

# [***Opinion: Trump videos send wildly different messages***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BP1-Y2J1-DY7V-G133-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; There is "one English book and one only, where ... perfect plainness of speech is allied with perfect nobleness; and that book is the Bible," cultural critic Matthew Arnold said in one of his three 1860 lectures at Oxford University on the challenges of translating Homer. He described the English translation of the Bible, which culminated in the King James Version in 1611, as an achievement comparable to Homer's Iliad, and praised it as a "master-piece."

Last week, former President Donald Trump sought to improve on perfection. "Let's Make America Pray Again," he posted on his social media platform. "As we lead into Good Friday and Easter, I encourage you to get a copy of the God Bless The USA Bible."

The book, priced at $59.99, takes its cue from Lee Greenwood's song, "God Bless the USA" and includes the US Constitution and Declaration of Independence, among other documents. The book's website says the Bible "has nothing to do with any political campaign" and uses Trump's "name, likeness and image under paid license."

As CNN's culture writer AJ Willingham noted, "God Bless" wraps an American-flag draped cover around the King James Version of the Bible, [*which isn't protected by copyright*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/28/us/donald-trump-bible-christianity-cec/index.html), and the bundling of the scriptures with America's historic documents has drawn criticism from some theologians.

In a video promoting the Bible, Trump said, "Religion and Christianity are the biggest things missing from this country. ... we need to bring them back."

On Good Friday, Trump posted a very different kind of video. It showed an image of President Joe Biden lying sideways and tied up in the bed of a pickup truck. Trump noted that the image was on the tailgate of a pickup truck on Long Island, where the former president attended a wake for a slain New York City police officer.

Hawking the Bible and sharing the incendiary image were two more jarring moments in a political campaign like no other, where a former president is selling not only his own candidacy but also an array of merchandise including gold-toned sneakers for $399. The appeal to his base is as much cultural as it is political, with signifiers of belonging to the MAGA world taking on outsized importance.

As for Biden, there may be a through line that explains the difficulty of his re-election bid. Why isn't his approval rating benefiting from the very healthy US economy? **Fareed Zakaria** noted that the once strong link between the economy and ***politics*** has given way to a greater focus on culture and identity as a dividing line.

"America is rapidly secularizing, and this is causing extreme anxiety in large parts of the country, especially among non-urban, non-college educated people. The religious and cultural divide in America is layered underneath a class divide: urban vs rural, college-educated vs non-college educated. And economic differences are malleable; you can split the difference between someone who wants to spend $2 billion and another who wants to spend $4 billion. But how do you split the difference on issues of identity, religion and morality like abortion and gay rights?"

Zakaria noted that his new book, [*"Age of Revolutions,"*](https://wwnorton.com/books/9780393239232) makes the case "that we are living through a huge backlash after decades of rapid accelerations in technology and globalization. [*And this backlash is largely centered on cultural anxiety in a fast-changing world.*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/24/opinions/biden-economy-low-approval-ratings-zakaria/index.html)"

For more on the Bible:

**Candida Moss:**[*This Easter, reflect on how your Bible came into being*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/30/opinions/easter-bible-ghostwriters-christianity-moss/index.html)

Trump and Biden's money week

Trump's tumultuous week revolved around money - an appeals court cut by roughly two-thirds the bond he must post while he appeals the verdict in New York's civil fraud case. Trump's stock in Truth Social's parent company, which is now trading on the Nasdaq under the ticker symbol DJT, added billions in paper wealth to his balance sheet, though he'll be hard-pressed to turn that into ready cash.

Trump has carved his own path, discarding the traditions of presidential campaigns in favor of the merchandising and counter-programming skills he's honed over decades. On the day Biden raised $26 million at a campaign fundraiser in Manhattan last week with former Presidents Barack Obama and Bill Clinton, Trump visited the wake of an NYPD officer shot in Queens.

The contrasting optics are a sign of the challenges Biden faces, **Julian Zelizer** noted. The president's "strength has always rested on his ability to connect with average, working Americans because of his own modest roots," and he should not "fall into the predictable trap of letting Republicans paint him as an out-of-touch coastal elitist who likes to hang out with Hollywood stars."

"Biden's greatest asset is to have public attention turn toward the dangers that Trump poses to the nation. When that is not the subject of conversation, the discussion needs to center on what Biden does well for America. [*Shifting to past presidents ... has its costs*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/29/opinions/biden-fundraiser-obama-clinton-colbert-zelizer/index.html)."

**SE Cupp** asked, "Is bringing in two former, younger presidents, whose approval numbers were considerably higher at the same point in their presidencies helpful or harmful?"

"On the one hand, Obama is an unquestionably talented, popular, and convincing surrogate, and a nostalgic throwback to a time when American ***politics*** seemed less crazy."

But there are risks, too: "Obama is younger, sharper, more energetic, and more popular than Biden, [*a contrast that might ultimately backfire by highlighting Biden's weaknesses*](https://www.cnn.com/videos/opinions/2024/03/28/se-cupp-unfiltered-biden-former-presidents-vpx.cnn)."

Trump learned in a New York courtroom Monday that his criminal trial - the first against a US president - will begin with jury selection April 15. In the case, brought by Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, "Trump is charged with covering up hush money payments he made to Stormy Daniels to keep voters from knowing about their alleged affair, out of fears that it would harm his 2016 presidential campaign," **Norman Eisen** and **Andrew Warren**[*wrote*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/25/opinions/trump-facing-a-legal-one-two-punch-ny-eisen-warren/index.html). (Trump has pleaded not guilty and denies the affair.)

But the former president has successfully used his legal woes to motivate his voter base. Trump [*"is the leader of a populist political movement that sees itself as being under assault from elites,"*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/25/opinions/trump-bond-reduced-democrats-james-antle/index.html) wrote **W. James Antle III**.

"To many of those voters, Trump is now himself under attack from Democratic prosecutors in multiple jurisdictions and the former president stoked this perception by calling his prosecution a 'witch hunt,' 'hoax' and 'pure case of voter intimidation and election interference' outside a Monday hearing in his separate criminal hush-money case. ... First, these voters say, they tried to take away his freedom in multiple indictments. Now they see the legal system taking away his businesses and money. They don't see New York Attorney General Letitia James, who is a Democrat and brought the fraud case, as an honest broker, but rather a partisan political figure."

'Heartbreaking'

Millions of people have now seen video footage of the 984-foot container ship Dali losing power and plowing into the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore early Tuesday. Six immigrant workers who were repairing potholes died. A major East Coast port is paralyzed until workers can clear out the bridge's debris and free the ship.

"The video is heartbreaking if you are familiar with the operations in the pilothouse and engine room of a large commercial vessel departing port," wrote **Richard Timme**, a retired US Coast Guard assistant commandant.

"When the ship went dark from the loss of power, the pilot, the captain and the engineers on board leapt into emergency mode. [*They knew that the only way to steer that ship was with water over the rudder from a moving propeller.*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/30/opinions/baltimore-bridge-us-maritime-transportation-crisis-timme/index.html) Every ounce of their beings would have been concentrated on restoring steerage way. But they didn't make it. The crew's 'mayday' call, however, likely saved lives as vehicle traffic was halted preventing an even larger tragedy," Timme observed.

"Black swan events like this - major events that are unpredictable but, in hindsight, inevitable - are supposed to be rare and infrequent, wrote maritime expert **Salvatore R. Mercogliano**, [*"yet over the past few years, it appears that a flock of black swans have had set their sights on disrupting the global supply chain."*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/28/opinions/key-bridge-black-swan-disasters-maritime-infrastructure-mercogliano/index.html)

Forty percent of America's international trade value is carried by sea, but recent years have seen numerous hazards to international shipping. A ship ran aground and blocked the Suez Canal for nearly a week in March 2021. Port congestion after Covid-19 disrupted the supply chain and caused shipping rates to skyrocket. Cargo ships have damaged bridges in China and Argentina. And Houthi militants have targeted vessels in the Red Sea since the outbreak of the Gaza war.

"While Baltimore has invested in deepening their channel and harbor and new ship-to-shore cranes to offload ships, some aspects of the maritime infrastructure remained frozen in time, such as the Key Bridge, which was designed over 50 years ago," Mercogliano observed.

"We need to fortify critical infrastructure like the bridges over our waterways. According to the Federal Highway Administration, out of the 615,000 bridges in the US, more than 17,000 are 'fracture critical.'" Those bridges lack redundancy that would sustain them even if a supporting pillar is knocked out.

Kate's diagnosis

**Jalal Baig** was saddened but not surprised by the announcement that Catherine, Princess of Wales, had been diagnosed with cancer. Baig is an oncologist.

"Early-onset cancer, which is defined as happening in adults under 50 years of age, is no anomaly. In fact, it is part of a rising global trend in which newly diagnosed cancer patients are getting younger. Further, it deflates the myth that cancer is the preserve of older people."

"The global incidence of early-onset cancer increased by 79.1% and early-onset cancer deaths rose by 27.7% from 1990 to 2019," according to a recent study Baig cited.

"During the past week alone, I saw a 37-year-old with breast cancer that had already metastasized to her lymph nodes, bones, lung and liver. In the room next door was a 45-year-old with colon cancer that had spread so diffusely throughout the liver that it had become packed and enlarged with the tumors. Both patients had stage IV cancers that can potentially be controlled for a finite time but are no longer curable..."

"[*Even as considerable advances have been made in cancer outcomes, true progress can't be declared if certain age groups are worryingly falling behind.*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/27/opinions/young-cancer-kate-catherine-princess-diagnosis-baig/index.html) The Princess of Wales' public disclosure of her cancer is a reminder of the work left to do."

Vanishing stick shift

Unlike some car enthusiasts, **Paul Hockenos** is not a fan of the stick shift: [*"The day of manual transmissions is speeding to an end - and this layman is shedding no tears."*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/27/opinions/automatic-vs-manual-cars-electric-pollution-hockenos/index.html)

"It's not just that I cringe at the grating screech of a botched downshift, that high-pitched sequel worse than fingernails across a chalkboard. The sound upbraids and shames me for having wronged the drivetrain."

"The oft-repeated benefits of a stick shift over an automatic have been redundant now for years ... technology has moved on and automatics with as many as nine gears are common. And they chalk up better mileage and drive faster than their stick-shift counterparts."

As for electric vehicles, there's only one gear needed. "Positive surveys seem to jibe with my own and friends' impressions of the ride one gets with the EV. It's quiet and as smooth as creme brulee."

The RFK Jr. factor

**Paul Begala** has seen the impact of third parties up close: as a campaign strategist in 1992, he helped Bill Clinton best independent Ross Perot along with then-President George H. W. Bush.

"Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s independent presidential campaign can't win, but it could swing the presidency to former President Donald Trump," Begala wrote. "Kennedy's selection Tuesday of Nicole Shanahan, a Democratic donor from Northern California, as his running mate [*is the final point of proof that the RFK campaign is a heat-seeking missile aimed at Biden*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/26/opinions/rfk-jr-nicole-shanahan-vp-2024-begala/index.html)."

Shanahan "is a 38-year-old attorney and entrepreneur who grew up poor, raised by an immigrant single mom in California. She was formerly married to Google co-founder Sergey Brin and has used her wealth for a variety of philanthropic and political causes."

"In the political world, she has, according to The New York Times, described herself as a 'progressive through and through,' and has donated to Democrats like former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg and California Rep. Ro Khanna. And Biden. So, yeah, I think we can conclude she has been on Team D."

For more on ***politics***:

**Lee Drutman**: [*RFK Jr. is poised to be a chaos factor in November*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/28/opinions/rfk-jr-third-party-chaos-factor-election-drutman/index.html)

**Mark Osler**: [*Biden's failures in criminal justice could cost him an election*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/26/opinions/biden-criminal-justice-trump-first-step-act-osler/index.html)

**Jill Filipovic**: [*Good on Lisa Murkowski for having a backbone*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/26/opinions/lisa-murkowski-trump-gop-criticisms-filipovic/index.html)

**Dean Obeidallah**: [*Democrats shouldn't throw a lifeline to House Speaker Johnson*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/25/opinions/house-speaker-vacate-petition-democrats-greene-obeidallah/index.html)

Ronna McDaniel's exit

Former Republican National Committee chair Ronna McDaniel had the briefest of stints as a contributor for NBC News. A staff uproar at her hiring led network executives to drop McDaniel after one appearance on "Meet the Press."

McDaniel had supported Trump's false claim that he won the 2020 election. And it was Trump who "called the very product NBC and MSNBC produce 'fake news' and the journalists who produce it 'enemies of the people' and 'scum' as his White House and some of his followers lied to, mocked and threatened them," wrote longtime media critic **David Zurawik**.

"It was two days of [*the most aggressive, public and passionate pushback by employees against a decision by their bosses*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/26/opinions/nbc-msnbc-ronna-mcdaniel-newsroom-revolt-zurawik/index.html) that I have seen in 35 years of covering the media. NBC has damaged its credibility as a news institution by planning to elevate someone who played a key role in trying to thwart the peaceful transfer of power to the same status as journalists who have spent much or all their professional lives trying to inform citizen-voters with fact-based, verified information and analysis - journalism in service to democracy."

Boeing boss gone

As **Tim Hubbard**, a Notre Dame management professor, wrote, "Shortly after taking over Boeing from Dennis Muilenburg - who was fired for abysmal performance following two fatal 737 Max 8 crashes - David Calhoun said, 'We had a backup plan. I am the backup plan.'"

"[*Now Boeing needs a backup to the backup*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/27/opinions/boeing-ceo-leader-board-hubbard/index.html). The foundations of Boeing and its culture have not improved enough under Calhoun's leadership."

Hubbard wrote, "At its foundation, the board of directors needs to select the new CEO based on three criteria: Boeing's new CEO needs to signal change, embody the company they want Boeing to become and be driven by the goal of leaving a positive legacy."

Resigning in protest

**Annelle Sheline**, a foreign affairs officer at the US State Department, announced this week that she was resigning in protest over the Biden administration's support for Israel in the Gaza war.

"Across the federal government, employees like me have tried for months to influence policy, both internally and, when that failed, publicly," Sheline wrote. "[*My colleagues and I watched in horror as this administration delivered thousands of precision-guided munitions, bombs, small arms and other lethal aid*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/27/opinions/gaza-israel-resigning-state-department-sheline/index.html) to Israel and authorized thousands more, even bypassing Congress to do so. We are appalled by the administration's flagrant disregard for American laws that prohibit the US from providing assistance to foreign militaries that engage in gross human rights violations or that restrict the delivery of humanitarian aid."

Don't miss

**Frida Ghitis**: [*Watch carefully what Putin does next*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/27/opinions/russia-moscow-attack-putin-terror-ghitis/index.html)

**Howard Fischer**: [*The important irony in SBF's sentencing*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/27/opinions/sam-bankman-fried-sentencing-crypto-fischer/index.html)

**Keith O'Brien**: [*Pete Rose gave a roadmap to MLB on gambling. Now the Ohtani scandal is putting it to the test*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/26/opinions/shohei-ohtani-gambling-pete-rose-mlb-obrien/index.html)

**Khizr Khan**: [*The attacks against this judicial nominee are un-American*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/29/opinions/attacks-adeel-mangi-are-un-american-khan/index.html)

**Sara Stewart**: [*The next time I want to see Timothee Chalamet, I'll do it from the comfort of my couch*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/23/opinions/timothee-chalamet-dune-part-two-movie-theaters-stewart/index.html)

**Mary Ziegler**: [*Supreme Court shows little sympathy for foes of abortion pill*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/26/opinions/mifepristone-supreme-court-oral-argument-abortion-rights-ziegler/index.html)

**Patrick T. Brown**: [*GOP officials shouldn't run from conservative views on reproductive health*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/28/opinions/abortion-pill-scotus-reproductive-rights-brown/index.html)

**Emma Firth**: [*The secret of being the second happiest country in the world*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/27/opinions/denmark-second-happiest-country-firth/index.html)

**AND...**

'Cowboy Carter'

"Texas Hold 'Em" made Beyonce the first Black woman to hit number one on Billboard's Hot Country Songs charts, **Roxanne Jones** noted.

On Friday, she followed up with a blockbuster album, "Cowboy Carter."

"[*By refusing to be musically and culturally contained, Beyonce has given country music a boost that could only have come from one of the world's top entertainers*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/30/opinions/beyonce-cowboy-carter-black-women-country-jones)," Jones wrote.

"Country music roots run deep in many Black families like mine, even those of us who never lived 'down South.' It will always be the music of our ancestors that still touches our soul and carries us forward, no matter what commercially-acceptable label is forced on the music."

"I hear those ancestors in Cowboy Carter."

Opinion by Richard Galant, CNN

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