

# [***Opinion: Winds of fate confront Trump***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BX1-34H1-JBSS-S0G6-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; "How does it feel to shape the wind to your will?" Doomed vassal Kashigi Yabushige asks warlord Yoshii Toranaga that question in the final episode of the FX series, "Sho gun."

"I don't control the wind," replies Toranaga. "I only study it." That pays off, enabling Toranaga to foil his rivals though his army is vastly outnumbered.

But even the wiliest 16th century Japanese feudal leader might struggle to predict which winds will prevail in the two biggest news stories of last week: former President Donald Trump's many-layered encounter with the US court system and the protests roiling prominent US college campuses.

In the midst of what's expected to be an extraordinarily close election, the spectacle of Trump tramping from courtroom to courtroom is unlike anything seen in American history. The Republican candidate's odds of victory stand to be swayed by the decisions of judges and jurors in New York, Washington, and possibly even Florida and Georgia. A CNN poll released last week [*found that 24%*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/25/politics/cnn-poll-trump-trial/index.html) of those backing Trump say they could reconsider their support if he is convicted of a crime.

In room 1530 of the Art Deco New York criminal court building, prosecutors began to methodically present their case that Trump interfered with the 2016 election through a covert scheme to buy the silence of porn actress Stormy Daniels.

In the US Supreme Court's marble-walled chamber in Washington, several justices in the conservative majority appeared to give at least some credence to the former president's argumentthat he deserved immunity from the 2020 election interference case brought by special counsel Jack Smith.

To Trump's delight, the top court's session dimmed the chances the federal case will go to trial before the election. "It became clear early in Thursday's argument that there was little support across the bench for a narrow ruling that would be good for only this case," wrote **Steve Vladeck**. "As Justice Neil Gorsuch put it at one point, the court needs to articulate 'a rule for the ages' ... a forward-looking rule so that future presidents will know when they should be worried about future criminal prosecution, and when they shouldn't."

"Even if five or more justices ultimately agree on where the line ought to be, how long will it take them to get there? [*If the Court doesn't hand down a ruling until late June or even early July, that may have the effect of practically immunizing Trump*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/26/opinions/trump-immunity-supreme-court-roberts-vladeck/index.html) even if the majority holds that he can stand trial. That's because there may not be enough time for the trial to be held before the election, and there's no way the trial would happen in a world in which Trump wins."

On the spot is Chief Justice John Roberts, who might have to cast the deciding vote and write a landmark opinion that will help define the "broader legacy of the Roberts court," Vladeck wrote.

As the New York trial began, **Joey Jackson** wrote, "[*One cannot help but wonder what's going through the minds of the jurors*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/21/opinions/trump-criminal-trial-opening-arguments-jackson/index.html) - the statements they made during the jury selection process notwithstanding. Are they starstruck? Intimidated? Biased for or against Trump?"

"With regard to the primary jury panel of 12, I am struck by how many professionals have been seated. It includes two lawyers, a tech worker, a software engineer, finance professionals, a teacher and a salesperson, among others. In my view, that's a group that's going to zero in on facts, logic, documents and evidence. That could be very good for Trump because they likely would not be inclined to base their verdict on ***politics*** - his or theirs."

"It could also work against him, however, since the jurors may turn out to be dispassionate, unemotional and otherwise unpersuaded by defense claims of prosecutorial unfairness, governmental overreaching or witch hunts."

First witness

The prosecution's first witness was former American Media CEO and National Enquirer publisher David Pecker, who gave the jurors a revealing glimpse of the seamy side of the supermarket tabloid's way of doing business, including wielding influence with celebrities by buying up and killing potentially negative stories about them.

Pecker's "August 2015 meeting with Trump and former Trump lawyer Michael Cohen ... [*laid the foundation for the 'catch-and-kill' schemes later implemented to benefit Trump's campaign*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/24/opinions/trump-tabloid-ally-david-pecker-testifies-eisen-conway/index.html)," wrote **Norm Eisen** and **George T. Conway III**.

As **Jill Filipovic** noted, former first lady Melania Trump "is still standing by her man - the Trumps remain married, and Melania has been doing some light campaigning for her husband's presidential election bid - but she isn't spending her days at a trial that came about in part because he is accused of cheating on her and trying to cover it up. (Trump has denied the affairs with Daniels and McDougal and has pleaded not guilty to the hush money charges.)"

"Good for her."

[*"The days of women standing up next to their philandering husbands should be well in the rear view."*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/24/opinions/trump-affairs-hush-money-trial-melania-filipovic/index.html)

For more:

**Frida Ghitis**: [*Truth takes its revenge on Trump and his team*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/26/opinions/trump-trial-tucker-carlson-ghitis/index.html)

**Norm Eisen**: [*Trump attorney's embarrassing courtroom apology*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/27/opinions/trump-trial-david-pecker-court-eisen/index.html)

Campus protests

The pro-Palestinian protests at Columbia University, Yale and other US college campuses reflected the emotional intensity of the decades-long Mideast conflict.

**Jonathan Greenblatt** of the Anti-Defamation League described sitting in on a "listening session hosted in the Hillel by the Columbia Task Force on Antisemitism. Approximately 80 Jewish students from across the university came to tell their stories about their encounters with anti-Israel protesters, crowding into a room. Some were crying. Some were yelling in anger. [*They shared individual stories, each more harrowing than the previous one.*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/23/opinions/columbia-university-protests-greenblatt/index.html)"

"Students told me of having liquids flung at them and getting screamed at for simply wearing a Jewish star."

"Students illustrated the madness by showing me videos on their phones. One depicted the assault of a Jewish classmate, an Israeli flag ripped from his hand. Another showed a Jewish student being screamed at by a fully masked individual who came right up to his face, his voice shaking with fury."

Rev. **Serene Jones**, president of the Union Theological Seminary, described a different scene at Columbia. "Last Thursday, I listened in horror as sirens blared outside my office window ... Hundreds of officers from the New York City Police Department flooded onto the campus of our neighbor, Columbia University, to forcibly remove more than 100 peaceful student protesters from an encampment. Students were gathered there calling for action in the ongoing war in Gaza, including demanding the university sever any ties with Israel..."

"I firmly believe campuses must be places for lively, rigorous debate, where we struggle collectively to find better ways to live together on this planet, and where students have the chance to find and strengthen their voices. [*Education is to experience the power of collective action, to become a passionate, engaged citizen*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/26/opinions/columbia-university-protests-union-theological-jones/index.html). These precious values do not flourish when protests are squashed."

Historian **Julian Zelizer** observed that "the turmoil we're seeing brings back memories of the widespread student protests of 1968 - a comparison that won't be lost given that the Democratic National Convention this year will take place in Chicago. ... After President Lyndon Johnson announced that he would not run for reelection, the party nominated his vice president, Hubert Humphrey. But Humphrey's moment of coronation quickly turned into a moment of chaos. As Chicago police, unleashed by Mayor Richard Daley, confronted anti-Vietnam War protesters with tear gas and batons on the streets outside the convention, [*the televised images of violence greatly harmed Humphrey's prospects in November.*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/28/opinions/1968-protests-warning-to-todays-democrats-zelizer/index.html)"

The Republican candidate, Richard Nixon, ran on a "law and order" theme, claiming to represent the "forgotten Americans - the non-shouters; the non-demonstrators. They are not racists or sick; they are not guilty of the crime that plagues the land ... they give lift to the American dream."

For more:

Fareed Zakaria: [*Why the Gaza war has spun campuses into chaos*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/26/opinions/opinion-the-cause-of-campus-chaos-zakaria/index.html)

Ian Berlin: [*I'm a Jewish student at Yale. Here's what everyone is getting wrong about the protests*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/27/opinions/yale-student-palestinian-protests-berlin/index.html)

Mommy and wine

"When people have a difficult day, what do they often say? They joke about having a drink," wrote **Kara Alaimo**. That has led to memes like "Mommy needs wine."

It may also contribute to some disturbing statistics. "The number of women ages 40 to 64 who ended up at the hospital after abusing alcohol almost doubled during the pandemic," Alaimo noted. "This research comes on the heels of a study published last year that found alcohol-related deaths are rising fastest among women. In 2022, researchers found that the rate of having five or more drinks at a time grew twice as fast among women ages 35 to 50 as among men over the previous decade."

"[*It's clear: American women are increasingly abusing alcohol - often with devastating outcomes*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/24/opinions/women-alcohol-abuse-alaimo/index.html). To address the problem, our society needs to reckon with how it treats women as well as the disturbing way we talk about alcohol."

Ready for debates?

As **SE Cupp** noted, "Trump and Biden debated twice in 2020. The first debate was likened to a Real Housewives reunion, called 'a hot mess, inside a dumpster fire, inside a train wreck' by CNN's Jake Tapper, and 'the worst presidential debate I have ever seen in my life' by ABC's George Stephanopoulos, among other damning invective."

"Is anyone under the impression this time around will be better? No, if anything, these debates will be worse. Much worse. They will likely be awful."

[*"All of that said, however, they should happen."*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/25/opinions/video/se-cupp-presidential-debates-trump-biden-election-unfiltered-digvid)

"Debates are an important part of democracy. Voters deserve to see their candidates answer tough questions on their records and their future plans."

On Friday, Biden said for the first time that he would debate Trump.

View from Taiwan

In the first installment of a new CNN Opinion series on international views of America and the 2024 election, **Clarissa Wei** wrote from Taiwan, sometimes called "the most dangerous place in the world" because of the potential of a military conflict with China.

Wei's parents were among many Taiwanese citizens who immigrated to the US in the 1970s and 1980s. "[*My parents considered America a safe haven and wanted me to grow up with all its comforts... And yet, decades later, I ended up doing the exact opposite of what my parents did.*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/22/opinions/taiwan-view-2024-us-election-wei/index.html) In 2020 at the cusp of the global pandemic, I moved to Taiwan with my husband. Last year, I gave birth to a baby boy in Taipei."

"A lot has changed over the past 30 years as Taiwan has transitioned from a dictatorship to a vibrant democracy."

"In Taiwan, power is handed over peacefully while it's no longer a certainty in the US."

"In Taiwan, guns are illegal. In America, guns are a leading cause of death to children."

"Taiwan has universal health care; I can pop into any clinic or hospital for immediate and affordable treatment. My entire medical record can be accessed instantaneously via a chip on my health card. In America, medical insurance is opaque and not guaranteed."

Down the middle

House Speaker Mike Johnson bucked the fury of his extreme right-wing faction to pass aid for Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan. Sen. John Fetterman of Pennsylvania is facing criticism from fellow progressive Democrats for his unequivocal support of Israel since the Hamas attack on October 7.

[*"What Johnson and Fetterman are showing us is that it's possible to govern from the middle, even amid howling from the fringe of both parties,"*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/23/opinions/mike-johnson-john-fetterman-israel-ukraine-jennings) wrote **Scott Jennings**. "People will respond to principled leadership. They get painfully little these days from most politicians. But from Fetterman and Johnson, it's coming by the truckload."

The consequences of the foreign aid bill are crucial, wrote **Mark Hannah**.

"Biden is right to help democratic countries confront their illiberal enemies. Israel and Ukraine suffered terrible crimes of aggression. [*But lofty expressions of unconditional support can paradoxically hurt the countries they are meant to help by hindering the kind of negotiated peace that saves civilian lives and restores stability.*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/26/opinions/biden-israel-ukraine-military-aid-hannah/index.html)"

"The funds might motivate Ukraine and Israel to pursue unwinnable victories: the full restoration of Ukraine's borders and reclamation of Crimea, and the destruction of Hamas, respectively." Biden should use his leverage with these countries to increase the chances for peace, Hannah argued.

Golden Bachelor again

The marital bliss was short-lived.

As **Deborah Carr** wrote, "The Golden Bachelor" show "inspired viewers young and old to believe that everlasting love is possible, even in later life. More than 5 million people tuned in to watch the televised January 4, 2024 wedding of 72-year-old widower and retired restaurateur Gerry Turner and his love, 70-year-old widow and financial services professional Theresa Nist..."

"Imagine the shock and sadness of 'Bachelor Nation' - just three months later - when the couple called it quits."

Carr, a professor of sociology who studies aging, drew three lessons from the "Golden Bachelor" story. One of them:

"[*More and more older adults today are eschewing marriage and cohabitation for 'living apart together (LAT)'*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/25/opinions/golden-bachelor-divorce-lessons-gerry-turner-theresa-nist-carr/index.html) - which essentially means 'going steady,' with each keeping their own separate home. Some older adults want love, intimacy, support and companionship from a committed romantic partner, but they want to keep their home and remain in their own community where they have friends, family and routines. LAT arrangements also help older adults simplify finances and inheritance for their children, maintain their independence, keep their routines and schedules and avoid the strain of round-the-clock spousal caregiving."

Don't miss

**Terri Gerstein**: [*How we all benefit from this new FTC rule*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/25/opinions/ftc-noncompetes-workers-economy-supreme-court-gerstein/index.html)

**Dr. Hasan Merali**: I [*loved my Lunchables as a kid. Now, all I see is what's in them*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/23/opinions/lunchables-kids-school-nutrition-merali)

**Tess Taylor**: [*Why gardens and poems rhyme*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/22/opinions/earth-day-national-poetry-month-taylor/index.html)

**Jeff Yang**: [*The great Scrabble freakout*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/24/opinions/scrabble-together-gen-z-woke-outrage-yang/index.html)

**Dean Obeidallah**: [*Trump warns his supporters of bad weather but welcomed the Jan. 6 hurricane*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/21/opinions/trump-warns-supporters-north-carolina-rally-january-6-obeidallah/index.html)

**AND...**

The music of our lives

CNN anchor **Victor Blackwell** is a fervent Beyonce fan but her foray into country music didn't initially grab him. "These new songs didn't put me in a chokehold like 'Formation.' They weren't cultural markers like 'Single Lades.' They weren't going to get me to learn dance steps, as I did after hearing 'Get Me Bodied.' I resigned myself to skipping Queen Bey's impending country music tour, the first time in a long time that I'd be passing up a chance to see her onstage."

"That was my initial reaction as a devoted fan. It was only after the ugly tone of rejection by some others that I came to view 'Cowboy Carter' through a different prism..."

"In her climb to the highest echelon of the entertainment industry, she's increasingly used her platform to highlight other artists. [*This album honors the Black artists who were scraped and bruised trying to scale the walls around country music and it lifts the young Black country artists who are seeking a foothold*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/26/opinions/beyonce-cowboy-carter-call-me-country-blackwell/index.html)." CNN FlashDocs explores the nature of country music in a new film "[*Call Me Country: Beyonce & Nashville's Renaissance*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P_ONu2VwyZo&feature=youtu.be)," which is streaming on Max.

Monday marks what would have been the 125th birthday of another musical legend, Duke Ellington, but one whose greatest strength may have been his skill at inspiring his bandmates, wrote **Sammy Miller**.

Ellington's signature tune "Take the 'A' Train" was actually composed by fellow pianist Billy Strayhorn. "The lyrics were inspired by directions Ellington gave to Strayhorn to get to his house: You must take the "A" train/To go to Sugar Hill way up in Harlem."

"Ellington had an insatiable hunger for generating and creating with his bandmates -playing with them for 50 years through the Great Depression, the Second World War, and even the formidable rise of Rock n' Roll. As he got older, he wrote more and more ambitious works - refusing to limit himself to his swing era hits. He wrote suites, musicals and sacred concerts. If it involved music, Ellington gave it a shot, always with his band in tow."

"[*His life is a testament to the fact that the artistic process was always meant to be collaborative, and that no man - not even a great man - is an island*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/27/opinions/duke-ellington-a-true-genius-miller). His career is a reminder that there is no replacement for working with others who push you to be the best version of yourself and whom you, in turn, can lift to be the best version of themselves."

Opinion by Richard Galant, CNN

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