sites’ user bases in half, but “advertisers would rejoice”—and it would limit the need for “tens of thousands of content moderators.” If you post threats or libelous attacks on people, you will risk getting sued. “Post about buying zip ties and invading the Capitol, and the FBI knocks on your door.” Ending anonymity “would put an immediate damper on today’s worst offenders.”

## Why we must support foreign dissidents

Bret Stephens  
*The New York Times*

President Biden’s foreign policy should have one guiding principle: “Put dissidents first,” said Bret Stephens. The U.S. is facing a growing threat from autocracies such as China, Russia, and Iran that crush freedom at home and export repression and illiberalism abroad. These dictatorships “are too powerful to be brought down militarily.” But as the brave Russian dissident Alexei Navalny is now demonstrating, all regimes are vulnerable to domestic opposition that “galvanizes public indignation through acts of exposure, mockery, and heroic defiance.” It was Nelson Mandela who brought down apartheid in South Africa, Lech Walesa who ended Communist control of Poland, and truth tellers such as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn who weakened the Soviet Union. Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken must make support of dissidents in Hong Kong, China, Russia, Iran, Cuba, and Venezuela “inextricable parts of American statecraft.” We should amplify dissidents’ messages, and all negotiations with these regimes should include a demand they release jailed opponents. A foreign policy that prioritizes dissidents “would immediately revive America’s moral leadership,” undermine our adversaries, and increase the chance that one day these regimes will collapse.

### Viewpoint

“The Biden era presages a return to typical presidential dishonesty, without the cult of personality that defined the Trump era. But presidential lies were destructive long before Trump appeared, so the press and the public should resist the temptation to assume that the Biden administration will always be on the level, or that its dishonesties can be forgiven because Joe Biden’s predecessor wielded falsehood with such abandon. There will be moments when the public interest conflicts with the political interest of the White House, and during some of these moments, the president will lie. All presidents do.”

Adam Serwer in *TheAtlantic.com*

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

■ A Quebec woman was fined for trying to evade a pandemic curfew by putting a dog collar on her (human) partner’s neck and taking him for “a walk.” Police say the unidentified 24-year-old was obviously making a mockery of an exception to the province’s 8 p.m. curfew that had been given to dog owners. The woman and her partner were each fined \$1,500 for breaking curfew and hit with some harsh words from police about people “making light of the situation” as Covid cases soar.

■ The New Jersey State Supreme Court has thrown out a convicted bank robber’s 14-year sentence after ruling that a prosecutor biased the jury by comparing defendant Damon Williams to Jack Nicholson’s character in *The Shining*. The prosecutor showed jurors a photo of Nicholson’s face as his ax-wielding character Jack Torrance breaks into a bathroom occupied by his wife and son, yelling, “Here’s Johnny!” Prosecutors, the court ruled, “must walk a fine line” when showing photos of “an individual whom the jury associates with violence or guilt.”

■ A French woman has been fighting for three years to prove she is alive after being mistakenly declared dead by a judge. Jeanne Pouchain, 58, can’t drive, work, use a bank, or get insurance because she was declared dead in a 2017 court case. She hasn’t been able to reverse that ruling, despite appearing before numerous judges with a certificate from her doctor stating that she is, in fact, alive. “I no longer exist,” Pouchain says. “I don’t do anything.” Her lawyer is still fighting to get a court to reverse the original ruling, but says, “When an error is so enormous, it’s hard to admit.”





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## FRANCE

## Does Le Pen know what she stands for?

Stefan Brändle  
*Der Standard* (Austria)

Marine Le Pen is having an identity crisis, said Stefan Brändle. After losing to Emmanuel Macron in the 2017 presidential election, the far-right politician reinvented herself in Donald Trump's image, swapping her "statesmanlike" manner for the American president's rabble-rousing style. She even echoed Trump in insisting that only through widespread fraud could Joe Biden have won last November's U.S. election. But the murderous Jan. 6 assault on the U.S. Capitol by a pro-Trump mob forced Le Pen to make a "180-degree turn." She now claims to be "extremely shocked" by the unrest. Her problem is that while the far-right

"agitators" who make up the core of her National Rally party may have delighted in Trump's campaign against the constitutional order, most French voters value strong government. How to placate the base without alienating the center is a problem Le Pen has long struggled to solve. During the Yellow Vest anti-government riots of 2018 and 2019, Le Pen tried to support both the protesters, who often attacked law enforcement, and the police, who also meted out violence. If she's to have any chance of wooing voters beyond the far right in next year's election, Le Pen will have to decide if she's a Trumpist populist or a law-and-order conservative.

## SPAIN

## The ugliness of creeping Anglicization

Carlos Yárnoz  
*El País*

The rapid colonization of the Spanish language by English is becoming a "nightmare," says Carlos Yárnoz. Journalists have fallen into the ugly habit of sprinkling Anglicisms throughout their articles: phrases and words such as "winner takes all," "talent show," "bartender," and "gatekeeper" are now commonplace. In just one month last year, at least 2,329 Anglicisms appeared in this very newspaper. Many Spaniards are unfamiliar with these alien terms, and some readers now routinely skip articles by certain writers, because they have no idea what these journalists are gibbering on about. The use of an Anglicism when no Spanish equivalent exists is understandable, especially

when writing about sports, science, or technology. Words like *football*, *tweet*, and *selfie* are now effectively part of the Spanish language. But why, for instance, do some newspapers insist on offering readers a "newsletter" instead of a *boletín*? Even readers who are fluent in English find that absurd. Some critics blame the habit on laziness in writing, while others think it points to an inferiority complex about the Spanish language, with journalists imagining that breaking into English every other sentence is somehow "cool." But in a profession that prides itself on its economy with words, the proliferation of pointless synonyms is tantamount to abuse. It's high time we put a stop to it.

## Germany: Will Biden kill Russian gas pipeline?

Europeans are thrilled that Donald Trump is out of the White House, said Joe Kirwin in *The Brussels Times* (Belgium), but they shouldn't expect President Joe Biden to do their bidding. Just like the Trump administration, the Biden team strongly opposes the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, an \$11 billion project led by Russian state-owned gas monopoly Gazprom. The pipeline, which is nearing completion, will transport Russian natural gas about 750 miles under the Baltic Sea to Germany and is intended as an end run around the pipelines that bring Russian gas to Europe through Ukraine and Poland. European firms such as Royal Dutch Shell, the French utility Engie, Germany's Wintershall, and others "face hundreds of millions of euros in losses if the work is not completed," but the project is effectively on hold because of stringent U.S. sanctions against any company that participates in the pipeline. German officials had regarded those sanctions as Trumpian bullying meant to force Europe to buy American rather than Russian gas. But the U.S. view has not changed under Biden. The Americans contend that "a pipeline that makes Europe ever more energy dependent on Russia undermines European national security," and therefore U.S. security, given that Europe still relies on the U.S. for its defense.

Why do Germans have "an instinctive desire to appease Russia?" asked Dominic Lawson in *The Times* (U.K.). Is it "guilt" over the millions of Russians killed by Nazis in World War II? Or is it greed? Former German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder



Preparing a pipe for the Nord Stream 2 project

signed the pipeline deal during his final days in office in 2005 and then waltzed into cushy jobs as chairman of Russian state oil firm Rosneft and director of Nord Stream. Schröder's successor, Chancellor Angela Merkel—raised in East Germany under Soviet domination—is no fan of the Kremlin, but she supports Nord Stream 2 because it's good for German business. She has made a mistake, said Daniel Brössler in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (Germany). Russian President Vladimir Putin is more than willing to use gas exports as a weapon, as he proved

during a pricing dispute with Ukraine in the winter of 2009, when he shut off supplies and left millions of Europeans shivering in their heatless homes. Merkel convinced herself that she could constrain Putin, but Washington sensibly refused to buy into her thinking. If Biden holds firm, and if Germany can't find a way around U.S. sanctions, Nord Stream 2 "could become the world's most expensive tube to nowhere."

Now the EU is joining the Biden administration in urging Germany to abandon Nord Stream 2, said Berthold Kohler in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (Germany). The European Parliament, furious over the August poisoning and January arrest of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, is pressuring Berlin to halt the pipeline as a means to punish Putin. At this point, no matter what happens, Putin "can rub his hands together" in glee. Even if the pipeline is canceled, the project has already "sown maximum strife in the EU—and in the transatlantic alliance."



## Russia: Navalny leads from behind bars

In a matter of days, Alexei Navalny has turned Russia “into a different country,” said Leonid Gozman in *Novaya Gazeta*. The opposition leader was arrested at a Moscow airport last week after flying in from Germany, where he had spent five months recovering following his poisoning by suspected Kremlin agents. Rather than lying low and trying to appease the authorities, Navalny had his team release a video detailing a sprawling Black Sea palace allegedly owned by President Vladimir Putin. The feature-length investigation, which notched 86 million views in five days, accuses the president’s oligarch allies of funding the \$1.3 billion complex through a corruption scheme; Putin denies any connection to the property. Outraged by Navalny’s arrest, hundreds of thousands of Russians joined mass protests across the country. At least 3,450 people were arrested in some 90 cities and towns, including freezing Siberian villages where protesters gathered in minus 10 degree temperatures and hurled snowballs at the police. With his brave defiance and ability to rally crowds from behind bars, Navalny has “finally become a figure equal in size to the Kremlin and a real contender for the presidency.”



Police crack down on protesters in Moscow.

“The Kremlin’s hard-edged treatment of Navalny has backfired spectacularly,” said Alexander Baunov in *The Moscow Times*. Putin and his cronies tried to dispatch their nemesis in the most egregious and obvious way—with a Soviet-era nerve agent—but by surviving the poisoning, Navalny “has become something of a mythical hero, resurrected and given a second chance.” And he has chosen “not to live out his days peacefully abroad, but to

conquer evil, defy death, and defeat his enemies.” His arrest last week for violating the parole terms of a bogus, politically motivated fraud conviction has only further elevated Navalny, making him “the world’s most famous political prisoner.” To justify persecuting this gallant figure, the Kremlin is now promoting the “preposterous allegation” that Navalny, a noted nationalist, is a foreign intelligence agent.

Is he an agent? asked Mikhail Rostovsky in *Moskovsky Komsomol*.

Probably not exactly, but it is no secret that he was closely guarded by Western intelligence services while in Germany. The fact that German Chancellor Angela Merkel visited him in the hospital also suggests he has forged “a close alliance with the West.” Still, Western protection means nothing inside Russia. The U.S. and Europe may clamor for Navalny’s release, but—as they discovered with their demand that Crimea be returned to Ukraine—“Western ultimatums bounce off Putin likes peas off a wall.”

In fact, it’s the Kremlin elite who have foreign ties, said Maxim Trudolyubov in *Meduza.io*. Through his wildly popular video investigations, Navalny has shown this country “the magical changes that can happen to Russian officials” when they travel overseas. A drab lawmaker or prosecutor can suddenly morph into a “suave European, an investor in hotels and mansions, whose assets are protected by British, French, or Spanish law.” Navalny, meanwhile, remains a man of the people—and that makes him extremely dangerous.

### INDIA

## What if we paid housewives?

Anusha Chandrasekharan  
*The Indian Express*

An Indian actor turned politician thinks housewives should be paid for housework, said Anusha Chandrasekharan. Kamal Haasan says that if his centrist People’s Justice Party wins control of Tamil Nadu’s state legislature in this May’s election, it will mandate such payments. It’s only fair, his party points out, because the typical Indian woman does five hours of housework and child care a day, compared with half an hour for men. But who would pay them? “Husbands? Government? Tax subsidies?” Haasan wasn’t specific. In any case, compensation is entirely unrealistic unless we change the mindset that domestic work is “the domain of

women.” That patriarchal concept is partly rooted in Hinduism, which “associates the fireplace, the grinding stone, the broom, the pestle and mortar, and the waterpot with impurity” and therefore with women. Nor can we separate the issue of domestic work from caste. Even today, maids, who generally come from lower castes, are “treated as polluting, with households laying limits on where they can enter and what they can touch.” It will take a huge shift in Indian thinking to treat household work as worthy of compensation. “Payment for household chores to homemakers alone” won’t by itself raise women’s status—but it would be a start.

### CHINA

## Help the elderly navigate this cash-free world

Guo Yingzhe and Hu Yue  
*CaixinGlobal.com*

Chinese people now pay for almost everything with their smartphones, said Guo Yingzhe and Hu Yue, and that’s a problem for elderly people who aren’t tech savvy. The lightning growth of financial apps and services in China has made the two leading payment platforms, Alipay and WeChat Pay, ubiquitous. But the disappearance of banknotes comes with a cost. Two months ago, a heartbreaking video went viral showing a frail old woman trying to pay for her health insurance in person using cash. The impatient clerk snaps, “No cash is accepted here: Either tell your relatives or pay on your mobile phone.” There was an instant

backlash, and the following month the People’s Bank of China issued a rule requiring public institutions, financial firms, and small businesses to accept cash. So far it has penalized 15 companies and one public body, along with the individual employees who refused to take cash, with fines ranging from \$77 to \$77,000. The rule is meant as a stopgap, and the “broader strategy” is to “help the elderly master technology such as using QR codes, and to help bridge the growing digital and technological divide” between generations. As we move into the future, we can’t leave older citizens behind.



## Noted

■ Nearly 1 in 5 of the insurgents charged in the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol is a military veteran or active-duty service member. Some are members of the far-right white supremacist group the Oath Keepers, which is known to recruit current and former members of the military.

*NPR.org*

■ The true number of Covid deaths is 44 percent higher than the official count of 420,000, according to a data analysis of nearly 800 counties. Undercounting was most prevalent in counties that supported President Trump, the analysis found, with many Covid deaths simply not diagnosed or reported as such.

*StatNews.com*



■ Donald Trump made 30,573 false or misleading claims

during his four years in office. He averaged six such claims a day in the first year, 16 in the second, 22 in the third, and 39 a day in his final year—including more than 800 repetitions of the Big Lie that the 2020 election was stolen.

*The Washington Post*

■ In the first three weeks it was administered, the Moderna vaccine caused only 10 confirmed severe allergic reactions out of 4 million doses—a rate of 2.5 reactions per million shots, according to a CDC study. A similar study of the Pfizer vaccine found 11 allergic reactions for every million doses.

*Los Angeles Times*

■ Thirty-eight Capitol Police officers have tested positive for the coronavirus since the Jan. 6 Capitol invasion, according to the leader of their union.

*CNN.com*

## QAnon: The big letdown

QAnon followers could use a hug, said Aaron Mak in *Slate.com*. Thousands of conspiracy theorists are despondent after Inauguration Day failed to deliver “The Storm,” a prophecy that President Trump would declare martial law, stay in power, arrest the cannibalistic, satanic pedophile Democrats who pull the strings of government, and send them

to be hanged at Guantánamo Bay. Banished from Facebook and Twitter, QAnon believers on fringe message boards were thrilled when Trump gave a farewell address in front of 17 American flags—a supposed signal, since Q is “the 17th letter in the alphabet.” But when Joe Biden was sworn in hours later, stunned Q believers despaired. “We’ve been had,” one wrote. “Anyone else feeling beyond let down right now?” asked another. Yet another said he felt like a kid who wakes up on Christmas morning to a big gift, “only to open it and realize it was a lump of coal.”

Perhaps watching their messiah “slink off to Florida” could break the QAnon spell, said Julia Carrie Wong in *TheGuardian.com*. One prominent Q believer, Ron Watkins, wrote to his 100,000 followers “We gave it our all. Now we need to keep our chins up and go back to our lives as best we are able.” But this cultlike,



Among the people feeling let down

pseudo-Christian movement has managed to survive and explain away previous disappointments: Hillary Clinton was never arrested, and secret sex-trafficking rings were never exposed. Some QAnon followers have already embraced new extremist enthusiasms, said Chris Mills Rodrigo in *TheHill.com*, including Covid vaccine skepticism, white supremacy, and anti-Semitism. Unfortunately, there is an “impulse to double down when your belief system is challenged.” Just look at all the cultish religions that endure despite one apocalypse after another failing to materialize.

“QAnon is mortally wounded,” said Paul Waldman in *WashingtonPost.com*, but right-wing conspiracy thinking will continue to flourish. Last year, 97 GOP congressional candidates “were either outright QAnon supporters or dabbled in the conspiracy.” Facebook has removed 60,000 QAnon pages since November, while Twitter has banned 70,000 accounts. Those companies waited too long to take action, and they still haven’t rooted out fundamental flaws that turn their sites into “fever swamps” for conspiratorial movements. Crazy new conspiracy theories will sprout up to replace QAnon, and they “could be even more ridiculous, and even more dangerous.”

## LGBTQ rights: Did Biden go too far?

President Biden has already achieved “the most sweeping expansion of LGBTQ rights in American history,” said Mark Joseph Stern in *Slate.com*. In a “historic executive order,” Biden directed all federal agencies to interpret civil rights laws as prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. The order—which extends the Supreme Court’s landmark *Bostock* ruling on employment—will ensure equal protection for LGBTQ people in housing, education, health care, and more. Biden also reversed Trump’s ban on transgender people enlisting in the military. The new president has given gay and transgender people “something precious”—hope for the future, said Allison Hope in *CNN.com*. After Trump’s overt hostility toward transgender people like me, Biden’s empathetic actions, and his inclusion of LGBTQ people in his administration, “make me want to dance in the streets.”

Biden’s order goes too far, said Ramona Tausz in the *New York Post*, and “undoes decades of feminist progress.” By embracing the fashionable woke notion that gender is purely a matter of identity, unrelated to biology, it will force female athletes to compete with biological males, who will “unjustly claim titles, trophies, and scholarships.” Trans

girls who go through puberty as males retain huge natural advantages over girls and women, with greater bone density, muscle mass, and lung capacity. That’s why a pair of trans track-and-field athletes in Connecticut were able to easily dominate girls’ competitions, sparking a lawsuit on behalf of several girls whose athletic dreams were crushed. Transgender advocates say these fears are exaggerated, said Samantha Schmidt in *The Washington Post*. Gillian Branstetter of the National Women’s Law Center notes that 16 states already allow transgender students to compete as women, and says “girls’ athletics did not vanish” as a result.

Still, this “culture war aggression” isn’t the act of a president who’s seeking unity, said Andrew Sullivan in *AndrewSullivan.substack.com*. Biden has adopted the radical view that the law must treat trans women as “absolutely indistinguishable” from “biological women.” The impact will be felt well beyond sports. Consider a battered women’s shelter where traumatized women “do not want to be around biological males,” or a high school locker room, where blending naked trans girls and biological girls “is asking for trouble.” Dividing the country “along these deep and inflammatory issues of identity” is Biden’s first big mistake.



## The filibuster: A tool of restraint or obstruction?

Democrats “won’t be blowing up the legislative filibuster any time soon,” said **Li Zhou** in *Vox.com*. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell this week backed off his threat to halt almost all Senate business until Democrats promised in writing not to abolish the filibuster, when two moderate Democratic senators—Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.) and



McConnell: Still can block legislation

Kyrsten Sinema (D-Ariz.)—publicly restated that they would not lend their votes to repealing it. Though McConnell didn’t get the formal pledge he wanted from Democrats, his “approach still worked, in a way.” An intact filibuster means there will still be a 60-vote threshold for most bills to pass, requiring Democrats to get 10 GOP votes.

If the GOP uses the filibuster to engage in the same kind of relentless obstruction it did during the Obama presidency, said **Eric Levitz** in *NYMag.com*, the Democrats should “press the big red button” and repeal it. Otherwise, McConnell can block everything voters elected Biden and a Democratic Congress to do, including Covid relief, climate change legislation, and a federal \$15 minimum wage. Manchin and Sinema might be persuaded to change their minds if GOP filibusters again lead to gridlock. The framers did not intend the Senate to have a 60-vote threshold, said

**Adam Jentleson** in *The New York Times*. The filibuster isn’t in the Constitution, and it didn’t become an oft-used weapon until the Jim Crow era, when Southern senators used it to stop civil rights legislation. Today it’s used as “a weapon of mass obstruction” on almost every bill before the Senate. In the 1969-70 Congress, the filibuster was used just six times; in 2019-20, it was used 298 times, or nearly once a day.

Both parties like to “complain about the filibuster when they control the majority,” said **Susan Ferrechio** in *WashingtonExaminer.com*. When Democrats were in the minority in the Senate, they insisted in a letter that “this long-standing rule should not be broken.” Now they’re “at risk of repeating a costly mistake,” said *The Wall Street Journal* in an editorial. In 2013, then-Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid “broke the filibuster for judicial nominations.” He pushed through some federal appellate appointments, but at the incredibly high price of enabling McConnell to later ram through three conservative Supreme Court justices in four years. If Democrats eliminate the filibuster now, they will bitterly regret it when Republicans regain power and pass sweeping conservative legislation with 51 votes.

## Immigration: What Biden’s plan would do

President Biden’s “sweeping immigration reform” bill could “bring millions of people out of the shadows,” said **Nicole Narea** in *Vox.com*. The core proposal is to give America’s 10.5 million undocumented immigrants a pathway to obtaining lawful permanent residency (a green card) after five years—and citizenship after eight years, provided that they pay taxes and pass background checks. Biden’s bill would “remove barriers” for low-wage workers to obtain employment-based green cards and give the nearly 650,000 so-called Dreamers, or people brought to America as children by their migrant parents, immediate permanent residency. The bill also seeks to treat the “underlying causes of migration” by providing \$4 billion to curb violence and foster economic development in Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala—the countries from which the majority of asylum seekers hail.

The bill, however, doesn’t offer increased border security, said **Michelle Hackman** and **Siobhan Hughes** in *The Wall Street Journal*. That’s a departure from prior efforts at immigration reform, which always included concessions to immigration hard-liners in return for legalization. As a result, this bill faces “steep odds on Capitol Hill.” As it

should, said **Mark Krikorian** in *NationalReview.com*. It makes pragmatic sense to grant legal status to those already here, but only in return for closing the door to new illegal immigration. Biden’s plan does not require employers to use the “online E-Verify system to check the legal status of all new hires.” It makes it likely employers will be allowed to hire illegal immigrants by creating a commission to study the issue that is filled with liberal labor and civil rights organizations. Granting amnesty without addressing how and why so many people are here illegally “would merely guarantee continued illegal immigration in the future.”

Actually, Biden’s plan “would genuinely put America first,” said *The Washington Post* in an editorial. The nation has a historically low birth rate, is suffering from “population stagnation,” and will benefit from serving as a beacon for ambitious, hardworking immigrants. To that end, Biden will also raise the refugee cap, and ease Trump administration rules on issuing green cards. The stakes are high, said **Edward Alden** in *ForeignPolicy.com*. Washington’s two-decade failure to produce comprehensive immigration reform fueled the nativist movement Trump rode to the White House. This time, the Democrats can’t afford to fail.

## Wit & Wisdom

“There’s only two kinds of people in the world—the kind of people who think there’s such a thing as enough money, and the kind of people who have money.”  
**Humorist Fran Lebowitz, quoted in The New Yorker**

“The best way out is always through.”  
**Robert Frost, quoted in GoodReads.com**

“I have great faith in fools—self-confidence, my friends will call it.”  
**Edgar Allan Poe, quoted in TheRinger.com**

“Nothing in all the world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity.”  
**Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., quoted in CNN.com**

“A peacock that rests on its feathers is just another turkey.”  
**Dolly Parton, quoted in the Knoxville, Tenn., News Sentinel**

“Believe those who are seeking the truth. Doubt those who find it.”  
**Author André Gide, quoted in INews.co.uk**

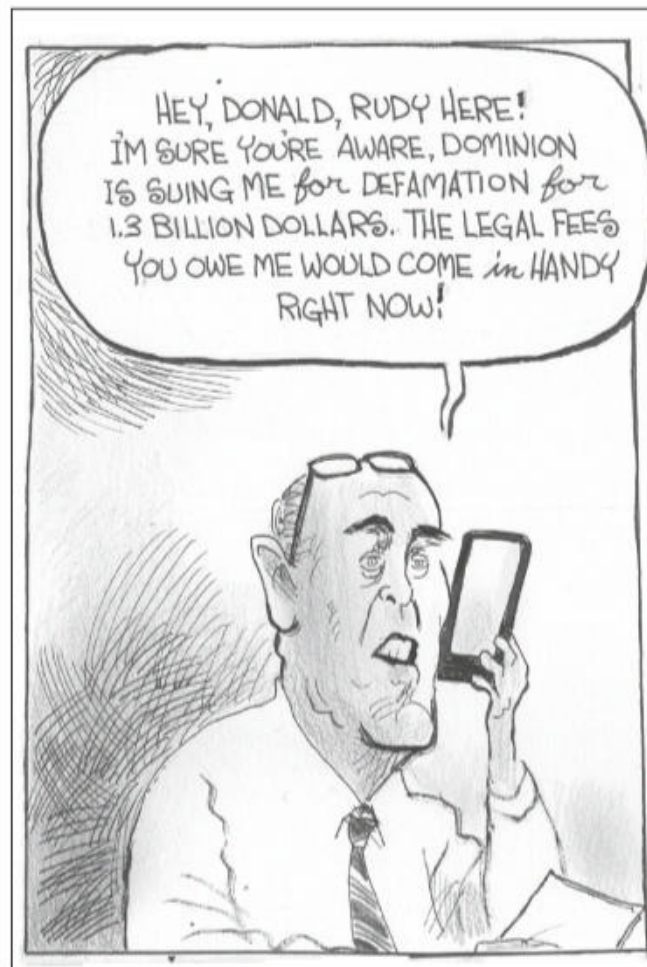
“Friends are God’s apology for relations.”  
**Writer Hugh Kingsmill, quoted in Forbes.com**

## Poll watch

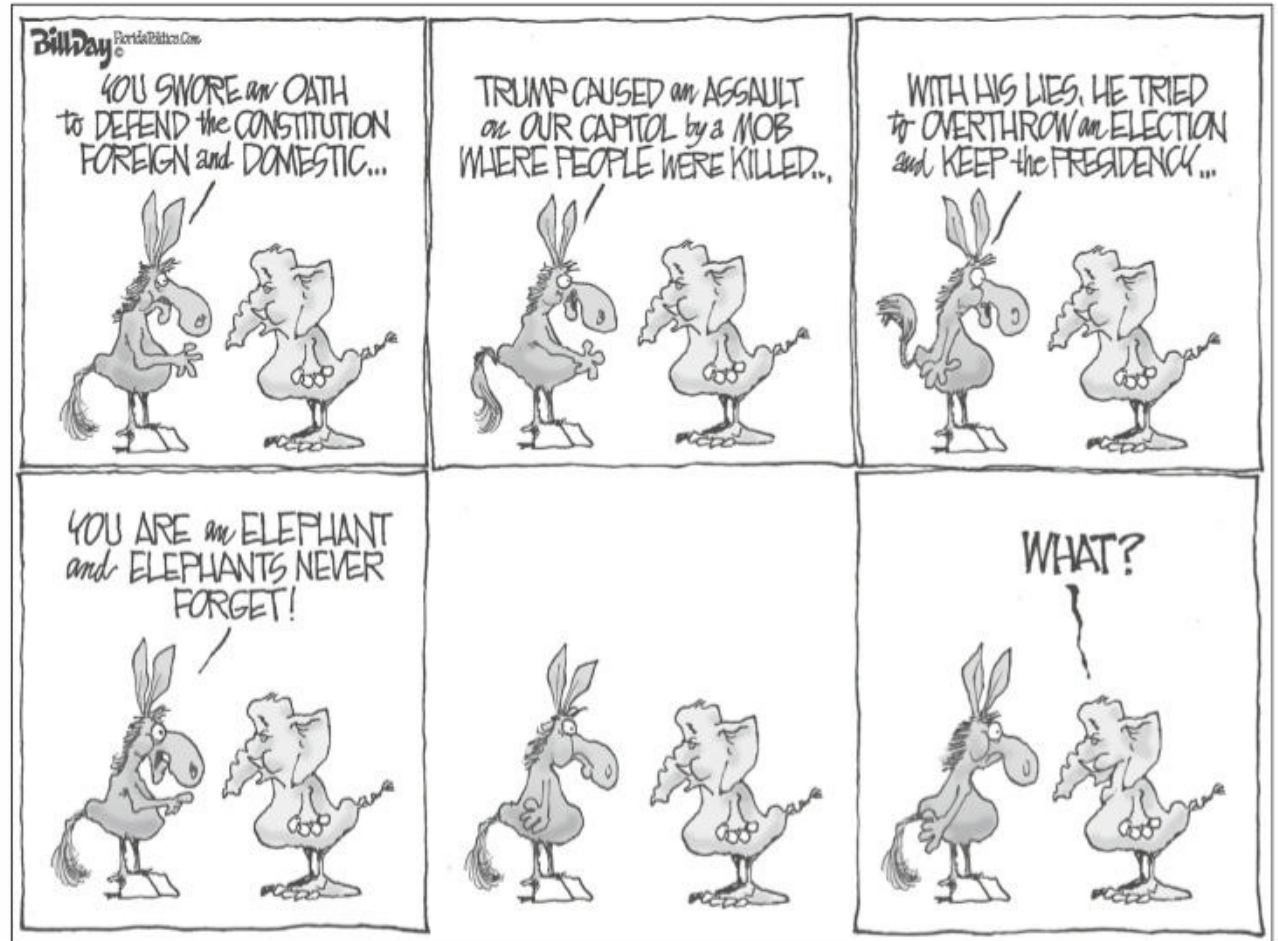
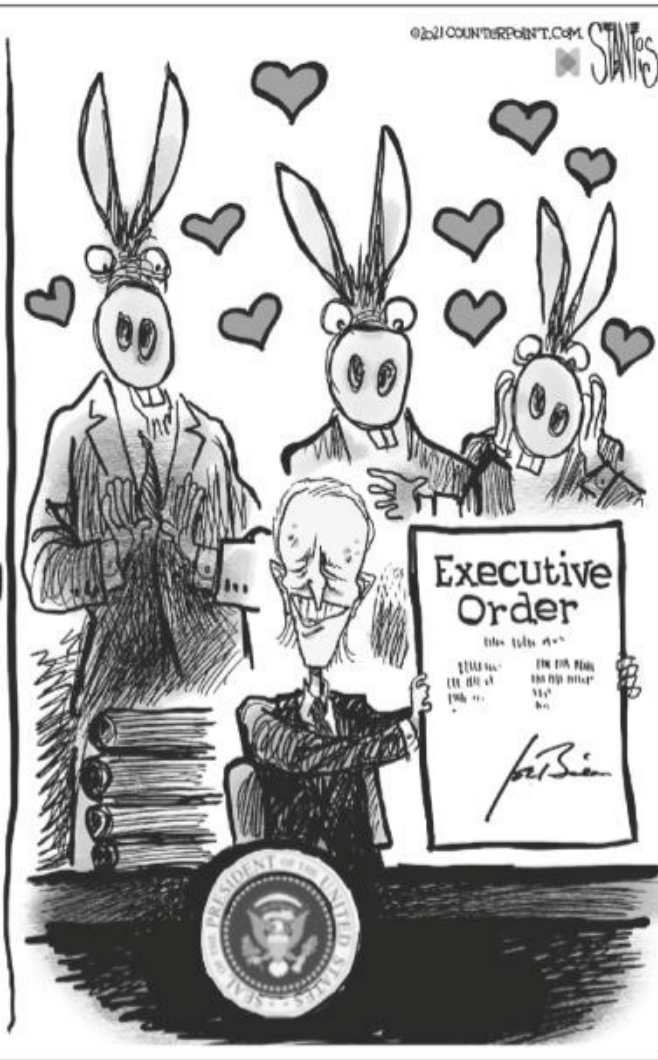
■ Days into his presidency, President Biden has a higher approval rating than former President Trump ever did. **55%** of Americans approve of Biden’s performance, including **92%** of Democrats, **52%** of independents, and **21%** of Republicans, while **32%** disapprove.  
Reuters/Ipsos

■ **51%** of Americans think the Senate should convict Trump of inciting the storming of the Capitol on Jan. 6. **37%** don’t think he should be convicted, and **12%** are unsure. **55%** believe Trump should be barred from ever holding office again.  
Reuters/Ipsos









Anti-Putin Riots Spread Across Russia





## Intel inside: A pathbreaker in need of a turnaround

Confronted with “the most critical juncture in its long and storied history,” Intel is bringing back its “boy wonder,” said **Therese Poletti** in *MarketWatch.com*. Still, its incoming CEO, Pat Gelsinger, “faces quite a task in returning the chip giant to the glory days.” An engineering whiz who spent most of his career at Intel, Gelsinger may be one of the few people who can “guide Intel out of the mess in which it currently resides.” The company that invented the microprocessor was long a driving force in the tech industry. But under CEO Bob Swan, who will leave in mid-February, Intel went from “having a two-year tech lead to being three years behind” in manufacturing technology. Progress is likely to be slow, but there is optimism around Santa Clara, Calif. One analyst called Gelsinger’s hiring “the biggest return of a prodigal son since Steve Jobs went back to Apple.”



Gelsinger is tasked with fixing Intel.

said he would outsource some work, but that Intel still plans to keep making most of its chips in the future—setting himself the “daunting” mission of recovering Intel’s manufacturing edge.

Intel’s challenges were on display at last week’s virtual Consumer Electronics Showcase, said **Chuong Nguyen** in *DigitalTrends.com*. Chip competitor AMD showcased its new Ryzen 5000 mobile processors, which it said could beat

A new chief executive will help stem Intel’s pressing “loss of talent,” said **Dan Gallagher** in *The Wall Street Journal*, but the company needs more than a morale boost. It’s now “two generations behind a fast-moving rival,” Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co., in its chip-making process. While TSMC is already making cutting-edge 5-nanometer chips, Intel’s “latest process for manufacturing chips at 7 nanometers ran into new problems” this summer. That has created pressure from Wall Street for Intel to outsource its production. Gelsinger last week

the performance of Intel’s 11th-gen Tiger Lake processors “by as much as 44 percent” while still offering “up to 17.5 hours of battery life.” While AMD was showing off its powerful new architecture for laptops, Intel’s much-promised new gaming chips “were a no-show.” Gelsinger is coming back to a competitive landscape very different from his earlier days at Intel, said **Clare Duffy** in *CNN.com*. The company “has in recent years lost its position as the industry’s undisputed leader”; competitors have bested it both in technology and in financial performance. Gelsinger not only has to solve the major delays in producing Intel’s next-generation chips, but also faces “unprecedented competition from former steadfast partners.” Apple’s success in building its own chips “will likely encourage other PC makers to explore” alternatives to Intel, too. Intel has to be “a different company going forward,” and we have yet to find out what its key innovations will be.

### Innovation of the week



Augmented-reality glasses are helping surgeons make sure their operations come off without mistakes, said **John McCormick** in *The Wall Street Journal*. Orthopedic surgeon Jonathan Vigdorichik at New York’s Hospital for Special Surgery recently donned spectacles made by Vuzix Corp. to perform the first augmented reality–assisted knee replacement. The glasses showed Vigdorichik a “3D model of the leg with a diagram of planned cuts.” When a surgeon “makes cuts exactly as planned, a green line appears as instruments are moving. If cuts are off, the line turns red.” Sensors clamped to the patient’s knee also transmit signals to the glasses, sending “a precise measurement of their spatial position in 3D” to help surgeons keep the ligaments in the knee in balance.

### Bytes: What’s new in tech

#### Google resists fees for news links

Google threatened to shut down its search engine in Australia if the government passes a bill forcing tech companies to pay for news links, said **Damien Cave** in *The New York Times*. Facebook, which “appeared with Google at an Australian Senate hearing” last week, “reaffirmed a threat of its own, vowing to block users in Australia from posting or sharing links to news if the bill is passed.” While Google has already “agreed to pay news publications in France under an agreement likely to lead to more deals across Europe,” Australia’s plan holds greater risks for the search giant. France gives Google broad leeway to negotiate prices with publishers, but under Australia’s proposed legislation, most negotiations between tech platforms and media companies are likely to end up at an “independent arbitration body.”

#### Trump pardon for trade secrets theft

Former President Trump granted a last-minute pardon to controversial onetime Google engineer Anthony Levandowski before leaving office last week, said **Kirsten Korosec** in *TechCrunch.com*. “A star engineer” renowned for being “an early pioneer of autonomous vehicles,” Levandowski was sentenced in August

to 18 months in prison for stealing trade secrets from Google, which he used to start Otto, the self-driving car company acquired by Uber. The actions triggered a “multi-year legal saga” beyond the criminal charges; Levandowski filed for bankruptcy protection last year after Google was awarded \$179 million in an arbitration case against him. But “Levandowski’s pardon was supported by technology founders and investors, including Founders Fund’s co-founder Peter Thiel,” a longtime backer of Trump’s.

#### Taking control of your browser tabs

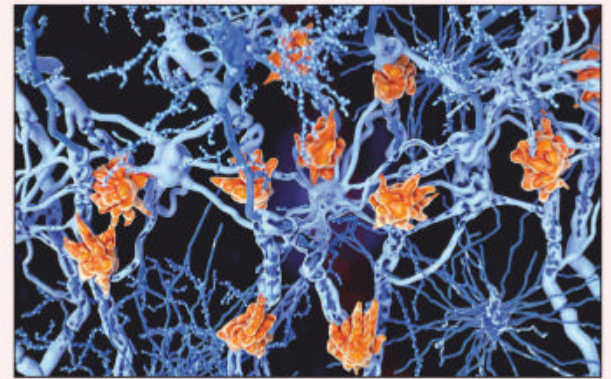
If you keep way too many tabs open in your browser hoping to get back to them later, you are far from alone, said **John Kehayias** in *Vice.com*. I’ve long “hoarded” tabs, opening more and more as computers got more powerful, “always going to the limit of what my computers were capable of.” I was afraid of missing something, but it was also a form of procrastination. Eventually, my computer would crash, and I’d add more RAM or an updated CPU to support my habit. But this New Year’s Day, I decided it was enough. I closed all 1,314 of my browser tabs and “let go.” Well, not totally. “Before I closed the tabs, I bookmarked them in a bunch of folders.”



## A potential vaccine for multiple sclerosis

The German firm that partnered with Pfizer to develop a Covid-19 vaccine in record time says it has applied the same breakthrough technology to create a new shot that could one day be used to treat or stop multiple sclerosis. BioNTech has been working on so-called mRNA vaccines for various diseases for several years, but the Covid-19 shots are the first to make it into widespread use, reports *VOANews.com*. Unlike traditional vaccines, which kick the immune system into action with an actual piece of the virus, or a dead or weakened version of the pathogen, mRNA shots instruct the patient's body to build a chunk of the virus itself. Multiple sclerosis,

though, is not caused by a virus but by the immune system malfunctioning and attacking the myelin sheath surrounding the nerve fibers, causing muscle weakness and neurological and sensory issues. Current treatments for MS suppress the entire immune system, which can leave patients vulnerable to infections. So rather than teaching the immune system to attack, BioNTech's experimental shot primes a set of "peacemaker" cells to quiet the immune cells destroying the myelin. In a new study on lab mice bred with a condition mirroring MS in humans, the experimental vaccine stopped all symptoms and halted further progression



*Immune cells attacking the myelin sheath*

of the disease. "Until you can get it into people, we won't know for sure" how well it works, says Drew Weissman of the University of Pennsylvania, who is working on mRNA vaccines to treat allergies. "But I think it has fantastic potential."



*Opening all windows is the safest option.*

### Cutting Covid risk in cars

What's the best way to stop the coronavirus spreading inside taxis and ride shares during the winter, when it's too cold or wet to open all the windows? Scientists have an answer—and it runs counter to intuition, reports the *New York Post*. The researchers created computer simulations of the airflow inside a Toyota Prius, traveling at 50 miles per hour, with a driver in the front left seat and a passenger in the back right. As expected, they found that opening all the windows was safest, reducing each occupant's exposure to aerosols exhaled by the other from 8 to 10 percent to 0.2 to 2 percent. The surprise was what happened when just two windows were open: Rather than opening the windows next to them, it was better for occupants to open the windows on the *opposite* side. This configuration created "an air current that acts like a barrier between the driver and the passenger," says lead author Varghese Mathai, from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. "While these measures are no substitute for wearing a face mask, they can help reduce the pathogen load."

### New Covid variant in California

Researchers in California have discovered a new variant of the coronavirus that may be responsible for several large outbreaks

in the state. The new strain, different from the highly contagious U.K. variant that is now spreading in the U.S., appears to have first emerged last July and lain low until November. But since then, it has been spotted in at least a dozen California counties and accounted for more than half the genomic samples collected in Los Angeles laboratories on Jan. 13. The strain has also been identified in at least 10 other states. Scientists aren't yet sure whether the variant is more contagious than other strains, or if it is simply cropping up more because lab work to identify different mutations is becoming increasingly sophisticated. What worries scientists is that the variant carries mutations in its spike protein, the part of the virus targeted by Covid-19 vaccines. That could potentially reduce the vaccines' effectiveness against the strain, something researchers are now studying. "This virus continues to mutate and adapt," Sara Cody, director of the Public Health Department in Santa Clara, tells the *Los Angeles Times*. "We cannot let down our guard."

### Vitamins C and E for Parkinson's?

People who eat a diet high in vitamins C and E may have a reduced risk of developing Parkinson's disease, reports *The New York Times*. Both vitamins are antioxidants—vitamin C is found in fruits and vegetables such as oranges, kale, and broccoli, and vitamin E in foods including almonds, avocado, and spinach. Researchers gathered health and diet data on 41,000 Swedish men and women over an average of 18 years, during which 465 of the participants developed Parkinson's. After adjusting for factors including age, sex, and alcohol consumption, the researchers found that the third of participants with the highest intake of vitamin C or E had a 32 percent reduced risk for Parkinson's compared with those with the lowest intake. For those in the top third for both vitamins, the risk was lowered by 38 percent. Lead author Essi Viding says more research is needed before definitive conclusions can be made. "In any case," she adds, "it's never wrong to implement a healthy diet."

### Thieving, deal-making monkeys

The long-tailed macaques who roam the Uluwatu Temple in Bali are notorious for stealing items from tourists and holding them to ransom for food. Now scientists have discovered that these cheeky monkeys are even smarter than they look—they learn over time which items are most valuable to the visitors and demand more food for higher-value loot. What's more, their ability to barter improves with age and experience. The researchers filmed interactions between the macaques and tourists for 273 days, reports *The Guardian* (U.K.).



*Phones for food*

They found that for low-value objects, the monkeys were more likely to accept a small snack. But for cellphones, prescription glasses, and other expensive gear, the bargaining took several minutes until a sufficient food ransom was agreed on. The longest wait before an item was returned was 25 minutes, including 17 minutes of negotiation. Lead author Jean-Baptiste Leca, from the University of Lethbridge in Canada, says the bartering is a sign of cultural intelligence: "These behaviors are socially learned, and have been maintained across generations of monkeys for at least 30 years."



## Review of reviews: Books

## Book of the week

**Work: A Deep History, From the Stone Age to the Age of Robots**

by James Suzman (Penguin, \$30)

James Suzman's version of human history "has a quasi-biblical feel," said Philip Coggan in *The Economist*. In his ambitious new book about the history of work, the U.K.-based anthropologist draws on his research among hunter-gatherers in the Kalahari Desert to paint a picture of pre-agrarian life that appears almost Edenic. Unlike today's harried wage earners, hunter-gatherers, he tells us, devoted only 15 to 17 hours a week to gathering food and another 15 to 20 to domestic chores. Otherwise, they enjoyed themselves, justifiably confident their resources wouldn't fail them. The agricultural revolution expelled us from that paradise, and Suzman's fashionably grim view of the fallout "may strike a chord with many readers": He doesn't deny the positive effects of that revolution but argues that we've been relatively discontented ever since.

*Work* eventually develops into "a devastat-



Ju/'hoansi reenact a scene from their idyllic past.

ing critique of consumer capitalism," said Joe Humphreys in *The Irish Times*. After all, for many millennia the great advantage of being human, said Jill Lepore in *The New Yorker*, was that we had figured out how to feed ourselves while spending a fraction as much time on the task as gorillas and other primates do. Farming increased food production, but with the result of increasing population to the point that many people always went hungry. And because agriculture replaced egalitarian communities with social hierarchies, some

of the hungry were the serfs tilling the land.

Throughout *Work*, "there is eminently underlinable stuff on most pages," said James Marriott in *The Times* (U.K.). Still, when the book reaches the industrial revolution and the centuries since, Suzman "writes with less conviction and less detail." You can read into those later chapters, though, that leisure, not work, has been the key element in humanity's exceptionalism, said Derek Thompson in *The Atlantic*. As Suzman describes the creep toward 80-hour work weeks and 24/7 work anxiety, you remember his descriptions of the Ju/'hoansi of Southern Africa and how he observed them spending their free daylight hours gossiping and flirting and their nights singing and telling stories by a fire. Crucially, the tribe had developed customs to quash status seeking, inequality, and other drivers of overwork, regularly demeaning the group's hunters and instead celebrating whichever person had crafted the arrow used in the day's kill. However you look it, "safeguarding leisure is work," an idea that offers the "tantalizing" possibility that the Ju/'hoansi can teach us how to live better, at least at the individual level.

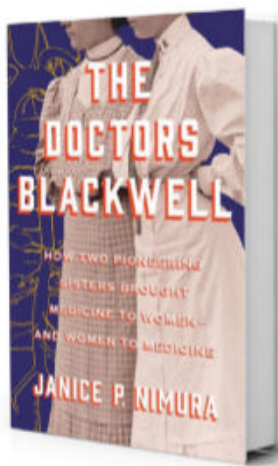
**Novel of the week**  
**Detransition, Baby**

by Torrey Peters (One World, \$27)

*Detransition, Baby* might be the first great trans novel in the realist tradition, said Grace Lavery in *TheGuardian.com*. "Witty, elegant, and rigorously plotted," the book builds a comedy of manners around two trans characters and a pregnant woman who devise a plan to raise a baby together. Author Torrey Peters, a trans woman herself, focuses primarily on Ames and Reese, who were a couple before Ames decided to transition back to male and then, to his surprise, impregnated his female boss. But for all of Peters' "electric" writing about being trans, her novel's appeal lies in the way it insists on the commonalities between cis and trans experience. "*Detransition, Baby* is that rare social comedy in which the author cuts people up not to judge them," said Noah Berlatsky in the *Los Angeles Times*. Instead, Peters shows how each character creates an identity from learned bits and pieces about gender and love, and as with any of us, the pieces don't all quite fit. Though the ending seems a mild cop-out, "the denial of closure functions as a note-perfect withholding of moral clarity."

**The Doctors Blackwell: How Two Pioneering Sisters Brought Medicine to Women and Women to Medicine**

by Janice P. Nimura (Norton, \$28)



The first woman in America to earn a medical degree was not a perfect feminist hero, said Jennifer Szalai in *The New York Times*. Elizabeth Blackwell, who talked her sister Emily into becoming the nation's third female doctor a few years later, was generally disdainful of other women. They are, she once wrote, "so often careless mothers, weak wives, poor housekeepers, ignorant nurses, and frivolous human beings." But we don't get to choose history's trailblazers, and instead of presenting a simple homage to the Blackwells, Janice Nimura's new book offers "something stranger and more absorbing": a dual portrait that's memorable because it captures the sisters' flaws and idiosyncrasies.

The book reminds us how odd their era

was, said Donna Rifkind in *The Wall Street Journal*. "Only the thinnest veneer of gentility" disguised the cruelty of 1847 America, and Elizabeth won entry to a medical school in western New York that year only because the decision was left to the male students and they admitted her for sport. The hospitals where she and her sister vainly sought work were better at spreading disease and suffering than at healing, yet the Blackwells had to establish their own hospital, in 1857 Manhattan, to secure steady employment. Their Infirmary for Women and Children was inspired less by idealism than pragmatism, as was the medical school for women that they created a decade later. The sisters both disdained the suffragist movement, and when engaged with patients, they displayed a "curious lack of compassion."

"Theirs is not a warm and fuzzy story," said Ann Levin in *USA Today*. "But it is inspiring." Though Elizabeth never abandoned her belief that disease stemmed from moral failures, the bravery and independence that she and Emily displayed were "nothing short of astonishing." Today, women account for more than half of U.S. medical students. How much credit the Blackwell sisters deserve for the change is debatable, but "every story needs a beginning, and this one starts with them."



## Best books...chosen by Lisa Gardner

In Lisa Gardner's new crime thriller, *Before She Disappeared*, an amateur sleuth moves to a Haitian neighborhood in Boston to investigate a teenager's disappearance. Below, the best-selling author recommends six other books featuring powerful female leads.



**The Silent Wife** by Karin Slaughter (2020). Slaughter's most recent novel featuring medical examiner Sara Linton is a brilliant mix of a current murder case and a reckoning with ghosts of the past. The result is a breathless serial-killer thriller with a very human edge.

**Confessions on the 7:45** by Lisa Unger (2020). This modern-day twist on *Strangers on a Train* dazzled me from page one. For Selena Murphy, revealing to a fellow train passenger that she just saw a video of her husband screwing their nanny is cathartic. Until the nanny goes missing. Until she starts receiving texts from the other passenger. And down the rabbit hole you go.

**A Conspiracy of Bones** by Kathy Reichs (2020). Temperance Brennan is a forensic anthropologist, a woman of science dealing with the dark underbelly of human desires. In *Conspiracy*, her very sanity is attacked. Trying to recover from neurosurgery, still racked by migraines and possible hallucinations, Temperance receives a string of mysterious texts containing the image of a corpse. What follows is a Hitchcockian tale of survival. I love this edgy series.

**My Sister the Serial Killer** by Oyinkan Braithwaite (2018). Korede knows things most sisters don't: how to best dispose of a body; how bleach destroys evidence. Now her sister Ayoola's third boyfriend is dead, and Korede is tiring of the routine. This groundbreaking novel is not about what it means to be a killer, but about what it means to love a sociopath that your family created.

**Murder on Cold Street** by Sherry Thomas (2020). Thomas' brilliant take on Sherlock Holmes makes him a brother invented for cover by actual sleuth Charlotte Holmes. The series cleverly incorporates classic Sherlock elements while adding the raw edge of a brilliant woman trying to conform to Victorian societal norms.

**Beating About the Bush** by M.C. Beaton (2019). Agatha Raisin is like Miss Marple with a drinking problem. She's rude, opinionated, obsesses over gin and tonics, and once confronted with a problem, can't let it go. The series' 30th installment is the perfect one-night read. It will make you gasp, laugh, and feel like you had a fabulous night out with your favorite girlfriend.

## Author of the week

### Amanda Gorman

Americans are sure to remember Amanda Gorman long after other memories of Inauguration Day 2021 fade away, said **Hanna Krueger** in *The Boston Globe*. The youngest inaugural poet in U.S. history delivered an original



five-minute poem that "outshone even the performances of megawatt stars like Jennifer Lopez and

Lady Gaga." On social media, the 22-year-old Los Angeles native and recent Harvard graduate became by far the most buzzed-about figure of the day. At Amazon.com, her two books due for fall publication suddenly ranked as Nos. 1 and 2 on the best-seller list. "I am on the floor," Gorman wrote on Twitter, where she suddenly had more than a million new followers.

Many of Gorman's new fans learned only later of the personal hurdle she'd overcome just to recite her work, said **Katie Kindelan** in *ABCNews.com*. She grew up with a speech impediment that makes certain consonants hard to pronounce, and R's remain a challenge. "I was kind of like why in the world did I put 'rise' in my poem five times?" she said the day after the event. She also had faced a tight deadline, finishing the poem only after watching rioters storm the Capitol on Jan. 6 in their attempt to reverse the outcome of November's election. "That was the day that the poem really came to life," she said, recalling staying up into that night writing about having witnessed "a force that would shatter our nation rather than share it." Various interviewers last week inquired if she still dreams of running for president in 2036, as she had told a newspaper when she was just 19. "Oh, heck yeah," she said. "Planning on it."

## Also of interest...in bodies in motion

### Exercised

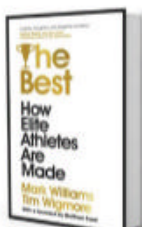
by Daniel Lieberman (Pantheon, \$30)



"Books about exercise are nothing new," said Jen Miller in *The New York Times*. But Daniel Lieberman's status as an evolutionary biologist and admitted workout-hater "allows him a distinct vantage." Our couch-potato inclinations are understandable, he argues, because our ancient ancestors, though more active, were similarly averse to expending more energy than was necessary to survive. Lieberman eventually sketches what routine exercise should look like, but he won't judge you for skipping it.

### The Best

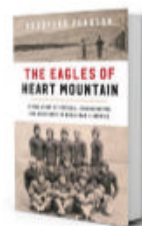
by Mark Williams and Tim Wigmore (Nicholas Brealey, \$25)



There is no one formula for producing an elite athlete, said Liz Robbins in *The Washington Post*. Still, this book by a sportswriter and a kinesiologist provides tips that "range from useful to delightful." The writing has "a distinct British accent" despite the inclusion of interviews with Steph Curry and Pete Sampras, but the insights are universal: If you want to be the best, try to be a younger sibling from a midsize town, then develop a "quiet eye" in competition.

### The Eagles of Heart Mountain

by Bradford Pearson (Atria, \$28)



There's less football in this book than readers might expect, said Olive Fellows in *CSMonitor.com*. But author Bradford Pearson has poured careful research and "a whole lot of heart" into his inspired story of a World War II Japanese-American internment camp and the high school gridiron team. Every page underscores the absurdity of treating these all-American families as enemies, and the Eagles' success punctuates the point. "When the sportswriting does pop up, it is nothing short of glorious."

### The Walker

by Matthew Beaumont (Verso, \$30)



Despite its subject, this book proves to be "anything but pedestrian," said Willard Spiegelman in *The Wall Street Journal*. Literary scholar Matthew Beaumont asks us to contemplate the poetics of urban strolling, and as he considers Paris and London, Balzac and Baudelaire, "epiphanies can occur on pavements or pages anywhere." He's particularly good on Georges Bataille's 1929 essay about the big toe, and particularly worried about how surveillance technologies affect the pedestrian experience.



**Exhibit of the week****Salman Toor: How Will I Know**

Whitney Museum of American Art,  
New York City, through April 4

Salman Toor's paintings "begin to pluck at your heartstrings almost as soon as you see them," said **Roberta Smith** in *The New York Times*. The Pakistani-American artist, who was born in Lahore in 1983 and came to the U.S. at 19, is experiencing an unlikely but deserved mid-pandemic breakout based on 15 of his paintings that are currently hanging in the lobby of New York's Whitney Museum. Blending various illustration and pre-20th century painting styles, Toor ([salmantoor.com](http://salmantoor.com)) creates images that capture in small moments the experience of young gay South Asian men living mostly in America. Though the men are sometimes safe, sometimes not, "the mood in these paintings is introspective yet ever-so-slightly comedic even when things turn sinister." Toor's delicate brushstrokes, his colors, and his skill with facial expressions combine to exert "an emotional pull that is rare."

"Toor can certainly draw," said **Peter Plagens** in *The Wall Street Journal*. He spent years copying the works of various past masters, and "he obviously picked



Toor's Four Friends: A fleeting joy

up what he needed to know there" before applying those lessons to scenes that might have come from his own life. *Man With Face Creams and Phone Plugs* could be a Pakistani expat passing through airport security. *Bedroom Boy* (2019) shows a young man lying naked in bed, apparently taking a nude selfie. Though Toor's small paintings tend to be stronger because they're so rooted in the everyday, *Bar Boy*, also from 2019, is "a wonderful exception": The 4-by-5-foot work centers a thin

young man standing still in a crowded bar and gazing down at his phone. He could be ill at ease or thrilled that he's found a place to text his friends about. Even Toor's color choices contribute to a sense that life is a series of fleeting moments of happiness unfolding against the constant background threat of societal oppression. "The prospects for lasting or profound happiness do not shine bright, but they do flicker."

Toor credits a recent spike in the sales prices of his work to "a handshake between the culture and the market," said **Cody Delistraty**, also in the *Journal*. In December, two of his paintings sold at auction at several times their estimated value. "It's a capitalist system," he says, "and people have decided to devour marginalized experiences and bodies all over again." But while the Whitney show "invites the visitor to become voyeur," privy to the tension between the public and private lives of its gay foreign-born subjects, said **Isabel Ling** in *Hyperallergic.com*, Toor imbues each character with irreducible dignity. None of his other works does this better than *Four Friends*, a painting in which the main subject, in the company of three men of similar background, is "experiencing freedom in a moment of dance and uninhibited joy."

**Jazmine Sullivan**

Heaux Tales

★★★★★



Jazmine Sullivan's bleak but beautiful new E.P. is a series of character sketches, said **Jon Pareles** in *The New York Times*. The title Frenchifies the word *ho*, signaling

the theme of a record that "looks behind dismissive stereotypes—party girl, avenger, sex addict, gold digger, cheater, castoff—to show complicated human longings behind them." Sullivan, who will sing the national anthem at next week's Super Bowl, is a virtuosic R&B performer whose music "carries the churchy, high-stakes emotionality and down-to-earth detail of vintage Southern soul into the everyday situations and electronic soundscapes of hip-hop." Here, her protagonists wound or get wounded, yet persevere. Interwoven with the songs are spoken passages that feature several women in Sullivan's life, said **Jeff Ihaza** in *Rolling Stone*. Their unscripted declarations can be so provocative that they can't be ignored. The songs reach a different realm, assembling "a complete constellation of love and loss," one that "shows us how to be patient with pain."

**Buck Meek**

Two Savors

★★★★★



Buck Meek's mellow second solo album feels like a Louisiana summer—"perfect to soundtrack a slow walk with no intention or any place to rush to," said **Maeri Ferguson** in

*NoDepression.com*. The Big Thief guitarist and his backing musicians recorded straight to tape in a house in New Orleans, and you can hear the heat of July in the record's "hazy twang and textured, full arrangements." From the opener, "Pareidolia," a song about seeing imagined images in clouds and shadows, "a dreamlike state washes over the whole thing." Unexpected splashes of color are added by pedal steel and slide guitars, organ, piano, and fiddle. Meek is such a hesitant, bashful singer that "he sounds like he might be singing just over your shoulder," said **Jayson Greene** in *Pitchfork.com*. "This is very comfortable music, but Meek threads strange disturbances into his weave. Residing alongside the blankets and stars and blue jays of his lyric sheet are darker things—faces forming on the ceiling, broken tongues, swimming pools full of turpentine."

**Rhye**

Home

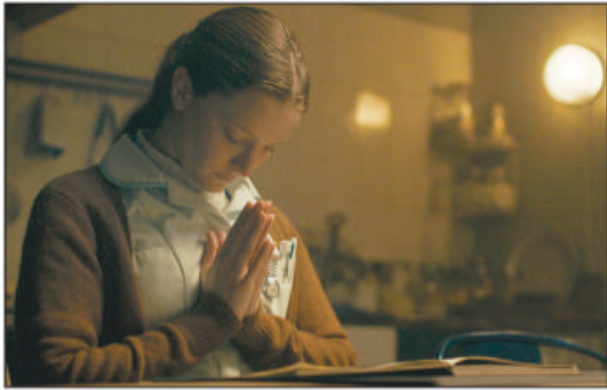
★★★★★



The fourth album from Rhye "strikes a soothing note of calm for frayed nerves," said **Jem Aswad** in *Variety*. A project begun in 2012, Rhye features

Canadian songwriter-producer Mike Milosh singing in a "crystalline" voice that's commonly mistaken for a woman's. The music is "generally low-key and unhurried, with R&B flourishes embellished with washes of electronics or swooning strings." On this record, "Black Rain" makes a bid for dance-club play, "with a driving four-on-the-floor rhythm, handclaps, and disco-style string stabs." Even so, it's an interpretation of disco so chill that it "barely breaks a sweat." Most of the rest of the album is typical Rhye fare: bedroom slow jams with "the disembodied grace of liturgical music," said **Mark Richardson** in *The Wall Street Journal*. Three tracks here even feature the Danish National Girls' Choir. The record, though "narrow in tone" and "a touch shallow emotionally," delivers many pleasures, "especially on the level of production." Milosh remains a cipher, but he makes "consistently lovely" albums.





Clark's zealot: A dangerous devotion

## Saint Maud



Watching Rose Glass' "wickedly crafted" directorial debut, fans of haute horror "might feel like they're having a religious experience," said **David Ehrlich** in *IndieWire.com*. A "divine" Morfydd Clark stars as a young Catholic nurse in coastal England who's teetering between ecstatic religious devotion and mental illness when she begins caring for a regal but terminally ill former dancer. "Soft-spoken but vibrating with serial-killer intensity," Maud eventually takes it upon herself to try to save the soul of her atheist client (an "extraordinary" Jennifer Ehle), "but there's no mistaking that Maud is a horror movie unto herself." The film doesn't dismiss Maud's brand of faith, said **Matthew Monagle** in *AustinChronicle.com*.

It recognizes that people who believe that humanity is engaged in ongoing conflict against the devil "defy easy comprehension." Many viewers will suspect they know where Maud's spiritual crisis is heading, "but that drains it of precisely none of its guttural power," said **Phil de Semlyen** in *TimeOut.com*. "I've seen *Saint Maud* twice, and each time it found new ways to freak me out. It will haunt your dreams." (*In theaters now; on demand Feb. 12*) **R**

### Other new movies

#### No Man's Land

The unusual premise of this borderland drama doesn't redeem all its shortcomings, "but it comes close," said Bill Goodykoontz in *The Arizona Republic*. When a boy dies in a skirmish at the Texas-Mexico border, a young man fleeing arrest crosses into Mexico and discovers he's been ignorant about its people. Jake Allyn "gives such a charming performance" that it's possible to overlook some unlikely turns and enjoy the scenery and good intentions. (*In theaters or \$7 on demand*) **PG-13**

#### Cowboys

"What a pleasure to see Steve Zahn in a leading role that fully capitalizes on the contradictory currents coursing through his screen persona," said David Rooney in *HollywoodReporter.com*. With his "wired energy" and "grounded warmth," the underrated actor carries this gentle outlaw Western about a bipolar father who defies

his ex (Jillian Bell) when he whisks their 11-year-old transgender son away on a trek through Montana. "The plotting is a bit thin," but *Cowboys* movingly captures "the soulful connection of two misunderstood outsiders." (*\$12 via virtual cinemas*) **Not rated**

#### Spoor

Agnieszka Holland's new eco-feminist crime caper has been widely celebrated, said Ben Kenigsberg in *The New York Times*. "A nature reverie wrapped around a mystery," the Polish award-winner features Agnieszka Mandat as an educated loner who questions why "Thou shalt not kill" doesn't apply to animals and becomes a suspect when her town's hunters start turning up dead. "Confusingly elliptical" storytelling undercuts the film's impact, yet it remains "sensationally atmospheric," with a wintry setting and orchestral score that "hit on a primal level." (*\$7 on demand*) **Not rated**

#### The Night

The Overlook Hotel has a worthy new successor, said Matt Fagerholm in *RogerEbert.com*. Set in Los Angeles' Hotel Normandie, Kourosh Ahari's psychological thriller chronicles a deeply restless night for an Iranian couple and their baby. Shahab Hosseini and Niousha Jafarian co-star in the mostly Farsi-language drama, and "though I could more or less guess every twist, Ahari's picture still managed to unnerve me with its remarkable evocation of Kubrickian horror." (*In theaters or \$7 on demand*) **Not rated**

## Soldier Songs: A new road opens for opera

It takes real imagination to create an opera production that "transcends 'OK for lockdown' status," said **David Patrick Stearns** in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. But Opera Philadelphia's new filmed interpretation of a 2006 monodrama



McCullough's damaged warrior

about a combat veteran feels like an enduring work of art. Available to stream and shot in and around a trailer parked near the site of the Battle of Brandywine, *Soldier Songs* was directed and co-written by its featured performer, the gifted young baritone Johnathan McCullough. McCullough, while singing, "has an extraordinary way of communicating intimate emotions to the camera without playing directly into it." But his theatrical vision proves even more impressive, as his video adaptation immerses viewers in the character's journey from a teen playing video games to an older man managing trauma. Even when the music of composer David T. Little "goes on too long for its own good," McCullough "seizes upon the screen time to further illuminate the character's inner world."

Among U.S. opera companies, Opera Philadelphia has become "a pace-setter for virtual performance," said **Seth Colter Walls** in *The New York Times*. The company launched a streaming service in October

to showcase mostly new productions, and *Soldier Songs*, the service's third offering, is revelatory. Memories intersect in the props themselves: The trailer becomes a combat tank; a red birthday cake evokes a battlefield wound; and McCullough's visual playfulness "accords with the subtlety of the score's blend of post-minimalist and hard-rock influences." Though the hour-long work is humbler than a movie, it is so skillfully directed that comparisons to such famous opera adaptations as Ingmar Bergman's *The Magic Flute* are not a stretch. Until opera fans can enjoy live performances again, Opera Philadelphia's slate of short existing and forthcoming videos "promises to be one of the best bets going, worldwide." *\$25, OperaPhila.tv, through May 31*

### More opera for streaming

#### The Kaiser of Atlantis

Masks muffle some voices in this filmed version of an opera staged outdoors this past fall, said *The Wall Street Journal*. But the Atlanta Opera does most everything else right in its adaptation of a 1943 work by a Jewish composer in a Nazi concentration camp. The title character is a despot who becomes so murderous that even Death objects, and the director "leavens the nightmarish satire with humanity." *\$20, AtlantaOpera.org*

#### The Fall of the House of Usher

Boston's Lyric Opera has transformed a 1987 Philip Glass opera into an "arresting" animated film, said *The New Yorker*. The main drama is still derived from an Edgar Allan Poe novella, but the vocal performances are new, and Poe's cursed siblings have been dreamed up by a Guatemalan migrant. *\$10, OperaBox.tv*

#### Live in HD/The Metropolitan Opera

Throughout the Covid shutdown, free nightly broadcasts of past productions at the Met have been "immensely popular," said *TimeOut.com*. The institution's Black History Month selections include a 1978 production of *Tosca* featuring Shirley Verrett (Feb. 7), and Jessye Norman in a 1989 production of Wagner's *Die Walküre* (Feb. 14). *MetOpera.org*



## Streaming tips

A murderers' row...

**The Night Stalker: Hunt for a Serial Killer**

Los Angeles was terrorized in the summer of 1985 when an unknown fiend went on a rape and murder spree whose victims ranged in age from 6 to 83. The story of the hunt for Richard Ramirez has given Netflix another true-crime hit series. *Netflix*

**I Love You, Now Die: The Commonwealth v. Michelle Carter**

Her texts to her boyfriend shocked the nation, and teenager Michelle Carter was soon convicted for encouraging the young man's suicide. This gripping documentary goes inside the trial, asking big questions about the power of speech. *HBO Max*

**The Killing Season**

An in-depth look at the unsolved case of a Long Island serial killer becomes a devastating investigation into scores of overlooked murders. *Amazon Prime*

**Killing for Love**

It was a lurid tale: A student couple from the University of Virginia had conspired in the 1985 murder of the young woman's parents. This documentary favors the courtroom contention of the boyfriend that he had falsely confessed to protect the woman he loved. *Hulu*

**Without Charity**

In 2000, three contractors in Lakeville, Ind., were bound and shot dead by burglars who'd been tipped on how to enter the property by a local 18-year-old. This 2013 documentary focuses on that accomplice, Charity Payne, who was initially given a 165-year sentence. *Amazon Prime*

**Murder Mountain**

In a docuseries set in the Northern California heart of U.S. marijuana farming, the murder of a transplanted San Diego surfer prompts a private investigation. Findings include a Wild West culture and a string of related killings that have gone unpunished. *Netflix*

## The Week's guide to what's worth watching

**The Investigation**

Nordic crime fiction can get pretty dark. But when a real-life Copenhagen-based journalist disappeared in 2017 after she accepted a ride on an inventor's homemade submarine, Denmark showed another side. In this six-part Danish drama series, director Tobias Lindholm focuses on the heroic work of the detectives, divers, and scientists who worked doggedly to convict Kim Wall's murderer and bring some peace to her parents and a shaken nation. *Monday, Feb. 1, at 10 p.m., HBO*

**Firefly Lane**

Tully and Kate vowed as eighth-graders to be best friends forever. In this new drama series based on Kristen Hannah's best-selling novel, Katherine Heigl and Sarah Chalke play the pair as they share ups and downs across three decades until an act of betrayal threatens to destroy their bond forever. *Available for streaming Wednesday, Feb. 3, Netflix*

**30 for 30: Al Davis vs. the NFL**

Pro football's greatest all-time rivalry? It might just have been the decades-long feud between Oakland Raiders owner Al Davis and longtime NFL Commissioner Pete Rozelle. This new documentary traces it back to Davis' reign as commissioner of the rival AFL, revealing that many of Davis' seemingly self-serving provocations were instrumental in the NFL's development. *Thursday, Feb. 4, at 9 p.m., ESPN*

**Bliss**

Owen Wilson and Salma Hayek, two stars of the early 2000s, join forces in a mind-bending new movie about a recent divorcé who meets a mysterious woman who lives on the streets and convinces him that the world of his everyday problems and worries is a simulation. Unfortunately, the dream world she ushers him into turns out to be far from stable. *Available for streaming Friday, Feb. 5, Amazon Prime*

**Earwig and the Witch**

Japan's legendary Studio Ghibli has long been known for its magical hand-drawn animated



Earwig and the Witch: A new breed of kid magic

features. The studio's first foray into computer animation doesn't match Pixar's current level of technical artistry, but it doesn't have to. It adapts a recent British children's book about a fearless orphan who's adopted by a witch and makes her grim new situation work for her. With a cameo voice role by longtime Ghibli fan Kacey Musgraves. *Available for streaming Friday, Feb. 5, HBO Max*

**Other highlights**
**9 to 5: The Story of a Movement**

A documentary revisits the secretaries of the 1970s who united in a grassroots campaign for workplace equality, inspiring lasting change and an iconic 1980 movie. *Monday, Feb. 1, at 10 p.m., PBS; check local listings*

**Super Bowl LV**

Football's biggest game promises an epic quarterback showdown as Patrick Mahomes and the Kansas City Chiefs face Tom Brady's Tampa Bay Buccaneers, in Tampa. The Weeknd headlines the halftime show following his record-breaking 2020. *Sunday, Feb. 7, at 6 p.m., CBS*

**The Equalizer**

A tough guy-for-hire series that ran in the 1980s gets a reboot with a twist: Queen Latifah now stars, playing a no-nonsense former CIA operative who uses her skills to help people in need. *Sunday, Feb. 7, at 10 p.m., CBS*



Modern lovers Washington and Zendaya

**Show of the week**  
**Malcolm & Marie**

Sam Levinson's intimate new black-and-white drama gives at least one rising star a fighting chance at bringing home hardware in an unconventional Oscar race. Emmy winner Zendaya and *Tenet*'s John David Washington play the title characters, a couple that has just returned home from a movie premiere at which Malcolm, a director, forgot to thank Marie, his film's apparent muse. A long night of argument and revelation follows. Think a John Cassavetes two-hander but with dialogue that sounds like today and that has sharply divided today's critics. *Available for streaming Friday, Feb. 5, Netflix*



## Food &amp; Drink

**Egg foo yung: How to make the restaurant classic at home**

“Eggs have a way of taking care of you, especially in lean times,” said Hsiao-Ching Chou in *Vegetarian Chinese Soul Food* (Sasquatch Books). If I didn’t love eggs so much, my new cookbook would be vegan, not vegetarian. But to me, a wok-fried egg in soy sauce is perfection, and everyone loves egg foo yung.

Egg foo yung is “basically a fluffy omelet with gravy.” Chinese restaurants puff up the eggs by deep-frying them in a wok. I’ve included a shallow-fry method for anyone who prefers it.

**Recipe of the week**  
**Homestyle egg foo yung**

*For a curry gravy:*

1½ tbsp vegetable oil  
1½ tbsp all-purpose flour  
1 tsp curry powder (optional)  
1 tsp black bean garlic sauce  
1½ tsp soy sauce, such as Kimlan

*For the omelets:*

1½ cups bean sprouts, roughly chopped  
2 stalks green onions, finely chopped  
1 cup shredded Taiwanese cabbage or regular green cabbage  
½ cup roughly chopped mushrooms  
½ tsp kosher salt  
⅛ tsp white pepper powder  
4 large eggs, beaten



*Simple but satisfying, especially with a side*

Vegetable oil, for frying  
Finely chopped green onions, for garnish

*To make gravy:* In a small pot over medium heat oil until surface shimmers. Sprinkle in flour and curry powder, and stir with a whisk. Add 1 cup water plus black bean garlic sauce and soy sauce. Whisk to combine. Let sauce come to a simmer, whisking occasionally as it thickens. If it becomes too thick, whisk in 1 to 2 tbsp more water. Remove from heat, cover, and set aside.

*To make omelets:* In a large bowl, using tongs, combine bean sprouts, onions, cab-

bage, mushrooms, salt, and white pepper. Add eggs, mixing to incorporate. Set aside.

For the shallow-fry method, in an 8-inch skillet heat ½ cup vegetable oil over medium heat until oil shimmers. Scoop up about 1 cup of egg mixture, carefully pour it into center of pan, and spread it like a pancake. Turn heat to medium low. Fry until slightly browned, 1 to 2 minutes. Carefully flip and cook another 1 to 2 minutes. Transfer to a platter and repeat with remaining mixture.

For the deep-fry method, fill a large Dutch oven at least one-third full with vegetable oil. Over medium heat, bring oil temperature to 325. Line a platter with paper towels. Using a heatproof ladle, slowly tip a ladleful of egg mixture into oil. Ladle in remaining mixture, leaving room for both omelets to float freely. Fry until bottoms are golden, 1 to 2 minutes. Flip and repeat. Transfer browned omelets to platter.

Reheat gravy over low heat. Arrange omelets on serving plates and spoon on gravy. Top with chopped green onions. Makes 2 omelets.

**Correction:** The recipe for skillet meatloaf in our Jan. 22 issue omitted the oven setting. The oven should be preheated to 375 and the meatloaf cooked on a low rack.

**Michelin goes vegan: A first-ever star for plant-based cuisine**

*Vallée in her kitchen*

“Lemongrass, seaweed, and fir are not the sorts of ingredients that once earned French chefs plaudits in the Michelin Guide,” said **Aurelien Breeden** in *The New York Times*. But tastes are changing, even in the land of *boeuf bourguignon*, and the red bible of culinary excellence has taken note. Last week, the guide for the first time bestowed one of its coveted stars on a vegan-only restaurant. ONA (for *origine non-animale*) is the creation of chef Claire Vallée, who developed her passion for vegan cuisine following a year that she spent living in Thailand to hone her knowledge of Asian cooking. Michelin had previously awarded stars to scores of vegetarian restaurants but never to a vegan-only establishment.

“It’s wonderful to see vegan cuisine getting the kind of official recognition it deserves,” said **Katherine Martinko** in *Treehugger.com*. But gourmands eager to sample Vallée’s groundbreaking seasonal cooking may have to wait until France’s Covid restrictions end and ONA reopens. The restaurant, located in the resort town of Arès in coastal southwestern France, was launched in 2016 using crowdfunding after local banks balked at the vegan concept. A hint of what Vallée does there can be glimpsed in the Michelin Guide’s mentions of black truffle gnocchi, peas and beans in barberry brine, and vegetable-ricotta meatballs with candied lemon. A handful of her recipes can be found (in French) at [Rue89bordeaux.com](http://Rue89bordeaux.com), and *Daily Mail* writer Sarah Rainey attempted them. Though she achieved “utterly delicious” results at least once, Rainey was mostly unable to match the techniques and ingredient demands of the master. “There’s no denying her food, with its foams and flourishes, looks impressive,” she wrote.

**Wine: Red Sancerre**

Over the past several years, red wines from Sancerre have undergone “a remarkable change,” said Roger Voss in *Wine Enthusiast*. The region previously made “thin and weedy” pinot noir as reliably as it produced praiseworthy sauvignon blanc. But climate change is blessing the pinot noir grapes with warmer days, resulting in “succulent” new Sancerre reds that are “close to attaining the heights of Burgundian pinot noir.”

**2014 Pierre Prieur et Fils Cuvée Maréchal Prieur** (\$35). “Suave, balanced, and totally ready to drink,” this red Sancerre has a smoky note atop black fruit and spice.

**2018 Michel Vattan B-C** (\$30). Acidity and “a hint of pepper” add interest to the blackberry notes of this “soft and fruity” pinot.

**2015 Lucien Crochet La Croix du Roy** (\$32). Time has benefited this 2015: It’s now “a smooth, structured, cherry jam-flavored wine.”





## Travel in 2021: What to know before booking a vacation

For many Americans tired of being stuck at home, whether to book a spring or summer getaway “may be one of the most difficult decisions of 2021,” said **Christopher Elliott** in *The Washington Post*. With Covid-19 vaccinations underway, optimism is spreading among the public that recreational travel will again be safe at some point this year. Travel agencies report fielding a sudden deluge of inquiries. But with the death toll exceeding 400,000 and variants of the disease spreading, many savvy travelers are managing the risks by planning only trips that can be made by car, sticking to outdoor activities, and avoiding destinations that may attract large crowds. “And they most definitely will have a Plan B.” There’s no shortage out there of potential game changers, after all. “International travel bans, public health warnings, and local quarantines and restrictions all add up.” For the same reason, “now perhaps more than ever, experts are recommending travel insurance.”



Think simple, nearby, and outdoors.

“Until the world has herd immunity, travel needs to be approached cautiously,” said **Johanna Read** in *National Geographic*. “No one is safe until everyone is safe,” and the more transmissible new strains of the coronavirus could mean herd immunity “might only come when 90 percent of citizens have antibodies.” Even if the inoculation rate ramps up, it will take until the end of 2021 to vaccinate 75 percent of U.S. adults,

according to a CNN analysis. Meanwhile, it’s unlikely that vaccination will reach even that share of the population in most developing countries. Compliance is also a hurdle: In recent polls, only about 3 in 5 Americans say they’re likely to get vaccinated when the shot is made available to them. Another unknown is whether a vaccinated person can spread Covid. “That’s the key reason why, a month after getting your first shot, you can’t just shop in a crowded Moroccan souk like it’s 2019.”

For those who simply can’t wait to book a trip, “checking cancellation terms is crucial,” said **Scott McCartney** in *The Wall Street Journal*. So is staying on top of the shifting health requirements for every stage of your trip. Many countries and even some U.S. states require recent negative Covid tests from visitors who wish to avoid quarantine, and as of Jan. 26, the CDC will require a recent negative test from all travelers arriving from abroad. Local rules often differ from state and national rules, and “you might even see hotels and airlines require negative test results or even vaccination.” When booking flights, expect delays when you fly and avoid tightly scheduled connections. When planning ground transport, try not to rely on a random taxi or car-share driver. Also, keep the entire journey as simple and focused as you can. “This is not the time to be planning whirlwind, multi-city tours across a continent.”

## Distancing season: Making the most of it

### Why you should be double masking

Suddenly, wearing two face masks is just “common sense,” said **Adrianna Rodriguez** in *USA Today*. That’s how Dr. Anthony Fauci described the growing practice in a TV appearance this week. Double masks were prominent at Joe Biden’s inauguration, and the nation’s top infectious-disease expert confirmed that layering masks can reduce Covid’s spread. With fast-spreading variants of the virus now here, other experts are recommending wearing a tight-fitting cloth mask over a surgical mask, said *The Boston Globe*. An N95 mask remains the gold standard, but the layering of a cloth and any medical-style mask inhibits the virus from being breathed in or out, and also reduces air leakages at the masks’ edges. Other ways to “up your mask game” include using KF94 masks from Korea or 3M’s 9205+ mask.

### How to find time for exercise

Though “we all know the benefits of regular exercise,” said **Maria Godoy** in *NPR.org*, making the time is tough when working from home. So start using calendar reminders on your phone to help block out times for putting exercise first. Also, “dress for success” by wearing athletic clothes at your desk (perhaps beneath a Zoom-appropriate layer) so you

can jump into a brief workout at any spare moment. That’s all the time you really need, because a few minutes every hour adds up. And don’t let your kids’ presence be an excuse. Instead, rope them in—for five minutes of dancing or a walk around the block. (“Think of it as recess!”) Finally, seek out “accountability buddies”—friends who will hold you to your goals, either by working out with you on Zoom or committing to logging the same number of steps every day.

### The benefits of a daily bath

People should bathe more often, said **Rachel Feltman** in *PopularScience.com*. Surveys show that adults who soak in a tub regularly are less stressed, depressed, and prone to anger than those who only take showers. What’s more, bathing “does your whole body good,” apparently by improving circulation and aiding sleep. To enjoy optimum sleep benefits, bathe 60 to 120 minutes before bedtime in water that’s “pleasantly warm but not uncomfortably hot.” The warm water boosts blood circulation to your hands and feet, which in turn kick-starts the cooling of the body’s core that naturally occurs during sleep. A bath puts your body on the right trajectory, “cuing your brain to chill out and let you snooze.”

## And if you’re bored...

Maybe it’s never too late to grow a pandemic beard after all, said **Bianca Giaeffer** in *The New York*



*Times*. As the work-from-home era stretches on, even men with scraggly facial growth can find encouragement at **Jeff’s Beard Board** (BeardBoard.com), a 20-year-old online forum noteworthy for a fraternal spirit that’s rare on the internet. “Grow on!” is a typical user comment, and insults are forbidden, even on threads such as “Patchy Beard Success Stories.” The team that reviews each post also supplies positivity by reminding readers that some follicles need 13 weeks to sprout a hair and that men can often grow a thicker beard at 45 than at 25. Moderator **Geoff Coleman** says the job is often about counseling men to embrace one simple idea: “Appreciate what you have.”



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## This week: Homes in Florida



**1** ◀ **Key West** Built in 1934, this extensively renovated home is in the historic Meadows district. The two-bedroom, open-plan main house has cathedral ceilings, Dade pine floors, a master bath with fish-scale tile, and a great room with French doors to the pool. The double lot has wood decks, brick paths, tropical plantings, a two-bedroom pool house with outdoor shower, and a one-bedroom carriage house with full bath. \$2,100,000. John Geno Zaharakis, Coldwell Banker Schmitt Real Estate, (773) 206-0097



**2** ▶ **Montverde** This award-winning 2018 Mediterranean sits beside Lake Siena on Pine Island. The four-bedroom home features Control4 automation, bleached-oak floors, two-story windows with water views, a gourmet kitchen, a wine room, and a master suite with built-in screen and projector, oversize walk-in closet, and bathroom with steam shower. The 1.3-acre property includes a pool with spa and a covered entertainment area with a pizza oven. \$2,800,000. Stacey Spencer Clarke, Premier/Sotheby's International Realty, (407) 701-7009



### **3** ▶ **Coral Gables**

The Modernista was built in 1989 by architect Carlo Estevez and remodeled in 2016. The five-bedroom open-plan house has plank ceilings, outside windows with garden views, a floating staircase, bonus bedroom lofts, and two downstairs main bedrooms with dual closets. The triple lot on a tree-lined avenue features a terrace, a palm garden, and a pool with spa, and is near the Biltmore Hotel & Golf Resort. \$2,795,000. Paulette Monserrate-Schena, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices/EWM Realty, (305) 610-4147





**4 ▶ Naples** The 2019 redesign of this 2005 three-bedroom home includes several unique elements. The house has an elevator; a custom kitchen with quartzite island, white-gloss cabinetry, and cut-glass backsplash; a study with detailed flooring; and a living room with a painted ceiling. Outside are a lanai looking out on the patio and pool, a two-car garage, and the beach and pier three blocks away. \$4,495,000. Robyn Pfister Griffin, William Raveis Real Estate/Luxury Portfolio International, (877) 298-2780



**5 ▲ Santa Rosa Beach** Set on Choctawhatchee Bay, this five-bedroom home is also just outside a state park and state forest. The house features an open living area, floor-to-ceiling windows showcasing waterfront views, a chef's kitchen with butler's pantry, a master suite with soaking tub, and a screened porch with grill and sink. The 0.7-acre property has a pool, a wooded lawn leading to a sandy beach, and an apartment over the two-car garage. \$2,799,000. Beau Blankenship and Field Williams, Engel & Völkers, (405) 623-5227

## Steal of the week



**6 ▲ Jacksonville** The renovation of this 1905 two-bedroom bungalow won an award from the Jacksonville Historic Preservation Commission. Details include high ceilings; wood-plank bedroom walls; an updated kitchen; a paneled dining room with built-in hutch; two bathrooms, one with a clawfoot tub and one with a walk-in shower; a Florida room; and a wraparound porch. On the quarter-acre lot are lawns, trees, tropical plantings, and an outdoor shower. \$449,000. Wally Sears, Florida Network Realty/Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices, (904) 610-9771



## The news at a glance

## The bottom line

■ For the second consecutive year, Facebook and Amazon topped all other U.S. companies in federal lobbying expenditures. Facebook spent nearly \$20 million in 2020, up nearly 18 percent from a year earlier, while Amazon checked in with \$18 million, an 11 percent increase.  
*The Wall Street Journal*

■ U.S. billionaires have collectively become \$1.1 trillion—nearly 40 percent—richer since mid-March. Forty-six people have also joined the ranks of billionaires since March 18, 2020, the week after the World Health Organization declared a global pandemic.  
*CNN.com*



*Space.com*

■ Elon Musk's SpaceX successfully launched a rocket carrying a record 143 satellites as part of its rideshare program to help companies get smaller satellites into space. Flights can be booked for \$1 million per launch.

■ China overtook the U.S. as the world's top destination for new foreign direct investment last year. New investments by overseas businesses in the U.S., which for decades held the No. 1 spot, fell 49 percent in 2020, while China, long ranked No. 2, saw direct investments by foreign companies climb 4 percent, to \$163 billion.

*The Wall Street Journal*

■ A United Nations agency estimated that pandemic restrictions on businesses and public life destroyed 8.8 percent of all work hours around the world last year. That is equivalent to 255 million full-time jobs—four times the economic impact of the 2008 financial crisis.

*Associated Press*

■ The average selling price for an iPhone in the U.S. hit \$873 last quarter, up from \$809 a year ago, according to Consumer Intelligence Research Partners.  
*Axios.com*

## Bubbles: Day traders rattle the stock market

A “frenzy from online traders” has sent shares in obscure and struggling companies soaring, said Sebastian Pellejero and Marco Quiroz-Gutierrez in *The Wall Street Journal*. Retail investors, “swapping tips and hatching trading strategies on online forums” roiled the market this week with wild “you only live once” wagers on companies “Wall Street has bet against.” The headliner was the retailer GameStop, which surged to more than \$300 a share. Melvin Capital, one hedge fund that had bet GameStop shares would fall, needed to raise \$3 billion after suffering catastrophic losses. Shares of the movie-theater chain AMC, another day-trader favorite, also shot up, tripling in a single day.



*Soaring in a day-trading frenzy*

This has to stop, said Arthur Levitt Jr. in *Bloomberg.com*, otherwise we know what will happen. As chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission two decades ago, “I remember high school students asking me for stock tips.” Investing was being confused with entertainment; “day traders were using chat rooms to exchange tips” on companies most of them “knew little about.” It all came crashing down when the dot-com bubble burst. Securities regulators can still take action against the online “market rumor-mongers” to ward off another collapse. There are “immutable laws of financial gravity” that tell us that, if they don’t, we could all get badly hurt.

## Epstein: Apollo CEO resigns over ties to sex offender

Apollo Global Management CEO Leon Black announced this week he would step down after an investigation into his ties to disgraced financier Jeffrey Epstein, said Miriam Gottfried in *The Wall Street Journal*. An independent review by the law firm Dechert LLP found that Black, the longtime chief of the \$300 billion asset management firm, had paid Epstein a total of \$158 million for “advice on trust- and estate-tax planning.” Epstein’s complex tax strategies may have saved Black as much as \$2 billion. The investigation absolved Black of any involvement in Epstein’s criminal activities. Epstein killed himself in 2019 after his arrest on charges of sex-trafficking victims as young as 14.

## Trade: Ships return empty from U.S. ports to China

U.S. maritime regulators are investigating why shipping carriers refused to load close to 300,000 U.S. agricultural export containers this fall, said Lori Ann LaRocco in *CNBC.com*. From July through November, “as U.S. agriculture exports were entering their peak season,” major ocean carriers rejected “a total of 297,997 TEUs (20-foot equivalent units)” from ports in California and on the East Coast. Instead of sending goods overseas, “3 in 4 containers from the U.S. to Asia are going back empty,” to be refilled with Chinese exports. Shippers say record Chinese imports have contributed to “a lack of appointments at the terminal,” creating long waits to send back loaded containers.

## Moonshots: Alphabet ends Loon internet project

Google parent Alphabet this week shut down one of its ambitious “moonshot” projects, Loon, after 10 years, said Aaron Mak in *Slate.com*. Loon used “helium balloons to beam internet access to remote” or otherwise unreachable areas; it was widely praised in 2017 for working with telecom providers “to deliver basic internet service to 100,000 people” in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria. But, as with several of Google’s other high-profile efforts, it had no clear “path to profitability.”

## BlackRock: Seeking more ambitious climate goals

The chief of the world’s biggest asset management company this week called on companies to eliminate greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, said Andrew Ross Sorkin in *The New York Times*. Last year, Laurence Fink, CEO of BlackRock, announced that his firm would “make investment decisions with environmental sustainability as a core goal.” Now, in his annual letter to chief executives, Fink has expanded his plans, saying that BlackRock will also publish new metrics comparable to a “calorie count” to help investors make “informed choices” about climate risk.

## Enron is dead, its knickknacks live on

Collectors are clamoring for souvenirs associated with disasters in recent financial history, said Sophie Haigney in *The New York Times*. “I’ve been selling a lot of Enron memorabilia lately,” said Scott Davidson, an accountant who runs the “stock market gifts and collectibles” website Wall Street Treasures. A popular item is the \$1,495 “framed promotional piece that displays a ‘Most Innovative Company’ award” that went to the energy giant known best for accounting fraud. There’s even an appetite for replicas of the canvas “banker bags” popularized by New York’s masters of the universe in the 1980s—before the market crash. Another website, Scripophily.com, sells stock and bond certificates from companies that have long since departed, like Lehman Brothers. That’s the cycle of capitalism: a “once valuable stock certificate becomes totally worthless,” only to rediscover value “in an afterlife as a collector’s item.”



## Taxes: Capital gains, business levies could see increase

Tax advisers are in a “wait-and-see game” to determine which of many proposals from the Biden administration will actually become law, said **Ben Steverman** in *Bloomberg.com*. “President Biden campaigned on a variety of tax hikes and other changes aimed at squeezing trillions of dollars from corporations and Americans earning more than \$400,000.” After the Democrats gained control of the Senate, the chances of fulfilling “at least some of those promises” improved. High on the agenda are changes in capital gains taxes and the estate and gift tax exemption, which Republicans doubled “to \$11.7 million for individuals and \$23.4 million for couples in 2021.” Any “retroactive tax changes” that become effective as of the start of 2021 could cost some wealthy taxpayers millions of dollars.

Don’t expect big changes yet, said **Jim Tankersley** in *The New York Times*. Biden’s treasury secretary, Janet Yellen, said last week that “the president would hold off on reversing any part of the 2017 tax law until later in the recovery.” Most likely, tax measures would get folded into “a large infrastructure package.” Biden could actually “end up cementing as much of Trump’s tax cuts as he rolls back,” particularly for middle-income families, though businesses may see the corporate tax rate going up to 28 percent from 21 percent. Congress might



Could the 2017 tax cuts get rolled back?

also limit “a deduction for high earners who run companies that are not organized as corporations.”

That would affect more people than you might think, said **Ed Finn** in *The Wall Street Journal*. “About 30 million owners of businesses, most of them very small outfits,” used the 2017 tax law’s 20 percent deduction on qualified business income. Changes in that provision could mean higher taxes for many small companies. Congress “would be smart to make sure that only the very largest of these 30 million businesses—say, those with more than \$2.5 million in annual profit—lose this deduction.”

The biggest tax concern for this year may be “what happens to the capital gains tax rate,” said **Paul Sullivan** in *The New York Times*. That rate, currently at 20 percent, could jump to “the same level as the tax on income,” which for the highest earners would be 37 percent. Additionally, the strategy of “holding on to securities until you die and not paying any capital gains tax” could come to an end if the Biden administration required heirs to “pay taxes on those gains when they sell the assets.” Instead of selling, some investors may want to consider borrowing against their portfolio. “There would be interest on the loan, but it would be far less than the tax bill.”

### What the experts say

#### College costs and your child’s GPA

“When should you tell your child that their high school grades might be worth six figures?” asked **Ron Lieber** in *The New York Times*. Nearly all but the most selective schools now consider grades as a factor not just for admission but also in “what you might pay.” In Georgia, for instance, “a 3.0 grade point average or above can lead to thousands of dollars per year off the price” at state schools. Many schools aren’t shy about making the grades-price connection explicit; Clark University sent out an email in 2019 with the subject line “Show me the money.” It’s worth having a conversation about this with your kids surprisingly early, even “two months into the summer after eighth grade.” Wait any longer, and “the vicious math of grade point averages may not allow them to catch up.”

#### DIY investors turn to expert advice

Rumors about the death of the financial advice industry appear to have been greatly exaggerated, said **Kameron Leach** in *Bloomberg.com*. One study released in October found that “40 percent of U.S. investors said they need more advice,” while “those who said they were willing to pay a financial professional rose to 56 percent, up 5 percentage

points from 2019.” The rebound in expert outreach may be a counterintuitive outgrowth of the rise of investing apps such as Robinhood. While these apps were once seen as “the death knell for the financial planning and advice industry,” more investors have “come to realize there are a lot more components involved in building wealth” than picking stocks or index funds. The year’s market gyrations also may have convinced some traders that their portfolios require “constant attention.”

#### Fitness apps’ growing monthly fees

“Taking a page out of the Netflix handbook,” fitness apps from Peloton, Apple, and FitBit have turned to pricey subscription models, said **Rachel Lerman** in *The Washington Post*. Instead of simply “watching free workout videos online” when the pandemic closed many gyms, “consumers became more willing to shell out cash on workout apps.” The subscription model has been key for Peloton. “More than 1.3 million people currently both have the bike and subscribe to the \$39 monthly service that gives them access to guided workouts.” Apple also recently entered the market with its \$10 monthly Fitness+ service, “which offers workouts and personalized data combined with Apple Watch hardware.”

### Charity of the week

The **ALS Therapy Development Institute (als.net)** was founded in 1999 by James Heywood, after his brother was diagnosed with



ALS, a neurodegenerative disorder also known as Lou Gehrig’s Disease. ALS attacks nerve cells and the spinal cord, eventually destroying a patient’s muscular control. Finding no suitable treatment options, Heywood started ALSTDI to bridge the existing gap in developing therapies. Today, the institute operates one of the most prominent ALS drug discovery labs and takes a multipronged approach to ending ALS, using clinical, preclinical, and basic research to turn scientific advances in understanding ALS into effective treatments. Though there is no current cure, ALSTDI is the first biotech nonprofit to develop a potential treatment and bring it to a human clinical trial.

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.



## Virtual Davos: No quick reset for U.S.-China conflict

World leaders gave a warm welcome to the Biden administration at the annual Davos conference this week, said **Natasha Turak** in *CNBC.com*. While President Biden did not speak at this year's all-virtual summit, his latest moves to "rejoin the global community," such as re-entering the Paris Agreement, were broadly embraced at the World Economic Forum event. But the real news came from China's President Xi Jinping, whose virtual-Davos remarks made clear that "the single most important geopolitical challenge and question mark for Biden" remains America's relationship with China. Xi lost no time in giving the new president a "warning against confrontation," said **James Areddy** in *The Wall Street Journal*. Carefully positioned "in front of a rendering of the Great Wall, designed to deter foreign invasions," Xi threatened that sanctions, "supply disruptions," or further "decoupling" between the U.S. and China could end in a "new Cold War." China has "signaled a desire to reset its relationship with the U.S." following a battering trade war and years of confrontation with former President Trump. But the acrimony isn't expected to dissipate anytime soon, as Biden hopes to "rally allies to challenge Beijing on a range of issues," from trade to technology and human rights.

The Trump administration left Biden a "ticking time bomb in the form of tariffs," said **Chad Bown** in *Foreign Affairs*. Trump used national security as his justification for imposing levies on nearly \$50 billion in imported steel and aluminum in 2018. But any ruling from the World Trade Organization "could prove devastating for the trading system." If the WTO allows the tariffs, "it



Xi: Giving an early warning to Biden

opens a giant loophole for any country to justify protectionism by invoking national security." But if it rules against them, U.S. populist politicians like Republican Sen. Josh Hawley could "spark a rebellion" against the WTO. Biden "has echoed many of his predecessor's complaints about China," and seems to think he can stay the course on tariffs, said **Zhang Jun** and **Shi Shuo** in the *Japan Times*. But as long as the Trump-era 25 percent tariffs on many Chinese-made goods remain in place, even the limited trade accord struck last year "will be fundamentally unworkable, and further progress toward a mutually beneficial trade relationship will be all but impossible."

Biden's trade vision may be one of the few areas where he and Trump have some overlap, said **Yuka Hayashi** in *The Wall Street Journal*. The new president fulfilled a campaign pledge this week with a "Buy American" executive order that echoes some of Trump's "America First" policies. Biden's order is mainly limited to tightening rules on government procurement. But other countries are "warily" awaiting details of exactly how the plan will be implemented, to see if the Biden administration strikes a tone that shows it "wants to cooperate with allies." Biden has to define "a viable middle path to shared prosperity," said **Roya Wolverson** in *Qz.com*. It's clear "the isolationism of the Trump era did little to protect the American worker." But the pandemic's impact on supply chains underscored how a "lax approach to global market forces" leaves us vulnerable. Biden's challenge will be convincing Americans that "global openness and cooperation" can co-exist with protections for U.S. workers and interests.

## Miami's GOP starts a tech bromance

**Henry Grabar**  
*Slate.com*

It's easy to see why Miami appeals to techies tired of the San Francisco Bay Area, said Henry Grabar. Great weather and no income tax have always made South Florida "the kind of amenity-rich place to attract wealthy people who could live anywhere." But there's another factor: Miami is "easily the most enticing large U.S. city with a Republican mayor." Miami Mayor Francis Suarez is "all in," promoting Miami as the destination for "refugee billionaires" who "want to feel like they matter." Keith Rabois, a venture capitalist who dropped \$29 million on a mansion in Miami Beach, said he appreciated Suarez's listening to his ideas for a science-and-engineering-

based curriculum in the public schools. Never mind that schools in Miami-Dade County aren't under Suarez's control. When Elon Musk tweeted that he wants his Boring Co. to build tunnels underneath Miami, Suarez responded enthusiastically, "Count me in!" Suarez wants to relax Florida's cryptocurrency laws and make every student in the schools fluent in coding. In short, he's ready to cater to "every grievance" of the tech elite to position Miami as the opposite of San Francisco, "a place where a certain tier of technology millionaire has felt persecuted in recent years." The tech bros have finally found a place where they have the ear of the political establishment.

## Reddit now rules the markets

**Matt Levine**  
*Bloomberg.com*

The story of GameStop's skyrocketing share price is "perhaps best told with a series of rocket emojis," said Matt Levine, but I'll try to do it with words. GameStop is not in a good business. "It was a money-losing mall retailer in a dying business during a pandemic." Then Ryan Cohen, the former CEO of Chewy, bought a big chunk of the company and joined GameStop's board in December. This has made "some people think GameStop is primed for a turnaround"—especially people with "nothing better to do but trade stocks with their buddies on Reddit." Perhaps they just think "it's comical to pump the stock of a chain of mall video-game stores during a

pandemic." Or "they thought it'd be funny to mess with" the professional investors who think—with justification—that GameStop shares are overvalued and have shorted the stock, betting it would fall. Whatever the reasons, the stock shot up more than 10-fold in less than two weeks, with billions of dollars in shares changing hands. That frenzy "didn't come from nowhere." There was at least a speck of fundamental dust for a cloud of meme-stock enthusiasm to form around." But it didn't take much, and it's a terrifying notion that to create billions of dollars in paper wealth "you can just go on Reddit and talk about what stock you're all going to buy."



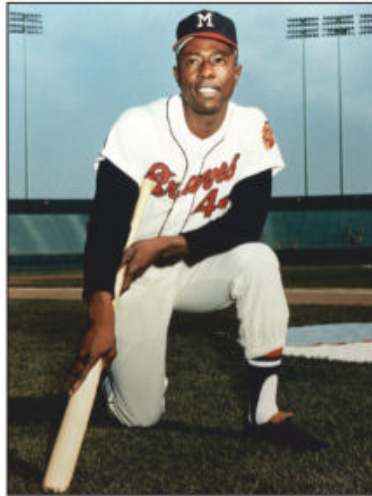
## The home run king who bested Babe Ruth

**Hank Aaron**

1934–2021

For Hank Aaron, breaking the most celebrated record in American sports was more than a matter of physical prowess—it was also a feat of psychological resilience. As the Atlanta Braves slugger approached Babe Ruth’s record of 714 home runs in the early 1970s, he was bombarded with hate mail and death threats from people outraged that a black athlete might surpass a white baseball icon. “My gun is watching your every black move,” read one letter. It didn’t stop him. On April 8, 1974, Aaron hit his 715th homer, smashing a slider over the left-center field fence at Atlanta–Fulton County Stadium. Baseball’s new home run king received an 11-minute ovation and a hug at home plate from his mother, who later said she was shielding her son from potential gunmen. The 20-time All-Star retired from playing in 1976 with 755 career home runs, a record that stood for more than 30 years, but remained scarred by the racism he’d endured during the Ruth chase. “It really made me see for the first time a clear picture of what this country is about,” Aaron said in 1994. “They carved a piece of my heart away.”

Born in segregated Mobile, Ala., Aaron grew up idolizing Jackie Robinson—who broke baseball’s color barrier in 1947—and learned to bat “by swinging at bottle caps with a broomstick,” said *The Washington Post*. By age 15, he was “playing baseball regularly on semiprofessional teams,” and at 18 he signed with the Boston Braves. Aaron was dispatched to a Jacksonville, Fla., farm team—his first time sharing the field with white players, said *The Times* (U.K.). Fans hurled slurs “and sometimes projectiles” from the stands, and a guard once mistook Aaron for a trespasser and shot at him.



At age 20, he made his debut with the Braves, recently relocated to Milwaukee, and “promptly drilled a ball that carried over the wall,” said the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. The slim, 6-foot rookie hit 13 home runs that season before being benched by a broken ankle. Aaron won the National League batting title in 1956, hitting .328, and the following year was named the league’s Most Valuable Player, with 44 home runs and 132 runs batted in. That season, he hit an 11th-inning homer to help the Braves clinch their first pennant, and he shined as the team defeated the New York Yankees in the World Series—the only championship of Aaron’s career. In 1966, the Braves alarmed Aaron by moving to Atlanta. “I have lived in the South,” he said, “and I don’t want to live there again.”

The quiet and understated Aaron continued to rack up home runs in Atlanta, ending the 1973 season “one shy of Ruth’s record, with 713,” said *The New York Times*. He slugged his 714th homer on Opening Day 1974, off the Cincinnati Reds’ Jack Billingham, and his 715th four days later against the Los Angeles Dodgers. Believing many Braves fans were indifferent or hostile to his feat, Aaron played his final two seasons with the Milwaukee Brewers. He retired with the most RBIs (2,297) and third-most hits (3,771) in baseball history. His home run record was finally bested by Barry Bonds in 2007, but Aaron was privately said to be offended by Bonds’ alleged use of performance-enhancing drugs. Over time, Aaron came to see his march to 755 runs as a part of the civil rights struggle. “There was a reason why I was chosen to break the record,” Aaron said. “It’s my task to carry on where Jackie Robinson left off, and I only know one way to go about it.”

## The talk show host who interviewed presidents and psychics

**Larry King**

1933–2021

Larry King could schmooze with anyone. As host of the CNN talk show *Larry King Live* from 1985 to 2010, he interviewed thousands of guests, including heads of state, six U.S. presidents, athletes, entertainers, authors, CEOs, sex therapists, and psychics. He tossed questions at the Dalai Lama and Paris Hilton, Margaret Thatcher and Marlon Brando, Muammar al-Qaddafi and O.J. Simpson. Hunched forward in his suspenders and rolled-up sleeves, gazing intently at his guests through hornrims, King commanded more than 1.5 million nightly viewers at his peak. “America watches him,” said former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, when asked why he went on King’s show. Detractors cited another reason some guests favored the show: a bantering, softball style that side-stepped pointed queries. King was unapologetic about his friendly approach, saying it put the spotlight where it belonged. “I think the guest,” he said, “should be the expert.”

He was born Lawrence Zeiger in Brooklyn, where his parents owned a bar and grill, said the *Los Angeles Times*. His father died when Larry was 10; devastated, he became a “troublemaker” who squeaked through high school. Larry then worked odd jobs while dreaming of a radio career. Hearing Miami was a good place to break into broadcasting, the 23-year-old headed south and found a job “sweeping floors at a small AM station.” One morning a disc jockey quit and Larry was asked to step in. Judging Zeiger “too German, too Jewish,” the station manager suggested he switch his surname to King.



King’s local rise was quick, said *The Daily Telegraph* (U.K.). Within a few years he had a morning talk show on a larger station, a TV show, a *Miami Herald* column, and “a spot as a color commentator for the Miami Dolphins.” He lived large, driving a Cadillac, gambling at the racetrack, and marrying a former Playboy bunny—the second of eight marriages. “But as his career flourished, his problems multiplied,” said *The New York Times*. Facing heavy gambling losses, he “plunged into debt” and declared bankruptcy. In 1971 “he was charged with defrauding a former business partner,” and his career nose-dived.

“By 1975 the scandal had largely blown over,” said the Associated Press, and he returned to Miami radio. Three years later he began hosting a nationwide call-in show on the Mutual network. Airing from midnight to 5:30 a.m., *The Larry King Show* expanded to 300 stations and “made King a national phenomenon,” leading to a prime-time deal with CNN in 1985. King had conducted some 50,000 interviews by the time he left the news network in 2010 “amid declining ratings,” said *The Washington Post*. He continued to appear on smaller cable outlets into his 80s and won “a loyal Twitter following” with rapid-fire observations (“Of what possible use is the pinkie toe?”) that he tagged #It’sMy2Cents. A longtime chain smoker, he was “beset by medical problems” in later years, including heart attacks, lung cancer, and a stroke. Despite his setbacks, he spoke of his life with a sense of wonder. “For this to all happen to a Jewish kid from Brooklyn,” he said, “is a damn impressive thing.”



# Covid's long reach

*When I fell ill with Covid in the spring, I knew I'd have a tough battle, said Laura Holson in The New York Times Magazine. I didn't know that the disease would come at me over and over for months, in unexpected ways.*

**I** REMEMBER THE second time I thought I would die. The first time was April 17, 2020, when, after finding out I had Covid-19 nine days earlier with aches and a cough, my fever shot up to 101.8, I could barely breathe, and my family doctor told me I had bacterial pneumonia.

It was a perilous time for New Yorkers. About 1 in 3 patients admitted to hospitals with Covid were dying alone in their beds, while refrigerated trucks stood sentry outside to hold the bodies. Some nights I heard as many as seven ambulances an hour on the streets below my Upper West Side apartment. My doctor, who called daily, diagnosed my pneumonia after hearing me breathe over the telephone. She vowed to keep me out of the hospital and prescribed a potent antibiotic that left me weak-kneed and dizzy. Within a few days the pneumonia began to clear, but I was left with a cough, nausea, fever, and chest pressure that was so severe at times that it felt as if an anvil had been placed on my rib cage and I couldn't catch my breath.

The second time I thought I would die was different, yet eerily the same. It was June 22, nearly three months after the initial diagnosis. By then the cough had softened, and I was well past the acute phase of Covid-19, having tested negative twice. The chest tightness had passed, supplanted by a nagging ache. I had lost 8 pounds as nausea dampened my appetite, and my heart seemed to race without reason. I was so tired I sometimes fell asleep upright in my chair.

On that cloudless day in June I was seated on the couch, working on my laptop, when, at about 4 p.m., the crushing chest pain I experienced during Covid's earliest days suddenly returned. My pulse began to quicken, and a shawl of heat gathered around my shoulders, crept up my neck, and swallowed my head. I began to sweat. It felt as if the air was being squeezed out of my lungs. Breathe, I told myself.



*Holson: 'Having long Covid imposed a certain order over life.'*

*Breathe.* I stood up, gasping, and walked to the window to look outside.

Could this really be happening again? I did what I did during my worst days with Covid: I lay face down on my bed and took deep breaths until the pressure passed. I called my family doctor, who gave me the name of an infectious-disease specialist. A few days later, I was in the specialist's office, and he was examining my chest. He said one of his other Covid patients had similar symptoms. "I'm worried you might have a pulmonary embolism. We need to get you tested." A blood clot could have traveled to my lung from another part of my body.

Almost 23.5 million people in the United States have come down with Covid-19 as of mid-January, according to Johns Hopkins University, and the number of deaths now stands at more than 400,000. What has been discussed less is that for some of us, months of lingering symptoms make you wonder if you will ever be OK again. Fever, fatigue, heart palpitations, and "brain fog" are some of the common long-

term symptoms. The experience can be much worse, with inflammation of the heart, stroke, kidney damage, an inability to focus, and depression.

No one really knows how many people suffer from "long Covid." A new study of 1,733 Covid-19 patients who were discharged from a hospital in Wuhan, China, the original epicenter of the pandemic, suggests that three-quarters of those patients had at least one symptom, like fatigue, muscle weakness, or diminished lung function, after six months. A U.S. study showed that symptoms even persisted among some people with mild cases, including young adults.

The coronavirus affects each person differently, and what I've learned these past nine months is that my recovery is singularly my own. I live alone and, after lockdown began, worked

from my home at my job as a visual editor at *The New York Times*. I left my apartment only a few times before I got sick to go to the grocery store and to the post office. Five days after my trip to the post office (where I was wearing a mask but few others were), I had a fever, and my body shook with chills. Though I was in my 50s and in good health and had no pre-existing conditions, it would be seven weeks before I returned to work, and when I did, I still didn't feel right.

**M**Y CHEST PAIN returned the week after I began working again in May—this time, as a stabbing pain under my left breast, followed by a fever of 100.5. My D-dimer level, which measures the possibility of a blood clot, was elevated. While it was infinitesimal compared to that of some patients who had died from Covid complications, the research was disturbing, so my doctor investigated further. She ordered a scan of my lungs to see if ground-glass opacities, or light-colored patches, appeared, a sign that Covid had affected my lungs. She also ordered an electrocardiogram



of my heart and an ultrasound of my lower extremities for blood clots. The results from my tests appeared normal, but I still felt uneasy. Two months after contracting the virus, I couldn't predict which part of my body would go haywire next.

In early June, my hair began falling out a few strands at a time. Every morning after a shower, I would find wisps of wet blond hair stuck to the bottom of the tub. Using a blow-dryer hastened the loss, and larger clumps would cling to my fingers, which I tossed like airy cotton into the garbage. My doctor thought it was because of stress due to the virus. All I knew was I had less hair after Covid than before.

More vexing was the brain fog that, for Covid survivors, can include memory loss, confusion, difficulty focusing, and dizziness. When I returned to work, I found myself losing my train of thought midsentence. One afternoon in mid-June, it took 20 minutes to write a paragraph that, on a typical day, took me a quarter of that time. What followed was downright bizarre: An electric current—or what felt like one—traveled from the left side of my chest, skipped up my neck, and stopped at a spot on the right side of my skull. The sensation vanished as quickly as it appeared, so I went back to writing.

A few days later I thought I would die for the second time and found myself in the office of the infectious-diseases specialist. On June 26, he called with the results of my CT angiography. The test detected no pulmonary embolism. Whatever had happened seemed to have resolved itself. The markers of inflammation in my body and D-dimer levels remained elevated, although they had improved from previous tests. This was another hallmark of recovery: The gains were incremental. The good thing, the specialist said, was that the numbers were coming down. He ordered a six-week leave from work so I could rest. When I had more good days in a row than bad ones, I would be on the mend, he said. But he warned me that it could take months.

Having long Covid imposed a certain order over life. By July, I had my routine down. I slept 10 hours a day or more. Upon waking, I took my temperature. Next, I would measure the amount of oxygen in my blood using a pulse oximeter. I would repeat this three times a day, sometimes more. Back in April, when I tested positive for Covid, I had a blood-oxygen level of 95 percent. It improved significantly after I recovered from pneumonia, hovering near 99 percent.

July 9 started out like any other day in post-Covid life. My temperature was 98.3

in the morning and rose to 99.7 by 7 p.m. I didn't think much about it when I called my brother; I was accustomed to the temperature fluctuations by then. But at about 11 p.m., I started to feel faint. Then, what felt like a warm ball gathered at the top of my shoulders and started to rise, until my whole head was engulfed in heat.

Beads of perspiration formed on my forehead. My hair was saturated at the roots with sweat. Within a few minutes, my whole body was sopping. The backs of my knees. My forearms and shins. I took my temperature at midnight—it was 100.1 and rising—and I packed my head in ice to cool off. I took two Advil and crawled into bed.



*Some patients start feeling better only after eight months.*

**I**N THE MORNING, the fever was gone. But it had been replaced by a wave of convulsive chills that persisted for two hours. I took a tepid shower, and some more Advil and drank a quart of water, concerned I would be dehydrated. I crawled back into bed and stayed there all day. At 7 p.m., as I expected, my temperature rose again, only this time it was accompanied by chills and body heat. My face was flushed, and, as they had two nights earlier, beads of sweat covered my forehead.

No, no, no, I said to myself. This can't be happening. Maybe through the force of my will, I could make my fever go away. I put ice packs on my back, mostly because it felt good. I drank water and crawled into bed, overcome with fatigue. There, I fell asleep at 11 p.m. and didn't wake up until noon. As quickly as the chills, fever, and fatigue appeared, they were gone. Like the movie *Groundhog Day*, I would relive the worst of Covid over and over until, one day, hopefully, I would not.

At the University of California, San Francisco, Michael Peluso, an infectious-disease doctor and co-principal investigator of a study of Covid's long-term impact, and his team have been interviewing about

250 Covid-19 survivors since April. In early interviews with subjects, Peluso told me recently, he would tick off a list of possible symptoms from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. He quickly found out that some people's symptoms diverged from the CDC's initial list. Patients described phantom smells, like burning cigarettes or burned meat. Others complained about low blood pressure that resulted in fainting. "I never knew what people were going to say," Peluso told me. "People would periodically have heart palpitations or shortness of breath out of nowhere."

Some study participants, he said, began to feel better only eight months after the first diagnosis. "The hard part is there is not a standard answer for everybody," Peluso said, adding that "it will take a while for us to understand what we have collectively been through."

On Nov. 3, two months after my September setback, I visited my doctor for a follow-up exam. It had been nearly seven months since I came down with Covid, and I could tell from the creases around her eyes that she was smiling beneath her mask. "You look pretty good," she said. "How are you feeling?"

"My hair is growing back!" I said, holding up a tangle of short bangs.

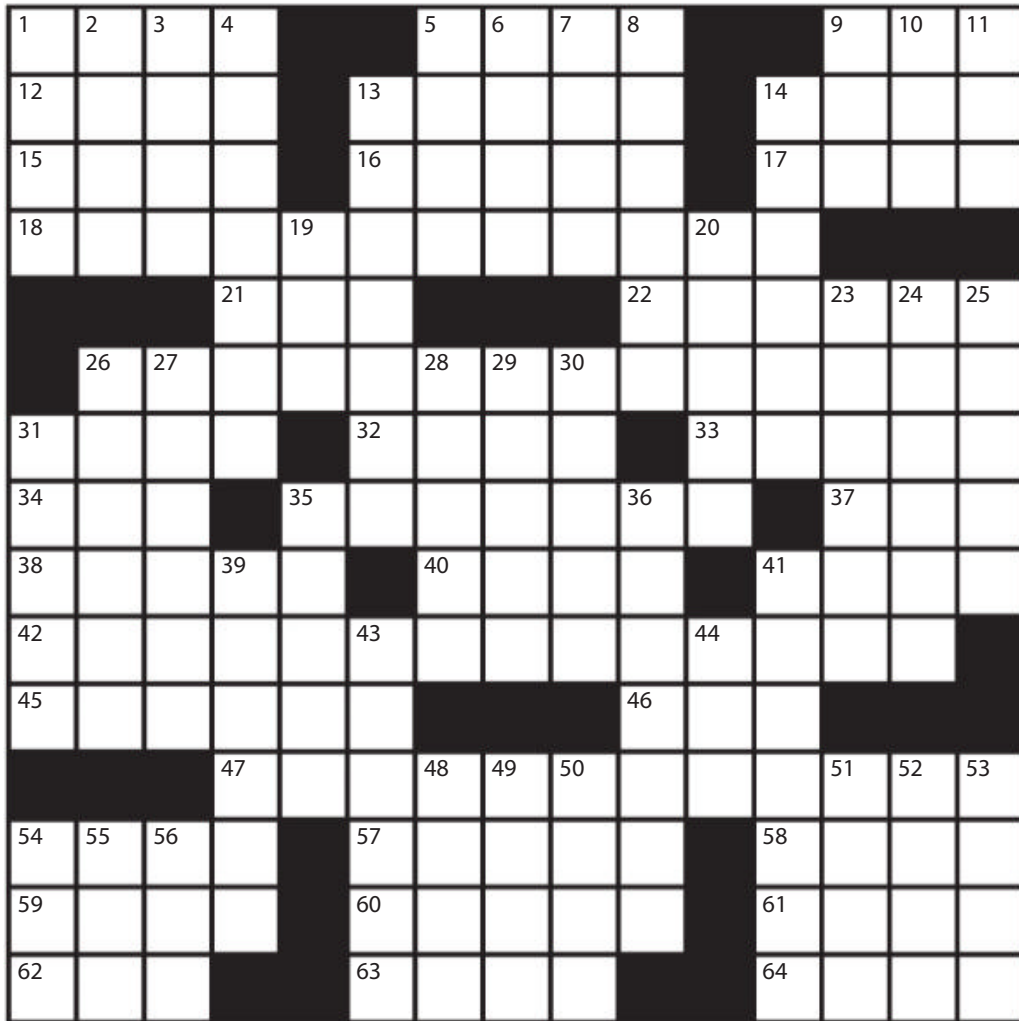
For the previous month, I had been living in a cottage on Cape Cod that a friend offered to me. I focused on exercises to strengthen my lungs and increase my stamina. The random chills and night sweats largely stopped. By Thanksgiving I noticed my fevers had subsided. I was still fatigued, sometimes spending half of Saturday in bed recovering from the week. But I seemed to have more good days in a row than bad ones. Life was edging closer to normal.

For me, life is slowly getting back to what it was in pre-Covid days, even as I've accepted that nothing will feel natural during this pandemic. I still tire and sleep more than I want, but I don't text my doctor as much, and the ice in my freezer is used for drinks, not cold packs. As my doctor would say, I'm moving in the right direction. But my thermometer and pulse oximeter remain on the dresser by my bed so that I can use them every morning. Maybe it's just for the sense of security they provide, but I'm not ready to move them to the bathroom cabinet yet. I don't think I will be ready to do that for a long time.

*Adapted from an article that originally appeared in The New York Times Magazine. Used with permission.*



## Crossword No. 585: Phil in the Blanks by Matt Gaffney



- ACROSS**
- 1 Trash bag brand
  - 5 Anchor
  - 9 Biden who moved into the White House on Jan. 20
  - 12 Widespread
  - 13 Lena who sang "Summertime"
  - 14 Biden who moved into the White House on Jan. 20
  - 15 Deserve
  - 16 Utterly bewildered
  - 17 "I haven't seen you in \_\_\_!"
  - 18 Punxsutawney Phil may or may not see his shadow on this upcoming occasion
  - 21 \_\_\_ double take (look again)
  - 22 Get right to the task at hand
  - 26 1963 hit song co-written by Phil Spector, who died on Jan. 16 at age 81
  - 31 Powerful snakes
  - 32 Volunteer's phrase
  - 33 Vivien of *Gone With the Wind*
  - 34 Belonging to all of us
  - 35 Data concern
  - 37 \_\_\_ *Married an Axe Murderer* (1993 Mike Myers comedy)
  - 38 Cancel, as plans
  - 40 Get exactly correct
  - 41 Family tree members
  - 42 Phil Vettel retired on Jan. 15 after 31 years as this newspaper's food critic
  - 45 Greek goddess of the hearth
  - 46 9-Across, e.g.
  - 47 English soccer great Phil Neville was named head coach of this American soccer team on Jan. 18
  - 54 Chipotle choice
  - 57 Killed, as a dragon
  - 58 Land in the ocean
  - 59 Country currently involved in a nuclear dispute with the U.S.
  - 60 Showy jewelry
  - 61 Sign of sadness
  - 62 Apiece
  - 63 Alma mater of new U.S. climate envoy John Kerry
  - 64 Stitched together
- DOWN**
- 1 Gutfeld of Fox News
  - 2 "Stop making things up!"
  - 3 Do for Lionel Richie, once
  - 4 Leaves without cover
  - 5 Flier around a porch light
  - 6 Approximately
  - 7 Blood type for about 7 percent of Americans (abbr.)
  - 8 Does the math again, maybe
  - 9 Lively Irish dance
  - 10 "Bravo!"
  - 11 Ernie on courses
  - 13 Got on the *Billboard* charts
  - 14 Secondary squad, in high school
  - 19 \_\_\_-dairy creamer
  - 20 Boeing divider
  - 23 Thomas portrayed in the 2020 movie *Tesla*
  - 24 "Leaving right now"
  - 25 Classic sodas
  - 26 "Point taken"
  - 27 Pence's successor
  - 28 \_\_\_ Lodge (motel chain)
  - 29 Unit of purity
  - 30 Aloft
  - 31 Dutch painter Hieronymus \_\_\_
  - 35 Country whose prime minister stated last week that tourists probably won't be allowed back in until the end of summer
  - 36 Activity in a paramotor
  - 39 Director's shout
  - 41 Mountaintops
  - 43 Fitzgerald title character
  - 44 Arthur of screen and stage
  - 48 \_\_\_ Emhoff (stepdaughter of 27-Down)
  - 49 Train travel
  - 50 Selfish person's shout
  - 51 "Got it"
  - 52 Bear's weapon
  - 53 Plant with big fronds
  - 54 Diner's dinero
  - 55 "What \_\_\_ the odds?"
  - 56 Bugatti or Bentley, e.g.

## The Week Contest

**This week's question:** A Tennessee law firm is offering a free divorce to whoever submits the best rationale, explaining that some couples trapped together in lockdown "may have reached their breaking point." In seven words or fewer, please come up with a snappy advertising slogan for a law firm that specializes in pandemic-era splits.

**Last week's contest:** Jacob Chansley—the shirtless, horn-wearing "QAnon Shaman" who stormed the Senate chamber in the U.S. Capitol riot—has demanded an organic diet in jail. "He gets very sick if he doesn't eat organic food," explained his mom. If Chansley, 33, were to write a cookbook of organic recipes for insurrectionists, what would it be called?

THE WINNER: "Farm to Rabble"  
Jason Schnuit, Santa Monica, Calif.

SECOND PLACE: "The Joy of Organic Coup-king: Chef's Sedition" —J.D. Watson, Rancho Mirage, Calif.

THIRD PLACE: "Clean Cuisine for the Revolting"  
Norm Carrier, Flat Rock, N.C.

For runners-up and complete contest rules, please go to [theweek.com/contest](http://theweek.com/contest).

**How to enter:** Submissions should be emailed to [contest@theweek.com](mailto:contest@theweek.com). Please include your name, address, and daytime telephone number for verification; this week, type "Break up" in the subject line. Entries are due by noon, Eastern Time, Tuesday, Feb. 2. Winners will appear on the Puzzle Page next issue and at [theweek.com/puzzles](http://theweek.com/puzzles) on Friday, Feb. 5. In the case of identical or similar entries, the first one received gets credit.



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

## Sudoku

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

Difficulty: medium

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

Find the solutions to all *The Week's* puzzles online: [www.theweek.com/puzzle](http://www.theweek.com/puzzle).

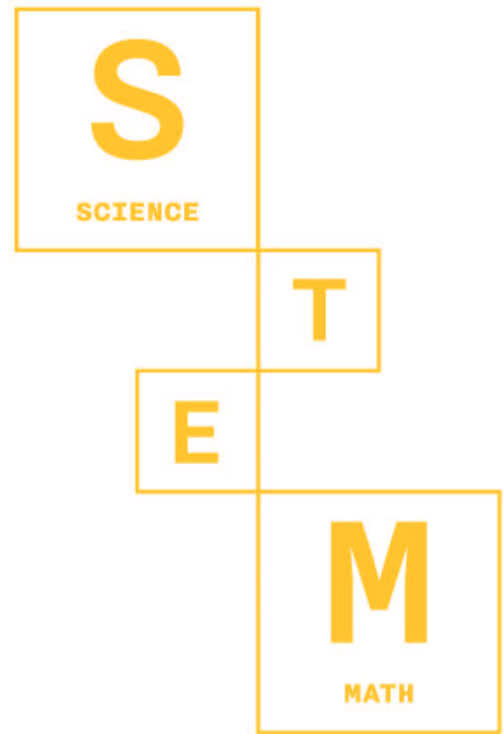
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# EVER WONDER IF THERE'S LIFE ON OTHER PLANETS?

LUCIANNE WALKOWICZ  
ASTRONOMER, THE ADLER PLANETARIUM

GIRLS IN STEM BECOME WOMEN WHO CHANGE THE WORLD.  
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