

Women AND THE Pandemic



TIME

PROTECTING WOMEN WHEN THE LAW WON'T

by Madeline Roache

Anna Rivina, in Moscow, runs a nonprofit for survivors of domestic violence, which has skyrocketed globally over the past year

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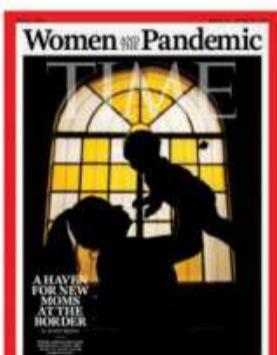
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Magnum Photos
for TIME



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Kanishka Sonthalia
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A migrant fleeing
El Salvador shelters
with her young kids
at the San Juan
Apóstol facility in
Juárez, Mexico

Photograph by
Meridith Kohut
for TIME

Time Off

What to watch, read,
see and do

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for *Minari* director
Lee Isaac Chung

Conversation



WHAT YOU SAID ABOUT...

TIME100 NEXT The 2021 edition of TIME100 Next in the March 1/March 8 issue drove much conversation on social media, with pundits and commenters hailing the honorees in politics, health, tech and other fields. On Twitter, Tom Steyer, 2020 presidential candidate, said the climate activists Vanessa Nakate, Ayana Elizabeth Johnson and Julian Brave NoiseCat are “the future,” and actor Bradley Whitford called Harris County Judge Linda Hidalgo “an amazing public servant.”

In many instances, tributes to those featured were written by established trailblazers in their field. Amanda Gorman, the poet who spoke at President Joe Biden’s Inauguration, wrote that she was starstruck by the words *Hamilton* creator Lin-Manuel Miranda wrote for her. “When we met [years] ago, I shoved a poem into his hands & said ‘I’m too nervous to speak but this is what I’d say if I could!’” she tweeted. “He hugged me & said he’d keep it to say he knew me when. Look at us now.”

Others took their inclusion as an opportunity to reflect, and to pay it forward. “This honor is actually an acknowledgment that

the work is just beginning,” Omar Tate, a Philadelphia-based chef and activist, wrote on Instagram of his place on the list. “We may not see our great grandchildren running the stores, facilities, schools, that we are building for them. What I know we will see are the bricks being laid, because we are already holding them in our hands.”

‘When one of us wins, all of us win, struggle strengthens us all. I don’t do this alone.’

JONATHAN STITH, education-justice activist and honoree, on Twitter

‘Honored. Blessed. Prepared. Purposed. Next.’

KIZZMEKIA CORBETT, immunologist and honoree, on Twitter

Back in TIME

100 Women of the Year

To mark Women’s History Month, explore 89 TIME covers created for a March 16, 2020, special issue. Each honors the most influential women of every year since the ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920. Browse them all, as well as accompanying profiles, at time.com/women



TIME’s first Women’s Summit

Tune in to time.com/womensummit on March 8 at 1 p.m. E.T. to watch influential women discuss their visions for a better future, including:



ALICIA KEYS The 15-time Grammy winner sings about staying true to oneself and has worked to empower others as an advocate for her #NoMakeup movement and the Keep a Child Alive foundation. Keys and National Youth Poet Laureate Amanda Gorman will talk about making impactful art.



DOLORES HUERTA Since co-founding the National Farm Workers Association with Cesar Chavez in 1962, Huerta continues to be an inspiration for workers fighting for fair pay, benefits and job protections today, and will share her vision for a more equal future.



JANE GOODALL The English primatologist, whose research on chimpanzee behavior has informed the study of human behavior for generations, will talk about how the climate crisis is, in particular, affecting women and marginalized communities.



PATRISSE CULLORS Cullors, who co-founded the Black Lives Matter movement in 2013 to raise awareness of the fatal shooting of teenager Trayvon Martin, will discuss building a global movement and advocating for justice.

SPECIAL REPORT

WOMEN and the PANDEMIC

HOW TO HELP To aid women in crisis, you can donate to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, U.N. Women’s UNiTE campaign, G.L.I.T.S., HOPE Border Institute, the San Juan Apóstol migrant shelter (Haznos Valer) or any free-food fridge in your area, including: Free Food Fridge, Albany, N.Y.; the Black Feminist Project, New York City; Urban Growers Collective, Illinois; the Bulb, North Carolina; or Feed Black Futures, Los Angeles.

WOMEN'S SUMMIT**Raquel Willis****on the power of inclusive activism**

WRITER, EDITOR AND ACTIVIST Raquel Willis is on a mission to ensure the fight for equality is intersectional—cognizant of people's identities, privileges and lived experiences. Through her work in media and as the founder of Black Trans Circles, Willis elevates the voices of marginalized communities and emphasizes the impact of diverse coalitions. "We're paying more attention to the importance of the leadership of women," Willis tells TIME in a conversation that will air as part of the March 8 Voices of the Future Women's Summit. "We have to continue to find new pathways to support that work."

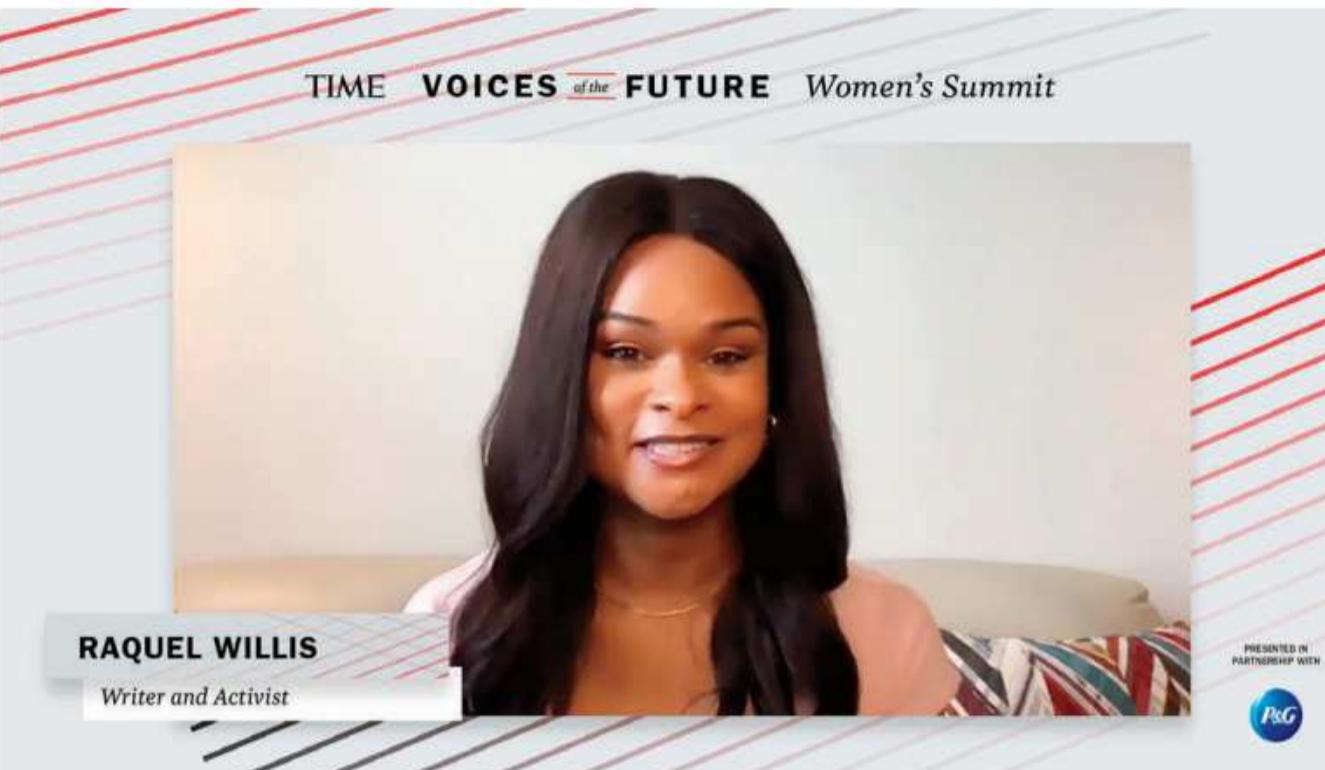
How can we ensure that the fight for women's rights is inclusive of all women?

By, at the very least, starting to reckon with our past. The women's movement has not always been welcoming of all types of women—it still isn't to this day. I think about the ways that women who are poor or working class or who are sex workers have been sidelined. And then, of course, I think about Black women and trans women.

We don't fully lean in to our power until everyone we claim to represent is being elevated, nourished and supported. We are all transformed when we learn through our differences.

TALK TO US

SEND AN EMAIL:

letters@timemagazine.com
Please do not send attachments**What must be done to ensure women are better supported moving forward?**

We have to start having regular conversations about the patriarchy—we still overwhelmingly live in a society where men and masculinity is prioritized. That's not O.K. Your gender should not be a barrier for you living the life that you deserve.

How can we better prepare young leaders to work toward a more equal future?

We empower young people by giving them space to figure out their story on their own terms. We have to allow them to understand they are brilliant and capable no matter what their experience is, which is not always the case for children that we raise as little girls. It's not always the case for gender-expansive and gender-nonconforming children. But we also have to let them know their history—it's all of our duty to leave the door open a little bit wider for the next folks who come through.

A recent Gallup survey reported that 15.9% of Gen Z adults identify as LGBTQ. Can changing demographics impact societal change?

More people openly identifying as LGBTQ is a benefit to everyone. It's a benefit to our community because we see just how large we are in this world—and we have more people power to draw on when we inevitably have to continue to fight against bigotry. And we're healthier as a society when [fewer people] feel stigmatized and shame.

I think it's a conservative estimate. There are still plenty more people who are not empowered yet to be open about who they are. We don't live in a society that fully educates us on the complexity of love and sexuality and identity and gender. That is a problem for all of us.

What is giving you hope in this moment?

I am always inspired by plants and their capacity to remind us that growth is possible; to remind us that we all need food, water, love and sunlight.

NOTICE OF EVICTION

Following two single mothers in New Orleans for six months, filmmaker Kathleen Flynn's documentary reflects an all-too-common reality for American families: the struggle to retain a safe place to live while tending to their children's most basic needs. Watch the film at time.com/women-evictions

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SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

▶ In the March 1/March 8 issue, a story in the Brief on new Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi misstated the amount of recovery loans the European Union offered to boost the country's economy. It is \$240 billion.



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For the Record

'DO YOU MISS ME YET?'

DONALD TRUMP,

former President, in a speech at the Conservative Political Action Conference in Orlando on Feb. 28

I now understand that my interactions may have been insensitive or too personal.

ANDREW CUOMO,
New York governor, in a Feb. 28 statement responding to sexual harassment allegations leveled against him by two former employees

77

Weight in pounds of fleece shorn from a ram recently found in rural Australia, a farm sanctuary worker told Reuters on Feb. 23

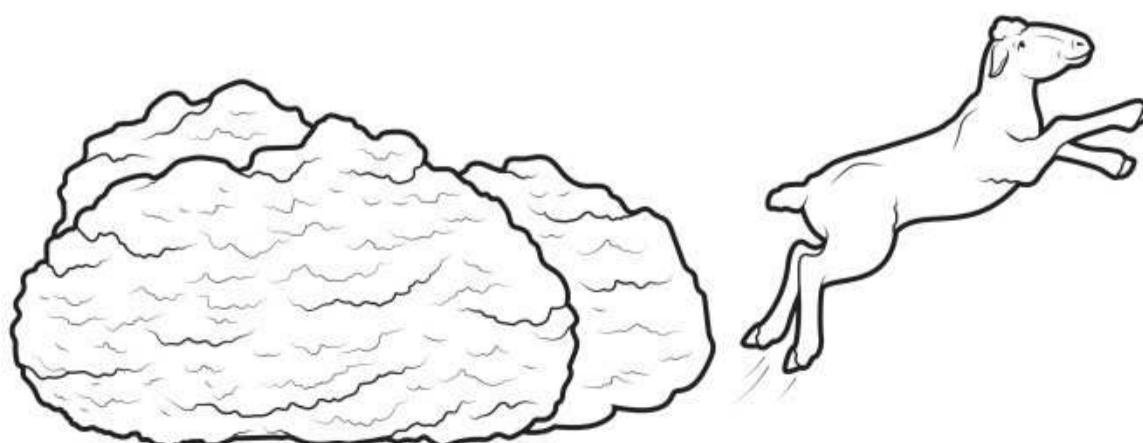


4,800 ft.

Distance two men descended on Feb. 21 when they skied and rappelled from the summit of Yosemite's Half Dome, becoming the first people known to have done so

'He would say something beautiful, something inspiring, something that would amplify that little voice inside all of us that tells you you can, that tells you to keep going.'

TAYLOR SIMONE LEDWARD,
accepting a posthumous Golden Globe award on Feb. 28 for her husband Chadwick Boseman, and his performance in the film *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*



'We're now on track to have enough vaccine supply for every adult in America by the end of May.'

JOE BIDEN,
U.S. President, in a March 2 speech announcing increased production of COVID-19 vaccines

'Can only have been painted by a madman.'

EDVARD MUNCH,
in an inscription on his 1895 work *The Scream*. Curators at the National Museum of Norway announced Feb. 22 that the handwriting, previously thought to be graffiti, was the artist's



GOOD NEWS
of the week

Bethany Christian Services, one of the largest religious adoption and foster-care agencies in the U.S., announced that it would start serving LGBTQ families nationwide on March 1

theBrief

COLD STORAGE
A day's worth
of Moderna
COVID-19 vaccine
doses in a
vaccination center
refrigerator in
Livingston, N.J.,
on Jan. 12



INSIDE

BIDEN DEMURS TO THE SAUDI
PRINCE ON KHASHOGGI

TEEN ISIS RECRUIT LOSES U.K.
CITIZENSHIP APPEAL

RISING VIOLENCE AGAINST
MYANMAR COUP PROTESTERS

PHOTOGRAPH BY BRYAN ANSELM

The Brief is reported by Jenna Caldwell, Madeleine Carlisle, Alejandro de la Garza, Amy Gunia, Suyin Haynes, Sanya Mansoor, Ciara Nugent, Billy Perrigo, Madeline Roache and Olivia B. Waxman

The Brief Opener

HEALTH

Vaccines vs. viral variants

By Alice Park

IT'S ONE THING TO TEST A VACCINE IN A controlled study, and another to see it in action in the real world. Since the first COVID-19 vaccines were approved at the end of 2020, more than 250 million people around the world have been vaccinated, and public-health experts are starting to see how the shots are faring when put to the ultimate test. That information is especially critical as new, more infectious versions of SARS-CoV-2 are starting to dominate new cases in certain countries—such as the U.K. and South Africa—raising concerns among both the public and health leaders over whether existing vaccines will work against these viral variants.

So far, studies show that the vaccines are doing what they should. In two large data reviews—one conducted in Israel, where most people have been vaccinated with a shot developed by Pfizer-BioNTech, and the other in Scotland, where people have been getting either the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine or one from AstraZeneca—scientists found that people who have been vaccinated are less likely to get sick with COVID-19 or need hospitalization for the disease. The shot appears to be especially effective at lowering risk of severe illness. In the Israel-based study, scientists even found hints that the vaccine could protect people from getting infected in the first place, an important factor in shutting down spread of the virus.

More good news: there isn't strong evidence yet that the new viral variants have actually figured out how to break through the protection provided by the vaccines. Neither the Israel- nor the Scotland-based research specifically tracked the vaccines' effectiveness against new variants, but in Israel, one of the variants became more dominant during the study, and the scientists note that the overall drop in hospitalizations suggests the vaccine was likely effective against different mutant strains. Johnson & Johnson's Janssen group, which received emergency-use authorization from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration on Feb. 27 for its vaccine, provided the most recent encouraging data: the company's global study of its single-dose shot included participants in South Africa, where nearly all new infections can now be traced to one of the new variants, and found that the vaccine was 57% effective in protecting people from severe COVID-19 illness in the country. (The FDA's threshold for granting emergency use

to COVID-19 vaccines is 50.) Studies by the manufacturers of the other two authorized vaccines in the U.S.—Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna—showed similarly sufficient protection, although both also reported slightly lower levels of immune antibodies generated against one of the variant viruses.

What's clear is that while the vaccines remain effective, vaccinemakers and public-health officials have to remain vigilant. SARS-CoV-2 won't sit still, and more variants are inevitable, given that viruses are trained to morph and find more efficient ways to infect new hosts.

ANTICIPATING THIS, PFIZER-BIONTECH and Moderna have both launched studies in which people who have already received a full two-shot regimen will be given a third dose. The goal is to see if boosting with an additional injection will bring up their immune responses against major viral variants.

In case that's not enough, each company has also designed new vaccines against the variant from South Africa. To make their original vaccines, both used mRNA technology, which involves injecting genetic material from the virus into the body, where it produces a viral protein that trains the immune cells to target and attack the actual virus later on. To create new vaccines against the variant strain, scientists simply swapped out the original genetic code for one including the variant's mutations, in the same way that the flu shot is modified each season

to target new versions of influenza. "We always want to be one step ahead of the virus," says Mikael Dolsten, chief scientific officer at Pfizer. "We expect that the antibody levels may rise against current variants to strengthen protection."

Janssen, too, is looking to amplify the protection provided by its vaccine. Its team is testing whether adding a second dose to the current one-dose regimen could generate a stronger immune response; it expects results in several months.

All this could be a dry run for how we manage COVID-19 in coming years. If the virus remains stubbornly resilient, mutating to evade the protection from vaccines and drug therapies, vaccinemakers could be scanning for new variants and tweaking vaccines every year or so, just as

they do the flu shot. If the protection provided by the vaccines creates enough of a barrier against SARS-CoV-2, however, the virus may find itself without enough people to infect and peter out.

For now, the vaccines at least appear to be lowering the tremendous burden of COVID-19 disease on strained health care systems. Public-health experts are hoping quick and complete vaccination programs will lighten the responsibility even further and eventually stop the virus in its tracks. They won't know for sure if that's possible until a greater proportion of the world's population is vaccinated, and they can track how the virus reacts to that growing wall of immunity. □

'We always want to be one step ahead of the virus.'

MIKAEL DOLSTEN,
chief scientific
officer at Pfizer





FREE AGAIN Four days after they were abducted by unidentified gunmen from a boarding school in Nigeria's Zamfara state, 279 schoolgirls, some pictured above at a government building, were released on March 2. School kidnappings are often undertaken by jihadist and criminal groups in the region as a way to extort ransoms. The state government has, however, denied paying a ransom for the girls—a controversial practice in Nigeria, as many say it fuels further criminality.

POLITICS

Democrats can't keep all their promises in the COVID-19 relief bill

THE DEMOCRATS' UNIFIED CONTROL OF Washington puts them within striking distance of passing President Biden's coronavirus relief package, sending \$1,400 checks to lower- and middle-income Americans, extending federal unemployment insurance until Aug. 29 and allotting nearly \$130 billion to reopen K-12 schools. But it's also notable what almost certainly won't end up in the final bill: a \$15 minimum-wage increase and a repeal of two tax breaks implemented under last year's CARES Act that primarily benefited billionaires and millionaires.

CHECKS AND BALANCES On the 2020 campaign trail, Democrats vowed to enact these policies, but that rhetoric is now meeting the reality of governing. The omissions are primarily being chalked up to procedural difficulties. Democrats voted overwhelmingly for the CARES Act last March, but aides later acknowledged that in the rush to pass the bill, they had not realized the tax breaks' full implications. Millions of dollars in refunds have already been issued, and experts on both sides of the aisle agree it's virtually impossible for the government to claw back that money.

PROCEDURAL SNAFUS The Senate parliamentarian recently ruled that the minimum-wage hike fell outside the relief package's budgetary confines, and while Senate Democrats briefly floated tax penalties for corporations that don't pay employees a living wage, they nixed the proposal to ensure that the bill reaches Biden's desk before unemployment benefits lapse on March 14. Such hurdles to their proposals will continue to thwart Democrats absent the 60-vote supermajority required to pass measures in the upper house. The chamber is split 50-50, with Vice President Kamala Harris the tiebreaker.

MIND THE GAP Tax increases are still on the table for a subsequent recovery package later this year, and on March 1, Senator Elizabeth Warren introduced a proposal for a wealth tax. But even with the party's newfound power to address the ever widening wealth gap, it still seems to be much easier for corporations and high-net-worth individuals to score seven- or even eight-figure tax breaks than for workers to get a minimum-wage increase. That's a problem the party will have to grapple with long after Biden signs his American rescue plan. —ALANA ABRAMSON

NEWS TICKER

U.S. airstrike targets militia groups in Syria

On Feb. 25 President Joe Biden **authorized an airstrike in eastern Syria**—the first such military action of his Administration. The strike was aimed at “infrastructure” used by Iran-backed militia groups involved in a February attack against U.S. coalition forces in Iraq, according to a letter Biden sent to Congress two days later.

Power co-op bankrupt after Texas storm

Brazos Electric Power Cooperative, Texas' largest and oldest electric power company, filed for bankruptcy protection on March 1, citing a **\$2.1 billion bill** it received from the state's grid operator after a historic winter storm in mid-February.

Polish court acquits LGBTQ activists

In the culmination of a case widely seen as a test of freedoms of speech, a Polish court acquitted three LGBTQ activists on March 2 after they produced and distributed images of a religious icon with a rainbow flag. They had been accused of **desecration and offending religious feelings**. LGBTQ-rights groups called the ruling a “breakthrough.”

NEWS TICKER

Hong Kong charges 47 under new law

In the most forceful use yet of Hong Kong's new and wide-ranging national-security law, authorities charged 47 pro-democracy figures on Feb. 28 with "conspiracy to commit subversion," carrying a potential sentence of life imprisonment.

The defendants include activist Joshua Wong and former law professor Benny Tai.

Biden backs unions amid Amazon vote

In a Feb. 28 tweet, President Joe Biden expressed support for employees in Alabama, where Amazon warehouse workers are currently voting on whether to become the first unionized Amazon facility in the U.S. Every American worker "should have a free and fair choice to join a union," Biden wrote.

10 arrested in Barcelona protests

Ten people were arrested in Barcelona on Feb. 27 during protests over the arrest and conviction of a rapper for glorifying terrorism and insulting royalty in his lyrics.

Pablo Hasel's arrest on Feb. 16 has since sparked sometimes violent protests in Barcelona and Madrid, and a debate over freedom of expression.

GOOD QUESTION

Why isn't the U.S. sanctioning Mohammed bin Salman?

IN NEWLY DECLASSIFIED DETAIL, THE WORLD can now read why the CIA believes Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman dispatched the 15-man hit squad that killed and dismembered Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018. MBS, as the prince is known, "viewed Khashoggi as a threat to the Kingdom," the report asserts, and "broadly supported using violent measures if necessary to silence him." The plot, which saw Khashoggi lured to his death at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, turned MBS from a figure many hoped would modernize Saudi Arabia into an international pariah.

But public shaming is where President Joe Biden's campaign pledge to hold MBS—who denies ordering Khashoggi's murder—accountable appears to end. On Feb. 26, his Administration announced new sanctions and travel restrictions for dozens of MBS's alleged henchmen, but punishment of the 35-year-old de facto ruler is limited to bruising his ego. U.S. officials say they won't be inviting him to visit anytime soon, and Biden isn't taking his calls, communicating instead with his father, 85-year-old King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. (MBS will have to make do with conversing with the Pentagon chief.)

The slap on the wrist sparked immediate criticism in Washington from lawmakers and human-rights activists who want to see MBS charged—or even, somehow, ousted from

power—for the killing. But the Biden Administration has evidently calculated it has too much at stake to alienate Riyadh; State Department spokesman Ned Price described the diplomatic slights "not as a rupture, but as a recalibration."

Saudi Arabia is central to ongoing U.S. efforts to offset Iran's expansionist ambitions in the Middle East, to continue to strengthen ties between Israel and the Arab world, and to help Washington fight the violent extremism Riyadh's fundamentalist clerics have been accused of helping foster. The nation hosts key U.S. military and intelligence posts, and buys billions in U.S. military equipment, even after a recent Biden ban on offensive weapons sales to the country to stop MBS's increasingly bloody campaign in Yemen. "Militarily speaking, we have obligations there in Saudi Arabia, and we're going to continue to meet those," Pentagon spokesman John Kirby told reporters. Indeed, Saudi news agencies reported that Saudi and U.S. troops began a joint training exercise just two days after the Khashoggi report's release.

Biden officials hope the diplomatic snubs are just enough to distinguish Biden from Donald Trump's coddling of the kingdom—and to keep MBS from lashing out at other journalists and dissidents. Saudi analyst Ali Shihabi says the rising royal does feel insulted, and could turn to Beijing both to hedge his bets and to salve his battered pride if he continues to come under attack from Washington. "But if this is put behind us, he will forget about it," Shihabi says. Biden's team appears to have calculated that most Americans, coping with COVID-19's chaos at home, have already done just that.

—KIMBERLY DOZIER and W.J. HENNIGAN



CHANGING TONES

Crayola launched its Colors of the World crayon box set in May 2020, releasing new colors meant to reflect over 40 skin tones from around the world. The line has since expanded to pencils and markers.

A DOLL FOR ALL

Mattel, the maker of Barbie, launched its first line of gender-neutral dolls in 2019. A company spokesperson said that it was time for a "line free of labels" and that Mattel hoped the new toys would help kids freely express themselves.

PLAYTIME

Driving diversity

Hasbro announced Feb. 25 that it will drop "Mr." and "Mrs." titles from an upcoming Potato Head play set so everyone can feel "welcome in the Potato Head world." Here, more toys updated for inclusion and representation. —Madeleine Carlisle

FIGHTING WORDS

After a 6-year-old girl wrote to ask why none of its iconic green army soldiers were female, BMC Toys decided to launch its first line of Plastic Army Women, available in four military poses, in December 2020.

Milestones

DIED

Lawrence Ferlinghetti

Last of the Bohemians
By Charles Lloyd

IN EVERYTHING LAWRENCE

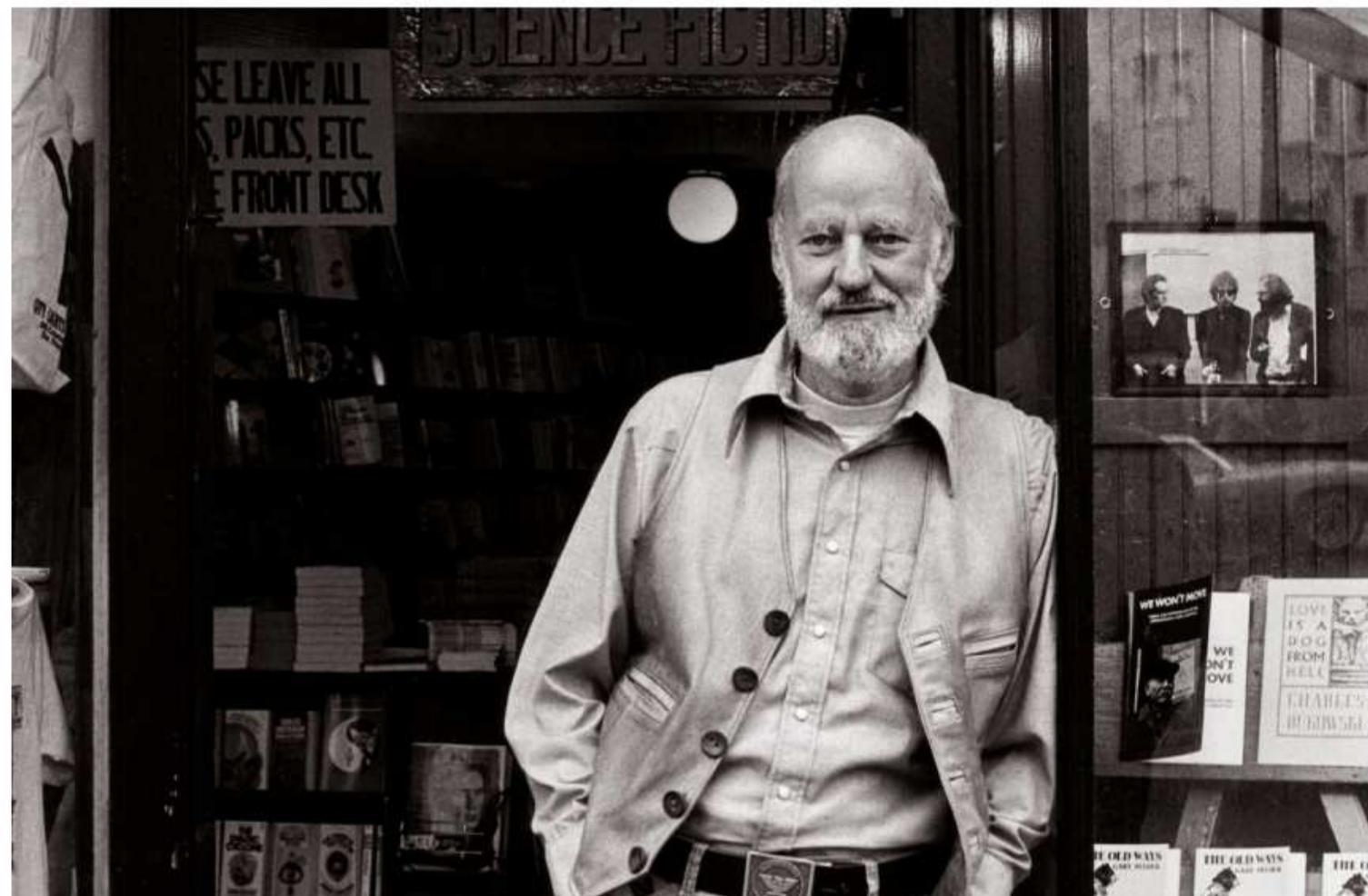
Ferlinghetti wrote, he wanted folks to wake up. A poet and publisher, Ferlinghetti, who died on Feb. 22 at 101, was a perceptive writer renowned for his progressive politics and a thoughtful observer of the human condition.

In the mid-'70s we both lived in Big Sur, Calif. We were kindred souls, trying to straighten out a world gone mad through our art. We attended poetry readings, shared homemade meals and performed together on occasion. Sharing a stage with Lawrence was a magical, unscripted experience—going back and forth between my notes and his words as our audience went wild.

Even in his 90s, Ferlinghetti continued writing. He was still eager—he never stopped striving for a better world. His legacy will live on through his words, and through City Lights—the landmark San Francisco bookstore he co-founded in 1953.

I was in New York City on 9/11. In the aftermath, everything in the city was closed below 14th Street. Makeshift bulletin boards were set up around the West Village seeking information about missing loved ones. Amid the chaos, I saw one of Ferlinghetti's poems scrawled; it still stays with me, decades later:

"The little airplanes of the heart with their brave little propellers," it begins. "What can they do against the winds of darkness, even as butterflies are beaten back by hurricanes yet do not die." That was Ferlinghetti reaching out to folks, as he always did. —As told to SANYA MANSOOR; Lloyd is a saxophonist, composer and NEA Jazz Master



Ferlinghetti pictured outside City Lights in September 1977

FERLINGHETTI: JANET FRIES—GETTY IMAGES; BEGUM: LAURA LEAN—AFP/GETTY IMAGES

DIED

Michael Somare, Papua New Guinea's longest-serving Prime Minister, who helped lead the island state to independence and was referred to by many as the Father of the Nation, at 84 on Feb. 26.

WITHDRAWN

Neera Tanden's nomination to run Biden's budget office on March 2, after it became clear the Senate would not confirm her amid focus on her past social media posts criticizing lawmakers.

DISCONTINUED

The publication of **six Dr. Seuss books**, including *If I Ran the Zoo* and *The Cat's Quizzer*, because they "portray people in ways that are hurtful and wrong," Dr. Seuss Enterprises announced March 2.

DIED

Civil rights icon and lawyer **Vernon Jordan**, who headed the National Urban League for years and advised numerous political figures, including President Bill Clinton, at 85 on March 1.

SPLIT

French electronic-music duo **Daft Punk**, the pair said Feb. 22. The Grammy-winning group helped define dance music for a generation with chart-topping hits over a 28-year career.

INVESTIGATED

A Feb. 25 incident in which California plastic surgeon Dr. Scott Green attended a virtual traffic-court hearing **while operating on a patient**, by the Medical Board of California.



In this Feb. 22, 2015, image, Renu Begum holds a family photo of her sister Shamima Begum

DENIED

ISIS recruit's appeal blocked by U.K. court

THE U.K.'S SUPREME COURT RULED ON FEB. 26 that Shamima Begum, 21, who was stripped of her British citizenship in 2019 over her affiliation with the Islamic State (ISIS), will not be allowed to return to the U.K. to challenge the decision. Handed down on security grounds, the court's decision serves as a test case for other Westerners who remain in detention over suspected involvement in terrorist groups abroad. As many as 350 Britons who traveled to Iraq and Syria to join ISIS are still missing or being held in Kurdish camps.

Begum was 15 years old when she and two friends traveled to Syria to join ISIS. She lived under ISIS rule for more than three years, married a Dutch ISIS fighter and had three children, all of whom have since died. In 2019 she was found in a detention camp in northern Syria. Begum has said she is "willing to change" and asked the U.K. authorities to show "mercy."

The ruling "sets an extremely dangerous precedent," said Liberty, a civil-liberties group that intervened in Begum's case, in a statement. "Washing our hands of someone and leaving them to languish in camps, rather than questioning, investigating and, if necessary, prosecuting them," adds Rosalind Comyn, a legal and policy officer at the group, is not a "long-term solution from a security or human-rights perspective." —MADELINE ROACHE

The Brief Business

Home bakers find sweet success in tough times

By Raisa Bruner

WHEN TUI TUILETA LEFT HONOLULU FOR COLLEGE in 2016, he was renowned for his skills in volleyball, not baking. But these days, the 6-ft.-2-in. former U.S. national volleyball team member, who has since returned home, is best known around his native Oahu as the Kuki Man, thanks to his delectable cookies, which have soared in popularity in the past year.

Tuileta, 25, lost his job as a fire-knife dancer performing at luaus when the COVID-19 pandemic prompted shutdowns throughout the service industry in 2020. While he's the first to admit he's no kitchen whiz, Tuileta turned to baking in his newfound free time to satisfy his own lifelong craving for cookies. "If there's one thing I can make, it's cookies," he says. His friends, who followed him on Instagram when he started posting about the desserts he was baking for himself last spring, quickly caught on. Soon, requests to buy his chunky, gooey creations rolled in.

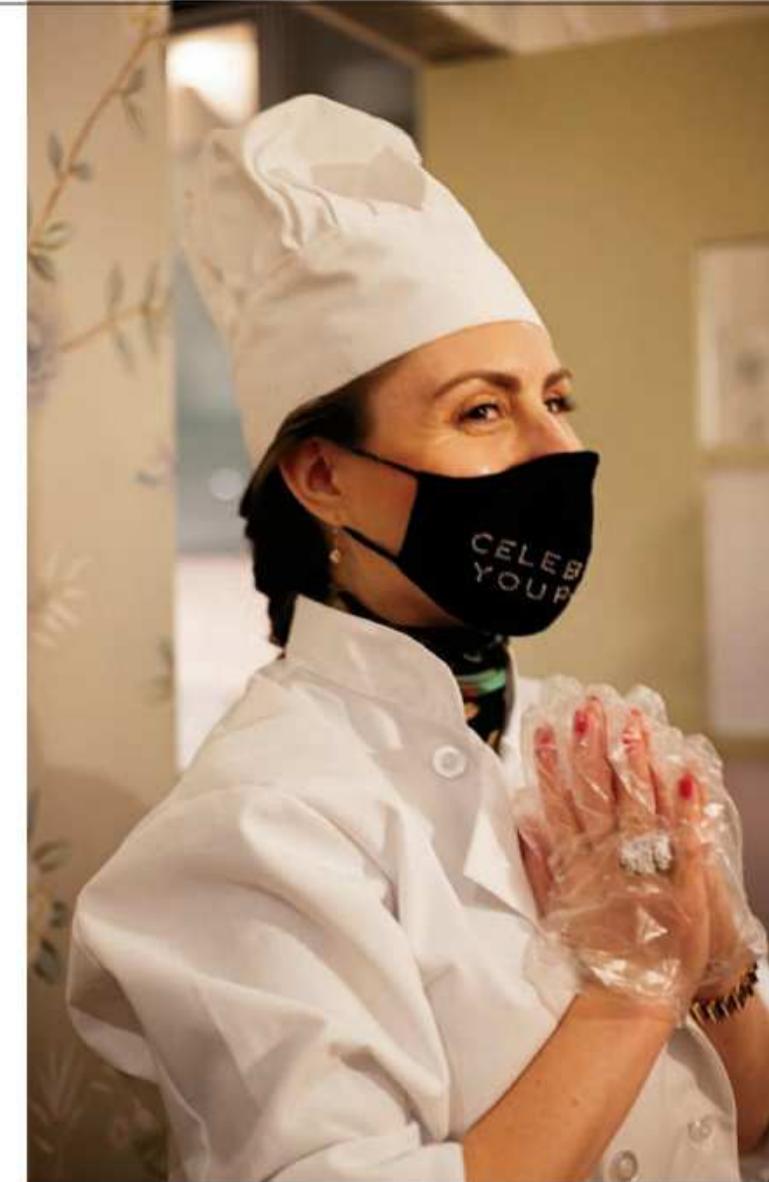
Tuileta made his first cookie deliveries on April 1 last year. Now he is baking up to 400 cookies a week out of his parents' oven, and delivering them all locally on the same day with the help of a friend. He insists the cookies, which come in limited-edition flavors like 3-in.-thick S'mores and Reese's-topped peanut butter, taste best when they are fresh. Responding to popular demand, Tuileta will launch a website this month making stateside shipping available. And looking ahead to the end of the pandemic, Tuileta sees no reason to step back from his baking business.

"I'll make cookies during the day," he says, "and fire-knife dance at night."

TUILETA IS NOT THE ONLY ONE turning to the kitchen to feed more people than just himself. Across the U.S., some have found time and opportunity amid the upheaval caused by COVID-19 to create sweet new entrepreneurial ventures.

Actor Whitney Crowder was in the midst of producing and starring in a short film in March 2020 when the pandemic prompted shutdowns across New York City, putting her plans on indefinite hold. Her jobs as a bartender and pastry chef at a restaurant disappeared. Crowder was left with a 500-sq.-ft. apartment in Queens and her side project: baking cakes and taking custom dessert orders through her Instagram account, Sugar and Bite.

A self-taught chef, Crowder was for years the



LADY AND THE CHOCOLATE

Sara Armet delivers chocolate bark by bicycle

'Everyone wants to feel connected, and the best way to do that is through social media and bread.'

Ashley Coiffard

baker of choice for her friends—even crafting a wedding cake for a former boss—but had always resisted committing to another creative (and potentially financially risky) pursuit. But quarantine was a game changer. "I was like, O.K., well, the one thing I can do is focus on my baking," she says. "I had time."

After six years of working multiple jobs in New York, the free time was itself a novelty. The other surprise: demand for desserts. Crowder started adding to her recipe arsenal and experimenting with more intricate designs. Orders for her sweets—cheesecakes frosted to look like oil paintings; towering chocolate cakes flecked with gold leaf—tripled in a month. The short film, intended as a proof-of-concept project for Crowder and her partner, Adam Hardman, to take to Hollywood, fell by the wayside. And when the couple moved to Long Beach, Calif., last summer, Sugar and Bite went too, and through a virtual inspection, they received a government certification to make and sell goods from their new home's kitchen. They adapted as the demand shifted: when the local farmers market was looking for a bread seller, Crowder and Hardman started making bread. The operation has continued to grow. Their farmers-market stand sells out weekly, no matter how much bread—and cake—Crowder brings. Custom orders are pouring in through a recently launched website, and they just opened a pop-up stand in a local shop.

"We're going to have to expand soon to a commercial kitchen," Crowder says. The couple has already maxed out storage in their apartment; bags of flour and cooling racks fill the linen closet, and the fridge is "jam-packed with doughs resting." They work in shifts, with Hardman waking up at 5 a.m. to bake bread, sometimes just an hour after

KUKI MAN

S'mores cookies were a limited-run flavor



SUSANA TORRES

Though working harder than ever, Torres is fulfilling a longtime goal



Crowder goes to sleep. She spends her nights decorating her cakes with the painstaking angst of a perfectionist. But the future is bright.

"This is going to be able to support us. We'll be able to save up and make our short films," she says. Crowder and Hardman have found a way to turn what might have been a pandemic survival job into something much more. "This is a passion job," she says. It just happens to also pay the bills.

FOR HOME BAKERS across the country, creating and sharing treats with others has been one upside in a year of isolation. In Brooklyn, Gautier and Ashley Coiffard started selling croissants from their home under the moniker L'Appartement 4F; after just a month, they had made the \$5,000 they were hoping to save for their wedding. Gautier, the chef, continues to work full time as an engineer during the day, while Ashley quit her job as a mortgage processor to run the business. "Everyone wants to feel connected, and the best way to do that is through social media and bread," she says.

Across the East River in Manhattan, Sara Armet's homemade chocolate bark—cheekily named the Lady and the Chocolate—has become a neighborhood favorite on the Upper East Side. The personal shopper and real estate agent made a major career change when she was struck with the idea on a whim. She delivers each order, often via Citi Bike, wearing signature heart sunglasses and a rhinestone face mask; now she's raising money via crowdfunding to expand beyond her apartment.

In Los Angeles, Sabeena Ladha and Scout Brisson turned their shared interest in healthy eating and connections in the food world into a "good-for-you" vegan cookie-dough brand, Deux; they now sell it in trendy Erewhon markets, and plan to

expand into stores nationwide by the fall.

No matter how different their origins, these home bakers are all crafting a meaningful future through their culinary pursuits. For some, it is a creative way to earn an income in tough times. For others, it's a chance to home in on a newfound purpose. But for Susana Torres and her four daughters, the pandemic hasn't just meant time to play around in the kitchen between jobs. They are fulfilling a long-deferred ambition.

Torres, who crossed the U.S.-Mexico border into Texas in the early 2000s, finally has her dream job: baking cakes. "When we first got to America, we sold cheesecakes, chocoflan," Susana's daughter Natalia Rodríguez Nuñez recalls. "It was to make ends meet. We were undocumented, and that didn't require paperwork." Torres soon picked up a job as a salesperson at an embroidery store at the border, where she worked for 13 years with no time for baking—until COVID-19 hit. Now, she runs her business, Susana's Cakery, out of her home in Weslaco. Her daughters have helped by setting up her social media and fulfilling orders. "I am putting in more hours now, but I am doing what I am passionate about," Torres, who is now a legal resident, says. The house smells delicious all day and all night, and she sells dozens of sweets every week: white chocolate raspberry cheesecake, three-tiered Bundt cake decorated with pastel swirls of frosting, classic tres leches.

"I put my heart in every single cake that I make," Torres says. "I am very happy." She envisions opening up a "very pretty cakery" where people can pick up confections to share for celebrations. As the pandemic eases its grip on the nation, her dream—and that of her fellow home bakers—crystallizes more each day. □

400

The number of cookies Tui Tuileta bakes each week

\$5,000

The budget for Gautier and Ashley Coiffard's wedding—earned through a month's worth of croissant sales

13

The number of years Susana Torres lived in the U.S. before achieving her dream of baking for a living

\$200

The price of a 10-in. custom cake from Whitney Crowder

The Brief Postcard

In Jackson, a ski town struggles for balance

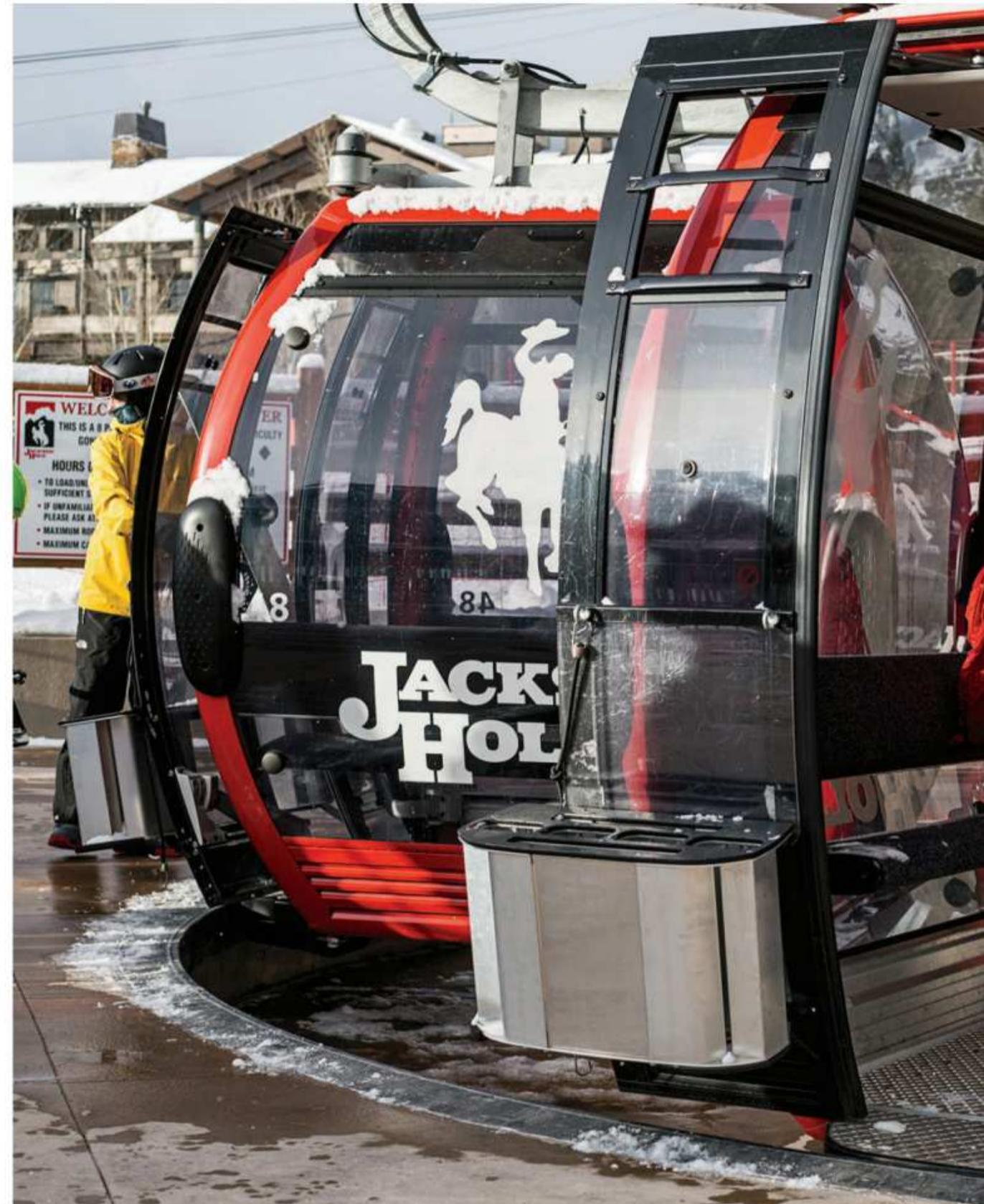
By Lucas Isakowitz

TUCKED IN THE SHADOW OF THE TETONS, THE TOWN OF Jackson, Wyo., and surrounding Teton County is home to fewer than 25,000 full-time residents, but annually hosts more than 2.5 million visitors. The valley's natural beauty attracts an influx of tourists, who in turn are responsible for roughly 30% of the region's jobs and more than \$1 billion in annual revenue. For the past year, visitors came with an unwelcome price tag for locals: "Every time in this pandemic that we've had an influx of visitation ... it follows with an uptick in [COVID-19] cases and hospitalizations," says Dr. Jeff Greenbaum, medical director at the emergency department for St. John's hospital and the Jackson Hole Mountain Resort (JHMR) ski patrol.

With just one major hospital and eight emergency-room physicians serving Teton County, any increase in COVID-19 cases is cause for concern. And in January, following the Christmas and New Year's tourism rush, cases in Teton County skyrocketed to some of their highest levels since the pandemic began. As cases surged, the county reissued a series of guidelines that kept indoor gatherings capped at 25% and limited outdoor gatherings to 250 guests. Since a high in mid-January, new caseloads have declined, and the local hospital seems unlikely to be overrun. Still, Greenbaum posits that part of the reason St. John's hasn't been overwhelmed by cases is that many of the tourists who get COVID-19 in Teton County might not stay to get treatment in Teton County.

The ski resort, hotels, bars and restaurants remain open in the town, and JHMR is optimistic that it can operate the entire season, trusting in the protocols it has put in place to protect both guests and staff. But at a time when millions of Americans are out of work, daily infection rates remain high, and thousands across the country are dying daily from the virus, should the wealthy indulge in an après-ski, looking out onto the beautiful Teton mountains, all while potentially shuttling COVID-19 into and out of Jackson?

"**THIS PLACE IS PRETTY MUCH** a gigantic country club, relying on second-home owners and tourism for its revenue," says Jesse Bryant, a doctoral candidate in American sociology at Yale University and creator of *Yonder Lies*, a podcast exploring the history of Jackson Hole. "But Jackson has to balance the ultra-wealthy with the real reality of people eking out a living here." Teton County has the largest income gap of any county in the U.S., with the top 1% making almost 150 times more than the other 99%. From mountain guides to house cleaners to bartenders, much of the employment in Jackson cannot easily be transitioned to remote work, meaning that Jackson's working class are among the most susceptible to unemployment from the pandemic. All across America, the costs of the pandemic are being borne by the poorest members of society; a Pew Research Center survey from September found that about 50% of low-income Americans say they or someone in their household has lost employment or taken a pay cut because of the



pandemic, and similarly, about 50% of low-income Americans report having trouble paying their bills since the pandemic started.

During much of the spring and summer, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act passed by the federal government at the start of the pandemic had provided \$600 in additional unemployment payments per week, assuring many local and seasonal workers that their livelihoods were safe for a few months even if their jobs weren't. But almost a year into the pandemic, Jackson's working class are left with far fewer options: federal unemployment relief ended in July, and when it restarted in January, it dropped to \$300. Meanwhile, state unemployment benefits in Wyoming, although extended by 13 weeks, dry up after 39 weeks. "Many of the workers here don't have a six-month buffer saved up," says one restaurant worker who wished to remain anonymous for risk of losing their job, "so while tourism presents a risk, we're willing to take it to keep our paychecks coming in."

JHMR has been doing nearly



everything within its power to keep COVID-19 from spreading on its slopes. The resort instituted a mandatory mask policy during the summer—Wyoming didn't issue a statewide mask mandate until Dec. 7—and transformed its human-resources department into a contact-tracing team. Staff are now trained to perform a number of different functions so they can sub in as needed, and work shifts in pods, meaning that if a person in one group has been exposed to COVID-19, another totally isolated pod can come in to take its place. Group ski lessons have been replaced by private lessons (at no extra cost), and the gondolas and lifts are ascending the mountain with minimal group mixing. Still, JHMR can control only what happens on the mountain. “My main concern is not skiing itself,” says Greenbaum. “But rather I’m concerned about peripheral activities to skiing that lead people indoors, whether it’s a bar, a restaurant, a hotel lobby, a rental shop, a bus.”

This is the predicament that America has put itself in: a country with a limited safety net during the pandemic forces its workers to choose between

the risk of getting sick and losing their livelihoods. The mountain and the town are left trying to find a balance between keeping the economy open for tourists and keeping COVID-19 out. As the second largest employer in Teton County, JHMR takes center stage in this unfolding drama. The resort is responsible for the livelihood of around 2,000 seasonal and local workers, and if the mountain were to shut down, many of the ancillary services in the town, like hotels, restaurants, rental shops, clothing stores and other retailers, would likely shutter their doors as well. It’s an experience that has been shared by people all over the world trying to survive in tourist-dependent places during the past months. And many faced with these same impossible decisions have come to the same conclusion, despite the serious consequences experts warned would likely result.

ON A BLUEBIRD DAY just after Christmas, the resort was booked solid. It had snowed almost 15 in. the day before, and cars inched into the packed parking lot. Skiers and snowboarders waited in line for the lot shuttle bus, which, despite operating at 25% capacity, still felt uncomfortably full. The restaurants and bars looking out onto the sunny mountain were similarly capped at 25% capacity, and while masks and social distancing were required, patrons waiting for tables escaped the cold by standing shoulder to shoulder in the foyer. Meanwhile, the socially distanced lines for the gondola were dangerously compressing. A resort worker cheerfully reminded guests from every corner of the U.S. to keep their distance and their masks above their noses. At the top of the mountain, with views of the valley floor against the backdrop of the jagged Tetons, everyone breathed a bit easier.

Rob Kingwill and Emilé Zynobia, professional snowboarders based out of Jackson, stepped off the gondola into the cold Wyoming air, about 4,000 ft. above the valley floor. “I feel like this is almost an essential service, to give

people the opportunity to be outside,” said Kingwill. “We need this for our mental health.” When JHMR shut down in March 2020, Kingwill strapped his snowboard to his backpack and hiked up Teton Pass’s 1,300-ft. Mount Glory bootpack—every day for 77 days until the snow had melted. But, he points out, most recreational skiers don’t have the knowledge and skills to navigate such technically demanding terrain—and without the money those tourists bring in, Jackson’s working class would suffer. “It seems like the benefits outweigh the costs of keeping the resort open,” agreed Zynobia, as she and Kingwill strapped onto their boards. “Even though this is an activity skewed toward wealthier people, it is helping a remote economy, and it is getting people outside at a time when we feel caged in.”

Other mountain towns in the West, like Telluride and Crested Butte, have

‘While tourism presents a risk, we’re willing to take it to keep our paychecks coming in.’

A JACKSON, WYO., RESTAURANT WORKER WHO WISHED TO REMAIN ANONYMOUS

experienced similar spikes as Jackson during the pandemic winter, likely driven by the influx of visitors. The infection rate in Pitkin County, Colorado, home to the Aspen and Snowmass ski resorts, skyrocketed in the middle of January, with about 1 in 35 residents infected with the disease. In response, the county’s board of health shut down all indoor dining operations, but left the ski resorts open. The results were promising: by February, Pitkin County’s COVID-19 rates had

dropped by over 75%. In Teton County, restaurants and bars remain open for indoor operations as long as they follow social-distancing guidelines. The reliance on the ultra-rich creates an undeniable risk to the livelihood of Jackson residents and workers, but without government support, there is little else communities like Jackson can do but to stay open, follow existing public-health guidelines and hope for the best. “When the pandemic first started, coming to work felt like entering the lion’s den,” says the restaurant worker from Jackson who wished to remain anonymous. “But by now we’re all used to the risk, and really, what choice do we have?” □

The Brief TIME With ...

Belarus' opposition leader **Svetlana Tikhanovskaya** learns to lead in exile

By Vivienne Walt

ON A HOT SUMMER DAY LAST AUGUST, SVETLANA Tikhanovskaya was pacing up and down her empty apartment in Minsk, the capital of Belarus in Central Europe, her life—and her country—in turmoil. With her husband in jail, she had sent her two small children out of the country, to safety, and now faced a stark choice, bluntly handed to her by the nation's security forces: flee into exile herself, or face arrest. "I had a couple of hours, but I could not pack anything, because I was so overstressed," she recalls. "It was a shock. I was not prepared for this."

It is hard to imagine how Tikhanovskaya could have prepared for the jolting transformation of her life. Within the space of a few months, she emerged from obscurity to become the leader of Belarus' biggest revolt in decades, determined to bring down President Alexander Lukashenko, who has ruled the former Soviet republic for more than 26 years as what many call Europe's last dictator—despite an on-off relationship with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Until last year, Tikhanovskaya, 38, was a full-time mother, planning to pick up her earlier career as an English teacher. Then last May, the government arrested her husband Sergei Tikhanovsky, thwarting his run for President in August elections, in opposition to Lukashenko.

With no political experience, Tikhanovskaya jumped in to replace Sergei as a candidate, campaigning alongside the wife of another jailed activist and the female campaign manager of a third. In Lukashenko's mind, the three women—who were barely adults when Lukashenko came to power in 1994—hardly seemed like a threat. But Tikhanovskaya, a soft-spoken neophyte appointed as leader by the group, exhorted the crowds to oust Belarus' strongman in the August vote. Her presence was electrifying. Thousands of women thronged to hear her, clutching flowers and draped in the opposition colors of red and white.

When Lukashenko declared he had won—claiming more than 80% of the vote—people poured into the streets in fury. Tikhanovskaya had reason to believe her own vote was around 75%. The estimate was based partly on voters who photographed and uploaded their ballots to a platform built by activists, in anticipation of election fraud.

Lukashenko responded by dispatching heavily armed security forces who beat protesters with

truncheons and rifle butts, and hauled them into jam-packed prisons. Amid the upheaval in August, Tikhanovskaya slipped across the border into Lithuania, where she now lives in exile with her children, ages 10 and 5, plotting the downfall of her nemesis, Lukashenko. She spoke to TIME in December, during a visit to Brussels.

Lukashenko has likened his beleaguered presidency to the last days of the Soviet Union before its collapse in 1991. His foes are tools of foreign governments, plotting a "blitzkrieg coup," he told his supporters on Feb. 11: "We must endure no matter the cost." The cost has been severe. Outraged by Lukashenko's actions, the E.U. is preparing its fourth round of economic sanctions against his officials. More than six months of protests have left Belarus' economy battered, even after Putin agreed to a \$1.5 billion bailout last September.

On Feb. 22, Lukashenko met Putin again, in Sochi, Russia, to ask him for \$3 billion more, according to Russia's *Kommersant* newspaper—a loan that could open the way for Putin to have a far greater hold over Belarus. Opposition leaders predict that could further ignite protests, as people see their country increasingly in the pocket of Russia—perhaps one reason Lukashenko has denied asking Putin for financial help. "People don't want to give up independence to save Lukashenko's ass," says Franak Viacorka, a Belarusian journalist and adviser to Tikhanovskaya. "Lukashenko is cornered," he says. "He doesn't have a choice."

Protests have simmered down in recent months, but activists say they plan to return with full force in the spring. Tikhanovskaya estimates about 33,000 people have been detained since August, in a country of just 9.5 million. More than 900 face criminal charges, some of which carry 15-year prison sentences, according to Viacorka. "People are being tortured, in violence and chaos," Tikhanovskaya says. "It is so scary, you cannot even imagine."

TIKHANOVSKAYA SAYS the past months have left her feeling drained, as she attempts to piece together, among the dozens of activists who have fled Belarus in recent months, a political force capable of collapsing a decades-old government. Called the Coordination Council, it now acts as a kind of government in waiting, with Tikhanovskaya as its leader. "We have been sleeping for 26 years," she says. "We thought after every election, there would be a rise of people, but it was brutally cracked down on." This time, however, she sees a profound shift. "People have started to feel that we are a nation," she says. "They started to feel proud of this fact."

Months on, she is still anguished by the choice she made that August day, as she paced her empty apartment in Minsk. She says she has been unable

TIKHANOVSKAYA QUICK FACTS

Nuclear fallout

She was one of the "Chernobyl kids" who were sent from their homes after the power plant's nuclear accident in 1986; she spent the summer in Ireland.

Campaign

Her election rally in Minsk, with an estimated 63,000 people, was the largest in a decade.

Family

To reassure her children (not pictured), she has told her 5-year-old daughter that they left Belarus because of the pandemic and that her father is on a business trip.



to quell the thought that security police might have tricked her into believing she was about to be jailed, simply in order to force her into exile. “Sometimes I doubt I made the correct decision,” she says.

If Lukashenko believed banishing Tikhanovskaya would end her threat to his rule, he was wrong. From her headquarters in Vilnius, Tikhanovskaya and other activists have spent months plotting how to force Lukashenko out of power, and to seek help from Western officials. After finding her voice as a candidate in her home country, Tikhanovskaya says she has had to learn on the fly how to become a politician. “It is so difficult to understand and realize that on your decisions, so much depends,” she says.

One key strategy, forged in regular talks with U.S. and E.U. officials, is to push for far tougher economic sanctions on Lukashenko’s government than Western countries have so far approved. After Tikhanovskaya consulted with U.S. State Department officials, Congress passed sweeping legislation in late November, saying it would not recognize Lukashenko’s government, and backing Tikhanovskaya.

Forcing out Lukashenko will take tougher action, however, given Putin’s billions in aid. Some Belaru-

**‘As a person,
I cannot
forgive his
crimes.’**

SVETLANA
TIKHANOVSKAYA,
on becoming a
leader in exile

sian activists hope that as Lukashenko becomes increasingly hated at home, Putin might pull his support. Lukashenko is already isolated in his capital trying to stamp out the protests. All the while, Tikhanovskaya has zipped across Europe, meeting German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Emmanuel Macron and other leaders. In Brussels in December, she and other Belarus activists were feted in the European Parliament, where they were awarded the E.U.’s human-rights honor, the Sakharov Prize. And yet, despite her fast rise, Tikhanovskaya says she does not envision herself as the next President of Belarus. She is painfully aware that her husband sits in a solitary cell in a Belarus jail.

Decisions about her own political future, she says, will come later. Should Lukashenko face trial? That question has two answers, she says. “As a person, I cannot forgive his crimes,” she says. “But for the future of Belarus, he can leave for Russia, or wherever, or stay in his house.” Tikhanovskaya knows that decision would likely face strong criticism back home. “But if you have to think globally, sometimes you have to take such decisions,” she says, already sounding—after half a year in politics—like a seasoned leader. □



LightBox

After the coup

A man in Yangon, Myanmar, is treated after police fired tear gas at protesters on Feb. 28, a day the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights says saw at least 18 people killed by security forces. The military has escalated its crackdown on protests since a Feb. 1 coup ousted the country's democratically elected government; during demonstrations on March 3, more than 30 protesters were reported killed. Over 1,200 people—including officials, journalists and civilians—have been arrested, charged or sentenced, says the nonprofit Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma).

Photograph by Hkun Lat—Getty Images
► For more of our best photography, visit time.com/lightbox



The Brief Health

EXERCISE

Free weights

The pandemic has spurred a return to low-cost fitness activities

By Jamie Ducharme

LIKE MANY OTHERS IN THE U.S., RON GUMUCIO AND HIS wife stopped going to the gym in 2020 as a precaution against COVID-19. To fill the void, Gumucio's wife eventually purchased a stationary bike, joining the club of people who have splurged on pricey at-home exercise equipment. But Gumucio, 44, has gone in a different direction. Until he feels safe returning to the gym, he's sticking to distinctly low-tech forms of fitness. He takes a daily walk around his New Jersey neighborhood. He jogs. He bought cheap resistance bands to sneak in a little strength training. Occasionally he uses the jungle gym in his local park to do pull-ups. His routine is nothing fancy, he says, but "it keeps my sanity."

During the pandemic, lots of people have rediscovered the sanity- (and cash-)saving joy of back-to-basics fitness. The Peloton effect is impossible to deny—over 1 million people worldwide now pay to stream in-home classes for the company's four-figure treadmills and stationary bikes—but at the same time, many people are returning to the simple pleasures of low-cost, low-equipment forms of physical activity. Body-weight training (i.e., training with minimal or no equipment) and outdoor activities were two of the five top fitness trends for 2021, according to the American College of Sports Medicine. YouTube has become America's free gym, likely contributing to many retailers' selling out of equipment like dumbbells and yoga mats during the pandemic. The running app Runkeeper also saw a 252% increase in global registrations last spring.

And many people are realizing they don't miss the eucalyptus-scented towels and designer toiletries they used to pay for at the gym. In a recent survey by consumer-spending experts the New Consumer and Coefficient Capital, 76% of respondents said they've tried working out at home during the pandemic, and 66% said they preferred it to the gym. In a July 2020 poll by financial-services firm TD Ameritrade, 59% of Americans said they don't plan to renew their gym memberships postpandemic, with 56% citing the appeal of more affordable ways to stay active. Many gyms are scrambling to add cheaper online options to retain members.

The U.S. health-club industry took in \$35 billion in 2019. Pre-pandemic, many fitness fans didn't bat an eye at spending

\$200-plus a month on a luxury gym membership or more than \$30 for a single class at a boutique studio. Plenty of people will return to fitness centers of all cost levels after the pandemic. But it's significant that as the wellness industry—long about status as much as about health—is idled by lockdowns, many are realizing they don't miss fancy gyms much at all.

NOR DO MOST PEOPLE need them, research suggests. Gyms have some obvious benefits: they're dedicated to exercise, stocked with a variety of equipment and can promote valuable social interaction. But numerous studies have shown that virtually any amount of physical activity, done at any intensity, can help prevent chronic disease, boost longevity and improve mental health. (A stroll around the block or a 15-minute YouTube yoga class really does make a difference.) Outdoor physical activity seems to be especially good for both the mind and the body.

Cedric Bryant, president and chief science officer at the nonprofit American Council on Ex-

ercise, thinks the changes to the wellness industry will outlast the pandemic. Many of the 20% of Americans who were gym-goers before the pandemic will likely return, he says. But the renaissance of simpler fitness approaches—the booming popularity of timeless activities like running, biking, yoga and hiking, as well as online programs that are far cheaper than their IRL counterparts—may usher in an era of increased affordability and accessibility in the wellness world, like the gym that cost Gumucio just \$25 a month.

"People are going to return to the gym, but people will also look to mix in some of the old-school experiences," Bryant predicts. "It won't be so compartmentalized—[it'll feel more like] 'I'm just going out and doing what is naturally available to me.'" When the world reopens, we may find that our gym can be anywhere. □



\$52

Average monthly price for a health-club membership in the U.S. in 2019

\$5.80

Average per-visit cost to a U.S. fitness facility in 2019

8.2 million

Number of Americans who paid more than \$100 a month for a health club in 2019

TheView

NATION

ALL AMERICANS DESERVE EQUALITY

By Marie Newman and Evie Newman

More than five years ago, before my daughter Evie Newman transitioned, she came to her parents one day upset. She had been experiencing anxiety and deep depression but was unable to identify the cause of her pain. Out of complete frustration and at just 14 years old, she thought there were only two solutions to put an end to it.►

INSIDE

THE GROWING RISKS FROM TURKEY'S STRONGMAN

A NOBEL LAUREATE ON THE HUMAN FACE OF AI

THE NATIONAL LESSON FROM THE DISASTER IN TEXAS

The View Opener

"I can either kill myself or I can run away," she told me.

As a mother, my heart was broken. This was only an eighth-grader, barely a teenager, who felt so worthless in this world she would rather not live in it altogether.

The next day, Evie enrolled in a local day program to help her cope and better understand what she was feeling. One night after her program, the typically timid Evie perked up in her chair at the dinner table, excited to share some news.

"I think I figured it out," she proclaimed. "I'm not a boy, Mom. I'm a girl. And my name is Evie Newman."

In too many households, this news could drive a parent to throw their own child out of their home. This is a nation where 33% of young people experiencing homelessness are members of the LGBTQ community.

But for us, it was one of the happiest days of our lives. Evie had found her authentic self. She no longer had to wake up every day pretending to be someone she wasn't. She wanted to live, and she found out who she wanted to live in this world as.

Nonetheless, both of us knew this would not be easy, and we are writing this because our experience is the experience of too many American families. Evie was going to grow up in a nation where, in more than 25 states, she could be discriminated against merely because of who she is. She was joining a community where at least two-thirds of the members experience discrimination in their personal lives. From that day on, she could be thrown out of restaurants, evicted from her apartment and denied access to education and other public services.

This was her new reality. One where each day, she could face hateful, vile attacks—verbal and physical—for simply existing.

That's why, when Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia devoted her day to arts and crafts so she could hang a transphobic sign on the wall directly across the hall from my office door, neither of us was surprised. She was no different from the bullies Evie dealt with in middle school. If anything, the only real surprise

was that these childish actions were coming from a sitting member of Congress.

And yet, we're used to it. From the religious right's loud cries of so-called discrimination against people of faith to conservatives' fear-mongering that female transgender student-athletes will now have a physiological advantage over cisgender women—we have heard it all. And contrary to Greene's bigoted sign ("There are TWO genders: Male & Female. Trust the science!") the reality is that the Congresswoman is not in fact "trusting the science" or even listening to the more than 100 faith-based organizations that support the legislation. Then again, a member of Congress throwing out red herrings to justify hate and discrimination is nothing new.

WE KNOW THAT SIGNING the Equality Act into law won't change Marjorie Taylor Greene's beliefs any more than putting a transgender flag outside her office door would. But that was never the point.

This has always been about ensuring millions of Americans who have been neglected for centuries are now heard loud and clear. By passing the Equality Act we can make sure that LGBTQ

Americans are not only recognized by their government but also afforded the same civil rights already extended to others across the nation.

We made progress on Feb. 25 when the House passed the legislation on a 224-206, near party-line vote, with only three Republicans voting for it with all Democrats. Now, in the Senate, the act needs 10 Republicans to support it to avoid a filibuster.

Families like ours cannot afford for this legislation to fail. We cannot allow more young Americans to believe that the only two answers to the question of who they are as a person is suicide or abandonment.

We need to make the Equality Act law to show millions of Americans that their government accepts them and will protect them for who they are and who they want to be.

Marie Newman represents Illinois's Third Congressional District. Evie Newman is a sophomore at DePaul University in Chicago.

SHORT READS

► Highlights from stories on time.com/ideas

Fighting for a living wage

Opponents of a \$15 federal minimum wage will point to its costs, writes the Rev. William J. Barber II, but the status quo is not an option: **"Before we let the sticker price of any estimates scare us away from doing what is right, we need a serious accounting of what it has cost to sustain the current levels of inequality in this country."**

Scenario planning

We need to talk about our endgame for COVID-19 in the U.S., write William Hanage of Harvard's School of Public Health and Gavin Yamey of Duke's Center for Policy Impact in Global Health: **"Elimination is a tall order. But large parts of the world have managed it for other viruses, like polio and measles."**

Beyond the outrage

Sia's movie *Music* has been criticized for being offensive to autistic people, but it's also bad art, writes Sarah Kurchak, author of *I Overcame My Autism and All I Got Was This Lousy Anxiety Disorder: I'm disappointed that it is yet another failure to reflect more of the human experience.*"

THE RISK REPORT

Beware Turkey's President as he faces uncertainty at home

By Ian Bremmer



OVER THE PAST 18 years, Recep Tayyip Erdogan has consolidated more power than any other leader since Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the

founder of modern Turkey. He has transformed Turkey's politics, faced down a military coup and rewritten the constitution to give his presidency additional power. But his combative style and autocratic instincts have earned him critics at home and abroad. His biggest political problem at the moment is economic: unemployment stands near 14%, inflation remains in double digits, and the pandemic grinds on.

The President and his Justice and Development Party (AKP) are paying a political price for all this. Erdogan has trailed rival Ekrem Imamoglu in head-to-head matchups in a number of recent polls. A recent poll from Turkiye Raporu found that the AKP's vote share in a prospective election has fallen below 30% for the first time ever. Erdogan's willingness to allow a new Central Bank governor to sharply raise interest rates late last year has stabilized conditions by cooling inflation and attracting more foreign investment. As COVID weighs more heavily on household wealth, domestic political pressure is growing and demand for change is rising. In coming months, Erdogan may well revert to the kind of quick-fix economic policies that made Turkey so fragile in the first place.

In the meantime, short on bread, Erdogan has offered circuses he hopes will rally his base. When students protested his choice of a loyalist as rector at a major university, he attacked them as terrorists and many were arrested. He has picked a political fight by calling for constitutional changes that would give the President new powers, despite the near certainty that they can't win the super-majority vote needed in parliament. Erdogan has also worked hard to stoke

History says Turkey's strongman will become even more aggressive and erratic, at home and abroad

national pride. Last month, he pledged to mark the 100th anniversary of modern Turkey's founding with a space mission culminating in "first contact with the moon." His poor polling suggests the public's priorities lie closer to home.

ERDOGAN HAS ALSO TURNED toward more predictable targets. On Feb. 8, he hinted at coming good news on the security front. But then a plan to rescue Turkish hostages held by Kurdish separatists in northern Iraq turned disastrous, and Erdogan was forced to cancel a promised triumphant televised speech. Next came news that Erdogan's government had arrested more than 700 people, including members of a pro-Kurdish political party.

Erdogan's heavy-handed approach to domestic opposition fuels tensions with other governments. U.S. President Joe Biden and E.U. leaders care far more than Donald Trump did about democracy and respect for human rights. But there are many issues dividing Turkey and the West. NATO member Turkey's purchase of a Russian S-400 missile system over U.S. and European objections is one. The upcoming trial in New York City of state-owned Turkish lender Halkbank on charges of helping Iran to evade sanctions could prove deeply embarrassing to Erdogan.

Erdogan has defied E.U. objections to authorize oil exploration in contested areas of the eastern Mediterranean. That's on hold for the moment, but Erdogan also created a crisis last year when he announced he had "opened the gates to Europe" for refugees Turkey had held back as part of a deal with the E.U. He can hope for stable relations with Vladimir Putin's Russia, but that depends on whether a truce remains in force around the Syrian city of Idlib.

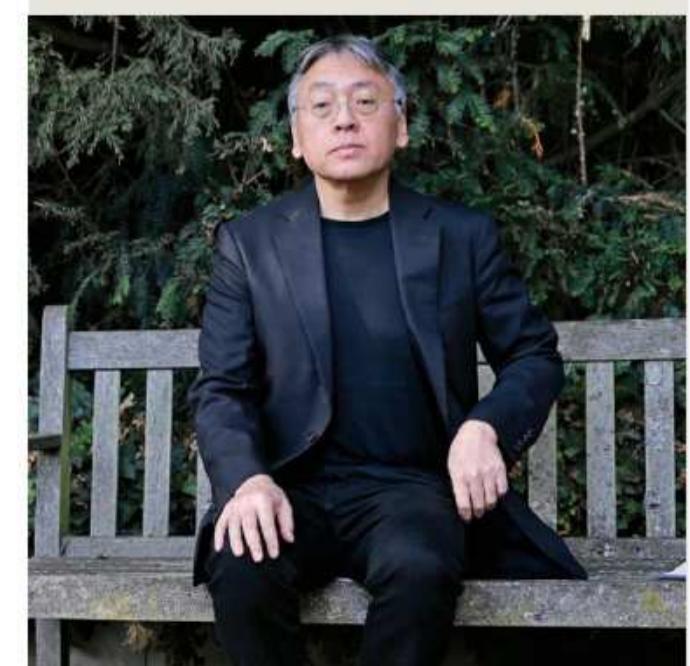
History says Turkey's strongman will become even more aggressive and erratic, at home and abroad, as his country's economy threatens his political future. □

BOOKS

Exploring AI

Kazuo Ishiguro's new novel, *Klara and the Sun*, centers on artificial intelligence. The eponymous narrator is unlike any of Ishiguro's previous narrators in that she is not human but an AF or "artificial friend," a robotic being resembling a human child, designed to comfort lonely children. "The narrator is very different from me, but that's really part of my technique," he says. Ishiguro's narrators typically look backward, over lives steeped in self-deception or regret. Klara, he says, is a "tabula rasa" at the novel's beginning and mainly looks forward. "She really has a child's perspective. She sees things that we don't, and is learning how to become a human," says the Nobel laureate, charming and self-effacing in a video chat. Through Klara's eyes, we are shown a near-future world where emerging technologies like AI and gene editing have transformed society. Despite the dystopian backdrop, Klara has a more optimistic story about a central character who is learning about humans. Ishiguro says, "I wanted to focus on celebrating the things worth celebrating about human nature."

—Dan Stewart



Signals and symbols: the collars of Ruth Bader Ginsburg

By Tessa Berenson

Photographs by Elinor Carucci for TIME

RUTH BADER GINSBURG WAS AN AMERICAN icon. The late Justice, who died on Sept. 18 at the age of 87, was only the second woman to sit on the U.S. Supreme Court, a trailblazing feminist who, over a long career, enshrined equal protections for women into the law. During her 27 years on the nation's highest court, Ginsburg also became a fashion pioneer, encoding style and meaning into the staid judges' robes through an eclectic collection of collars often given to her by colleagues and admirers.

"The standard robe is made for a man because it has a place for the shirt to show, and the tie," Ginsburg told the *Washington Post* in 2009. She and Sandra Day O'Connor, the first female Supreme Court Justice, "thought it would be appropriate if we included as part of our robe something typical of a woman," Ginsburg said.

She and O'Connor began wearing jabots—traditionally, lacy ruffles—on the front of their robes, and Ginsburg eventually branched out, acquiring a growing array of name-brand and one-of-a-kind collars. To Ginsburg, each one held a special significance; sometimes, the style even reflected the substance of her work as one of the court's liberal members. Two of her most famous majority opinions overturned an all-male admissions policy at the Virginia Military Institute, and strengthened civil rights protections for people with disabilities. She could be a fiery dissenter, particularly as the court shifted to the right. She dissented when the majority invalidated a key provision in the Voting Rights Act, as well as when the court ruled that certain companies couldn't be forced to pay for coverage of some forms of contraception. Although it is difficult to determine which collars Ginsburg wore on specific days, she regularly chose a colorful crocheted collar when she issued a majority opinion. More famously, on days she dissented, Ginsburg favored a bejeweled collar that resembled silver armor.

After Ginsburg's death, TIME was allowed to photograph some of her favorites.

1.

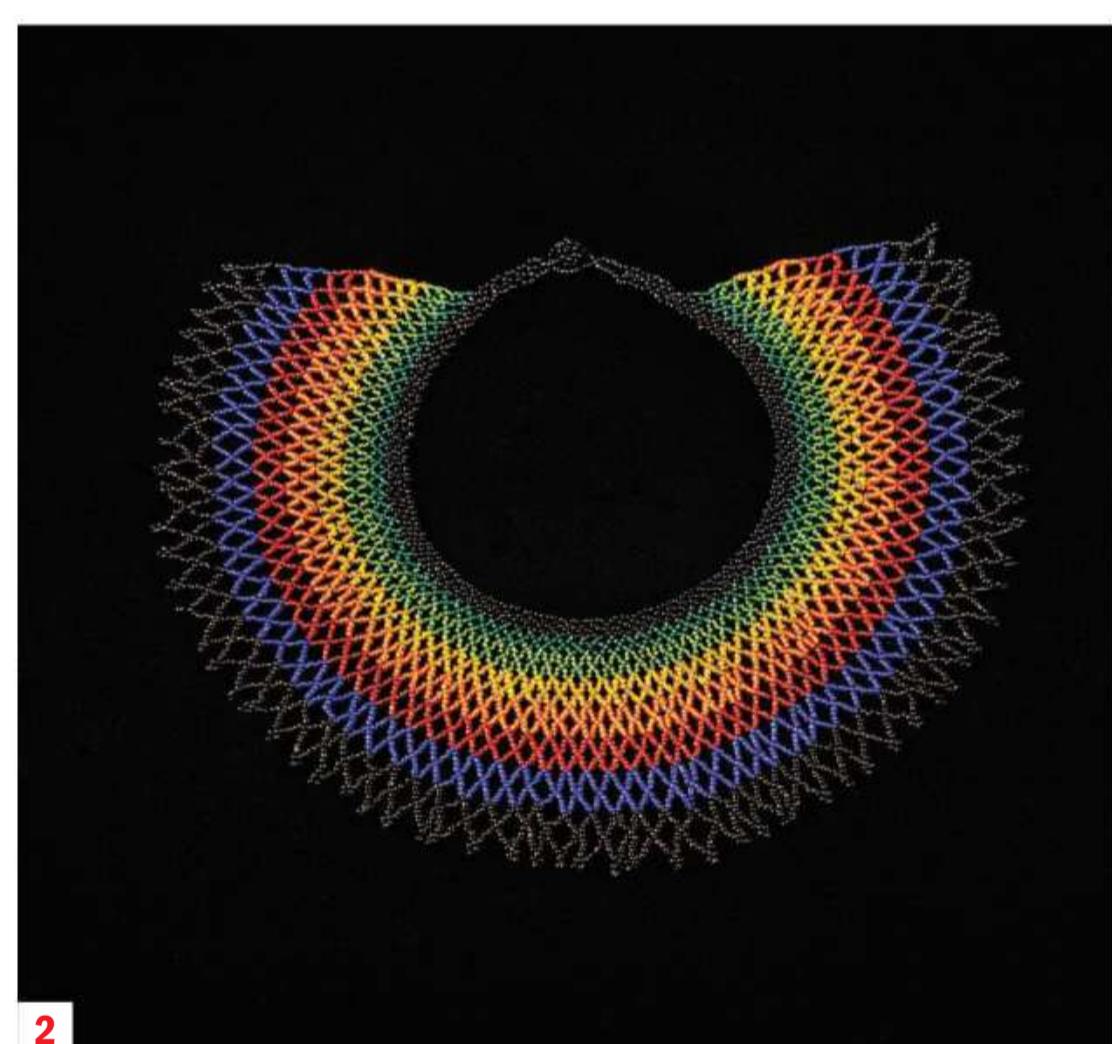
Ginsburg wore this collar, made by the accessories company Stella & Dot, in the official photo of all nine Justices in 2018 after Justice Brett Kavanaugh joined the court.



1

2.

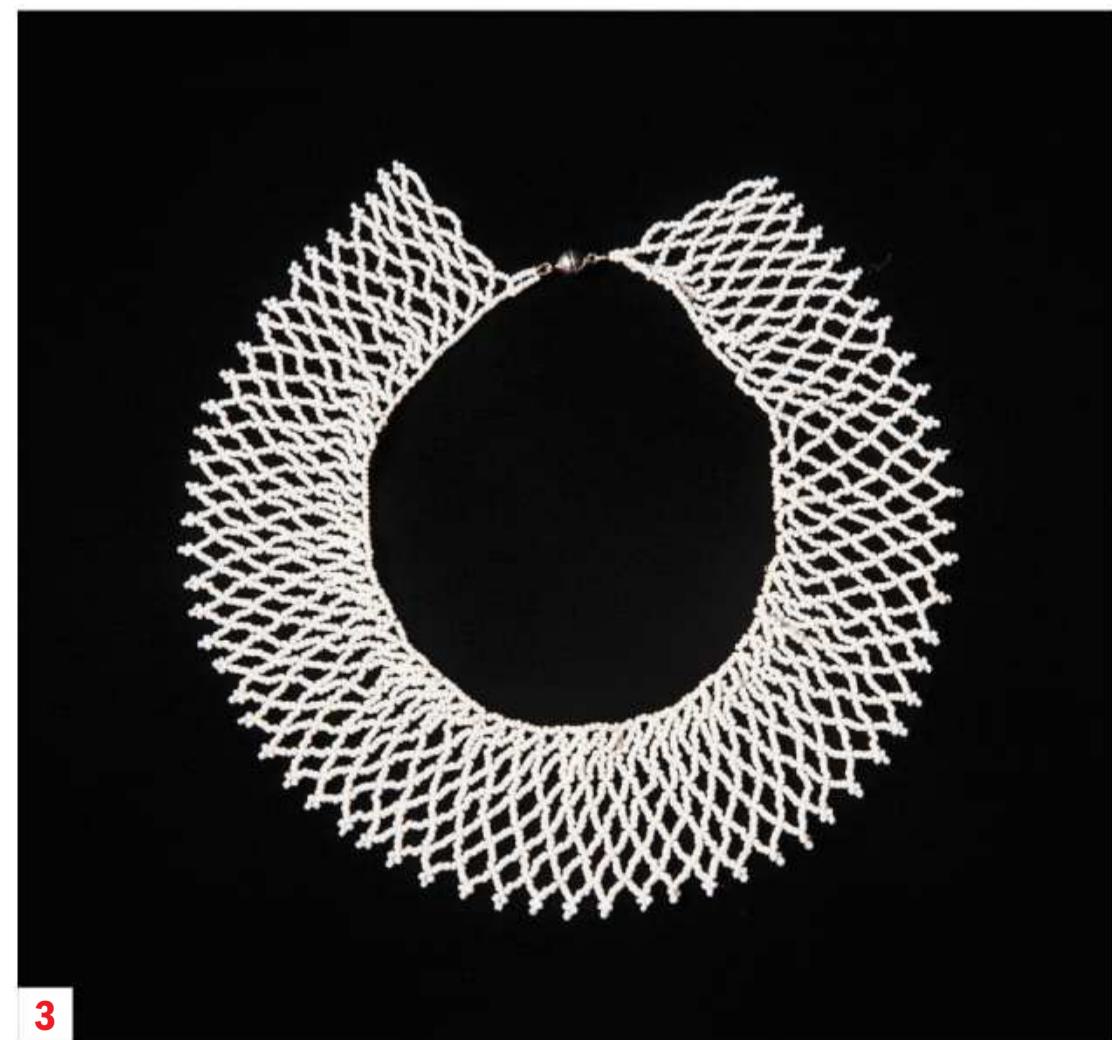
A fellow at the Georgetown University Law Center bought this "Pride collar" for the Justice from a bead weaver in Ecuador. Ginsburg first wore it on the bench in 2016.



2

3.

This South African collar was Ginsburg's favorite. She wore it in multiple court photos, in her official portrait now hanging at the Supreme Court and on the cover of TIME.



3

4.

Ginsburg received this collar as a gift before the COVID-19 pandemic struck. It was one of her recent favorites; she said it was "elegant."



4



7

5.
This was one of Ginsburg's original lace jabots, which she wore frequently on the bench from 1993 to 2008. She also wore it in official Supreme Court photos in 2001, 2003, 2009 and 2010.

6.
This was Ginsburg's "majority collar," which she often wore when announcing a majority opinion from the bench. The collar, from Anthropologie, was a gift from her October Term 2006 law clerks.

7.
Ginsburg was given this collar in September 2017 as a thank-you gift for officiating a wedding ceremony for a member of her staff. She then wore it to other weddings.

8.
This large, doily-like collar was a recent present to Ginsburg and a favorite of hers at the court before the COVID-19 pandemic.

9.
Ginsburg's famous "dissent collar" was made by Banana Republic. She received it in a swag bag at the Glamour Women of the Year Awards in 2012. She said with a smile in an interview with Katie Couric in 2014, "It looks fitting for dissents."



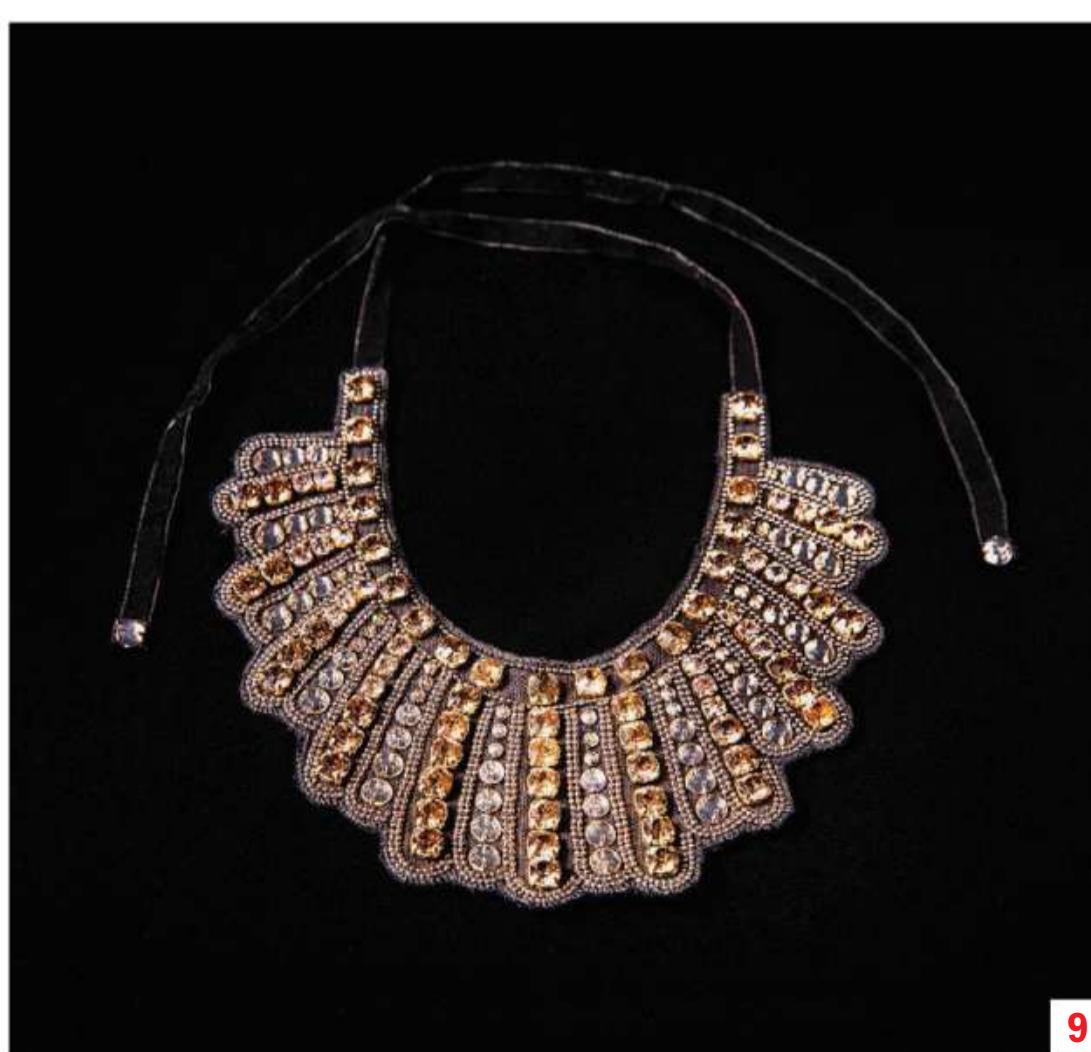
5



8



6



9

The View Environment



Power lines in Texas, where millions lost power during a winter storm, on Feb. 18

Rebuilding the U.S. for a climate-changed world

By Justin Worland

FOR MOST TEXANS, THE LIGHTS ARE BACK ON AND THE water pressure has returned. But if the most acute effects of February's weather crisis are fading into the rearview mirror, the battle to address the reality it revealed—America's crumbling infrastructure and deficient electric grid—is just beginning. For years, engineers, policymakers and politicians have wrangled over how to fix deteriorating roads, bridges and buildings as well as an ailing U.S. electric grid. The most catastrophic winter storm to hit Texas in decades accelerated the conversation, helping make the case for a multitrillion-dollar federal infrastructure package and shutting down past political talking points. "Texas laid bare for everybody how fragile the system is," says Jeff Navin, a former chief of staff at the U.S. Energy Department who is now a partner at lobbying firm Boundary Stone Partners. "Reform has been sort of bubbling very much below the surface; this is going to expedite those discussions."

In recent years, the debate about the future of the electric grid has often pitted Democrats promoting renewable energy against Republicans pushing fossil fuels. The Texas power outage delivered a dose of reality as all fuel types failed to some degree. Wind turbines froze and instruments at nuclear and coal-fired power plants iced over, shutting them down. Most significantly, the state's natural gas infrastructure couldn't stand the extreme cold as wells froze in the heart of the state's gas-producing region. In other words, the problem was not with any one energy source but with a system-level failure of the grid. "We need to recognize this as an energy-systems challenge that goes beyond any one component," says Daniel Cohan, an associate professor of civil and

Texas laid bare for everybody how fragile the system is.

JEFF NAVIN,
former U.S. Energy
Department
chief of staff

environmental engineering at Rice University in Houston.

Texas is not the only place where decades-old infrastructure is unprepared for the realities of a climate-changed world. From California's electric grid, which has sparked catastrophic wildfires in recent years, to waterfront communities across the country, experts say the U.S. needs to adapt.

SYSTEMIC ISSUES with the grid require more than a quick fix. To start, Texas' energy infrastructure would obviously have benefited from measures to protect it from extreme winter weather. But experts say that's just a small piece of the puzzle. Local electricity generation—like small power plants near the places they serve—could keep bad weather in one place from causing outages elsewhere. Long-distance transmission lines could bring electricity from other regions, providing a different type of backup. Digital technology could better target where to shut off the lights, saving electricity for those who need it most. (Many in Houston were upset to see lights on in empty office buildings while homes lost power.)

All of these proposals cost money, billions upon billions. The Biden Administration has signaled that once its COVID-19 relief legislation passes Congress, it plans to push for a massive stimulus package that would put people to work rebuilding U.S. infrastructure with climate change front of mind. The details are still in the works, but the Texas catastrophe looms large. Observers expect Biden's infrastructure plan to include many of the measures he recommended on the campaign trail when he proposed spending \$2 trillion largely on infrastructure designed to address climate change, including upgrading the grid with new transmission lines and expanding energy storage.

A number of hurdles remain to pass such a package. But, backers say, the disaster in Texas helps their case. "If there is a silver lining to the tragic events in Texas," says Heather Zichal, CEO of the American Clean Power Association, "it's that it helps underscore and build political momentum on both sides of the aisle to advance the kind of grid improvements that we believe we need." □

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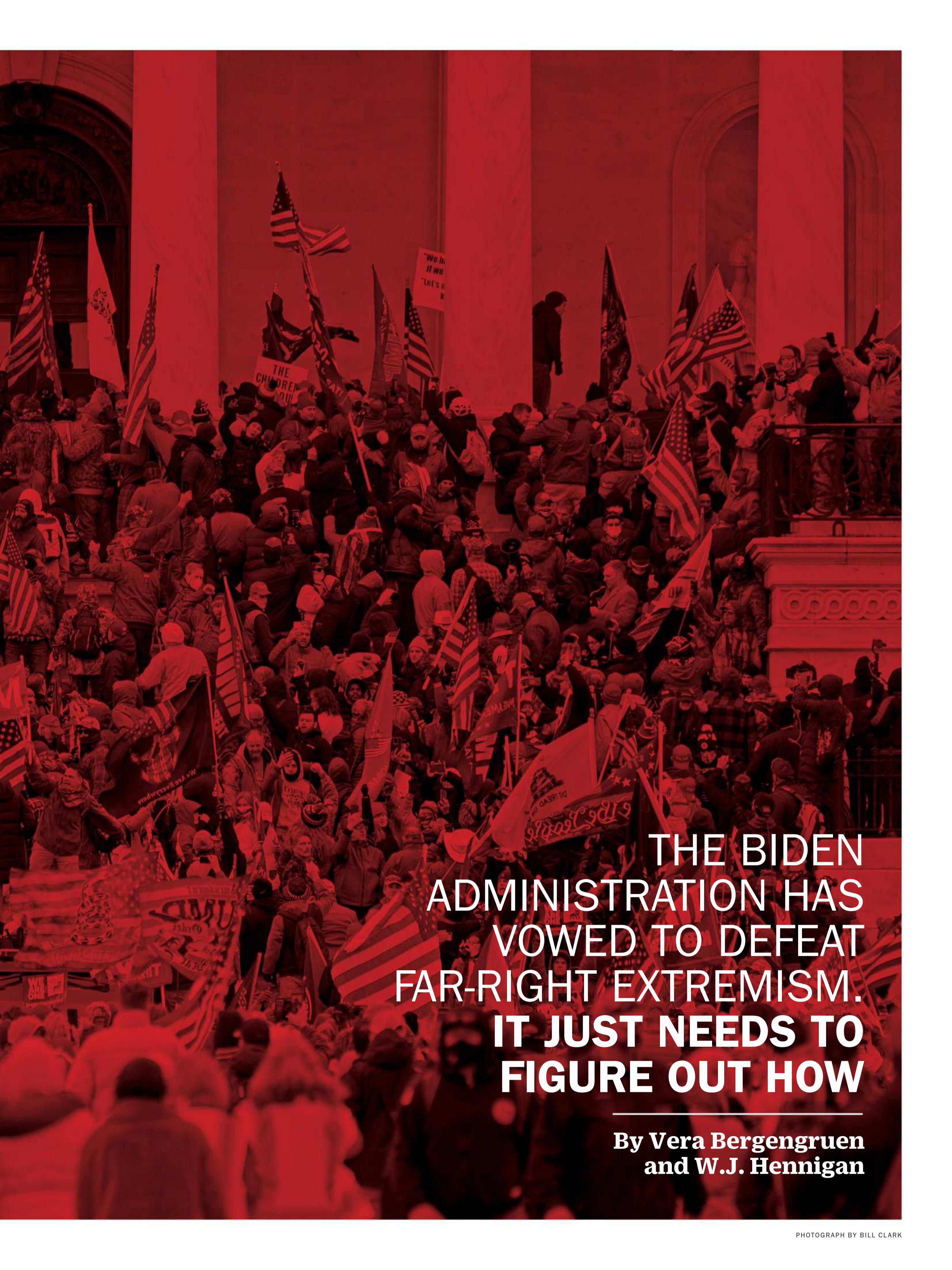


*The Capitol riot on
Jan. 6 spotlighted a
security threat that
analysts have warned
of for years*

Nation

ON THE HUNT FOR HATE





**THE BIDEN
ADMINISTRATION HAS
VOWED TO DEFEAT
FAR-RIGHT EXTREMISM.
IT JUST NEEDS TO
FIGURE OUT HOW**

**By Vera Bergengruen
and W.J. Hennigan**

JUST DAYS AFTER PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN WAS SWORN IN TO OFFICE, HIS NATIONAL-SECURITY TEAM URGENTLY REACHED OUT TO THE ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE FOR HELP.

The new Commander in Chief was launching a government-wide effort to combat far-right extremism and wanted to hear from the nonprofit, which for 108 years has tracked anti-Semitism, hate speech and domestic radicalism. “We expected to be contacted,” says Ryan Greer, a former Department of Homeland Security (DHS) official who studies extremism at the ADL. “We just didn’t expect it that quickly. The change in tone and urgency could not be more stark from prior years.”

In normal times, the top security aides in a new Administration would be focusing on dire foreign threats like transnational terrorism, Chinese cyberespionage or North Korean nuclear proliferation. This time, the gravest danger is closer to home. Spurred by the Capitol siege on Jan. 6, Biden has asked senior advisers to do something no previous Administration has attempted: refocus the network of U.S. security agencies to help combat domestic extremism.

Biden’s director of national intelligence, Avril Haines, is working with the FBI and DHS to assess the threat. A new four-person office at the National Security Council (NSC) has launched a 100-day push to better understand and tackle the problem. The office is seeking crime data and information on recruitment strategies, and convening weekly video meetings with former federal officials, scholars and advocacy groups. There’s talk of expanding FBI field offices and boosting funding for programs that rehabilitate former violent white supremacists and neo-Nazis.

The urgency was clear long before the Capitol insurrection. For three decades, the U.S. has suffered escalating violence at the hands of far-right extremists, from Oklahoma City to Charlottesville to El Paso. Since 9/11, right-wing terrorists have been responsible for almost three times as many attacks on American soil as Islamist terrorists, including all but one of the 17 domestic-terror attacks launched in 2019.

Meanwhile, it’s easier than ever for

extremists to recruit. Social media has put millions of Americans a click away from radical views and unhinged conspiracies once circulated by pamphlet. On Facebook and YouTube, clean-cut figures wearing suits and ties have built large followings by weaving racist, anti-Semitic and violent rhetoric into political speech. President Donald Trump’s embrace of his far-right supporters melded extremist militants with the Republican Party he commands; the Capitol riot blurred the barriers that once separated run-of-the-mill conservatives from self-styled militia groups like the Proud Boys, Oath Keepers and Three Percenters.

“This new phenomenon that’s emerged is particularly dangerous: soccer moms and Joe Blow citizens showing up at the same rally and participating in the same activities as hardcore white-supremacist groups and militia extremists,” says Daryl Johnson, a former DHS senior analyst who authored a 2009 report warning of the rise of right-wing extremism. “You’ve got the criminal, violent element blending in with the law-abiding element under the guise of the First Amendment.”

By January, nearly 4 in 10 Republicans said violence may be necessary “if elected leaders will not protect America,” according to a survey by the conservative American Enterprise Institute. Threats against politicians and local officials have grown commonplace. And analysts who have spent decades studying the far-right fringe warn its ranks are set to swell further under the Biden Administration.

It’s a daunting task for Biden’s team: confront one of the greatest domestic threats since the Civil War without provoking a political crisis or infringing on Americans’ civil liberties. Officials are armed with little data, less money, few programs to build on and no proven solutions. Federal law enforcement is limited by freedom-of-speech protections for U.S. citizens. Local police departments are often ill-equipped or unwilling to determine whether perpetrators

are part of a larger far-right organization. But Biden’s 100-day scramble to understand the scope of the problem suggests how far it has spread.

Perhaps most challenging of all is that fighting these extremist groups may strengthen them. Any crackdown on the far right risks reinforcing their narrative that the government is persecuting or silencing them for political reasons, which experts warn will further boost their numbers. Hours after Biden promised at his Inauguration to tackle “political extremism, white supremacy [and] domestic terrorism,” Fox News host Tucker Carlson warned his audience, “We are now in a new war on terror, but it’s a domestic war focused inward on the people of this country.” Pro-Trump forums lit up with furious messages. “If they start using bullsh-t legislation to target their political opposition,” one user wrote, “it should get violent.”

In this context, it’s no surprise that Biden picked an Attorney General, Merrick Garland, who led the Justice Department’s prosecution of the perpetrators of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, the deadliest act of homegrown terrorism in U.S. history. Garland vowed to make the prosecution of the Capitol mob his “first priority.” FBI agents and prosecutors have tracked down and charged some 300 of the rioters. “Jan. 6 was not an isolated event. The problem of domestic terrorism has been metastasizing,” FBI Director Christopher Wray told Congress on March 2. He noted that the FBI is currently working on about 2,000 domestic-terrorism cases, twice as many as it was in September.

But if the U.S. has learned any lesson from 30 years of failed attempts to stem the rise of domestic extremism, it’s that law enforcement alone cannot solve the problem. The Biden Administration’s success will be measured not by the number of prosecutions of domestic terrorists but rather by the number prevented from crossing over into violence in the first place.

AS CHRISTIAN PICCIOLINI watched the mob storming the Capitol from his home in Chicago, he had one overriding thought: *They’re winning*. Everything about the crowd—the chants, the anger, the symbols on their clothing—evoked the



Biden, in the Oval Office on Jan. 28, has made cracking down on domestic extremism a top priority

white-power movement Picciolini had left behind more than two decades earlier.

This, he recalls, had been their plan all along: to break out of back-alley meetings and blend in to the places where Americans live, work, discuss politics and consume news. The ragged crowd of jack-booted skinheads Picciolini escaped in the 1990s had merged into a throng that included college students, suburban “Women for Trump,” wealthy professionals, middle-class retirees and conspiracy theorists, united by a stolen-election fantasy stoked by conservative media.

“I was horrified, because it showed how effective these groups have been over that time that we’ve ignored them,” says Picciolini, 47, a former neo-Nazi who now helps others leave the movement. “And I’m angry, because so many of us saw it coming for many, many years, and nobody listened.”

Picciolini’s radicalization came during a previous peak of antigovernment fervor. On April 19, 1995, Timothy McVeigh detonated a 4,800-lb. bomb concealed in a Ryder truck parked in front of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in downtown Oklahoma City. The killing of 168 Americans, including 19 children, forced the feds to acknowledge the homegrown threat. McVeigh, a Gulf War veteran, sought revenge against the U.S.

government for the deadly sieges by federal agents in Waco, Texas, and Ruby Ridge, Idaho. He drew motivation for the attack from *The Turner Diaries*, the 1978 race-war novel that has inspired generations of white supremacists.

Today the threat emanates from a tangled web of ideologies, including white supremacists, neo-Nazis, anti-government militias and adherents of the QAnon conspiracy theory that posits the U.S. is controlled by Satanist pedophiles. Notions once consigned to the lunatic fringe have moved into the mainstream as right-wing news networks,

politicians and interest groups, while embracing a them-or-us posture against “liberal elites,” increasingly endorse white-nationalist narratives.

Few law-enforcement officials are more familiar with extremist propaganda than former FBI agent Michael German, who spent much of his career undercover, including infiltrating far-right groups. In 1992, as a young agent working on savings-and-loan scams in the bureau’s Los Angeles field office, German was walking the halls when a colleague turned to him and said, “Hey, you have blond hair and blue eyes. You can be a Nazi.” German went with it, growing his hair long and befriending a circle of neo-Nazis incensed by riots and looting in the aftermath of the police beating of Rodney King. He spent 14 months on the case, which led to the arrest of eight suspects who had amassed explosives and automatic weapons with plans to bomb the First African Methodist Episcopal Church in Los Angeles and shoot members of the congregation. “That was in the 1990s, and there was no shortage of laws to address criminal terrorists,” he says. “So what’s happened since then?”

9/11, for one. After the attacks, the U.S. government turned its full strength to building a globe-spanning intelligence network capable of stopping foreign

ANYTHING BIDEN DOES WILL REINFORCE FAR-RIGHT NARRATIVES THAT THEY ARE BEING CENSORED, PERSECUTED OR SILENCED, WHICH EXPERTS WARN WILL FURTHER BOOST THEIR NUMBERS

terrorist attacks before they occurred. Agents were granted sweeping authorities by Congress to surveil and investigate any terror suspects with even tenuous links to foreign organizations. Meanwhile, the homegrown threat grew. The number of right-wing extremist groups jumped more than 250% in the first year of Barack Obama's presidency, according to a report by the Southern Poverty Law Center. In an internal 2009 report, DHS analysts warned that the election of the first Black President, combined with the economic downturn, "could create a fertile recruiting environment for right-wing extremists." After it leaked, a backlash from conservatives—who objected to the term *right-wing extremism*—led DHS leaders to retract the document. That blowback, former DHS analysts say, offers a preview of the political challenge facing Biden.

Trump's election was a watershed for extremist groups, who until his 2016 campaign had been disavowed in no uncertain terms by national candidates. As President, Trump retweeted fringe followers and infamously called those gathered at a 2017 white-nationalist rally in Charlottesville "very fine people." Before the 2020 election, he asked the Proud Boys to "stand back and stand by" during a presidential debate, raising their profile and generating a rallying cry on the right.

At the same time, the Trump Administration dismantled many of the government's already limited tools to counter such groups. The DHS office that focused on domestic extremism was disbanded. Dozens of grants meant to go to programs that counter extremist ideologies at the grassroots level were pulled, including a \$400,000 grant to the only one focused on rehabilitating right-wing radicals, Life After Hate, co-founded by Picciolini.

The combination of Trump's sympathetic rhetoric and federal neglect had clear consequences. In Michigan, COVID-19 lockdown measures drove up membership in antigovernment militia groups. Last April, armed protesters tried to force their way into the legislative chambers of the state capitol in Lansing. The Proud Boys became a fixture at demonstrations across the state, wearing their distinctive black polos with yellow stripes as they provided "security" at local GOP events. In October, the FBI foiled a plot by

more than a dozen men with ties to right-wing militias, like the Wolverine Watchmen, to kidnap and kill the state's Democratic Governor, Gretchen Whitmer.

These groups "were sort of weaving themselves into local GOP activity," says U.S. Representative Elissa Slotkin, a Michigan Democrat whose district includes Lansing. "It's normalized in a way that I don't think people realized until recently." A former CIA and Pentagon official, Slotkin felt a sense of foreboding as she and her husband walked to the Capitol on the morning of Jan. 6, passing demonstrators gathering to protest the certification of the 2020 election. Anticipating violence, she directed her staff not to come in to work that day. "We recognized lots of different groups that we had seen in my own community. It felt very familiar," says Slotkin, who plans to focus on domestic extremism as chairwoman of the House Intelligence and Counterterrorism Subcommittee. "We had seen this movie before."

LAW ENFORCEMENT HAS PLENTY of tools to investigate and prosecute violent domestic extremism. Yet it often chooses not to use them, former national-security officials say. When someone spray-paints a swastika on a synagogue, local cops are more likely to classify the crime as vandalism than to probe whether the perpetrator has ties to hate groups. Only 14% of nearly 15,600 state and local police agencies involved in the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting program even report hate crimes. Most of them report zero. Without accurate data cataloging

the threat, it's impossible to allocate resources to fight it. "Right now, they're fighting blind," says German, "if they're even fighting at all."

State and local law enforcement are often ill-equipped or unwilling to respond to extremist crimes in ways that generate leads and investigations. (Nor does DOJ evaluate whether hate-crime perpetrators are part of a larger domestic extremist group when it defers an investigation to local law enforcement. And in 2019, the FBI said 80% of its counterterrorism agents in the field were assigned to international terrorism cases, while just 20% worked on domestic ones.)

Even when local officials flag a possible far-right plot, the feds rarely make the case. In 2019, Syracuse University's Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, or TRAC, released a study showing that hate-crime cases were referred to federal authorities for prosecution almost 2,000 times over the past decade. Only 15% of those referrals led to prosecutions.

Faced with this dilemma, many in Congress have renewed calls for new legislation to formally criminalize domestic terrorism, a move Biden supported during his campaign. But civil-liberties advocates reject the idea, fearing that more power for a broken system would only make matters worse. In a Jan. 19 letter to Congress, the American Civil Liberties Union and 150 other groups warned a domestic-counterterrorism law could undermine Americans' First Amendment rights and be used to target people of color and other marginalized communities.

At DHS, officials are expanding programs that focus on keeping those who flirt with extremist views from joining militant groups or committing violent acts. Biden's newly confirmed Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said the task will be to "identify where the line between hateful rhetoric and hateful action takes place, to be well ahead of the action before it occurs and to stop it." The agency announced it will provide at least \$77 million in federal grants to state and local governments to combat domestic violent extremism, including training beat officers to spot the signs of far-right violence early on.

Mayorkas has acknowledged that these programs will have to focus on fighting extremists' recruitment on social media platforms. But any efforts to

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CRIMES. MOST OF THEM
REPORT ZERO**



Members of the Boogaloo movement gather outside the Michigan state capitol in Lansing on Jan. 17

change hearts and minds will be controversial. Hate speech is in most cases protected speech, and the U.S. government is legally barred from countering home-grown extremism the way it does foreign terrorist propaganda. Already the prosecutions of the Capitol rioters are raising questions about the rights to free speech, assembly and privacy for American citizens. Leaders in law enforcement and the U.S. military are split on how to deal with extremists in their own ranks. Underlying all these efforts is a question that became harder to answer during the Trump era: Who is a potentially violent domestic extremist, and who only speaks like one?

Still, some on the left are calling for immediate action. Representative Jackie Speier, a California Democrat who chairs the House Armed Services Military Personnel Subcommittee, has urged Biden to issue an Executive Order that would identify white supremacy and domestic violent extremism as a threat to national security and screen service members' social media accounts for ties to radical movements. Others point to Canada's recent designation of the Proud Boys as a terrorist organization and argue for stronger measures at home. "Our best chance for success is to be straight with the American people—that the threats we now face are arguably as dangerous

as they were in the immediate post-9/11 environment, and these threats are not going away," Christopher Rodriguez, director of Washington's Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency, told Congress on Feb. 4.

THE MAKEUP OF THE MOB that stormed the Capitol may be the biggest problem. Though Congress has focused on militias and white-supremacist groups, those factions represented few of the participants. A George Washington University study identified 257 people involved in the riot, of whom just a small fraction were found to be part of a militant network. The vast majority were ordinary Americans—members of church groups, families who traveled together, and what the report calls "inspired believers"—which shows how far-right beliefs have seeped into the mainstream.

Experts recommend the White House begin implementing community-based initiatives, like those in Germany and elsewhere in Europe, to work with neighborhood organizations to combat disinformation and radicalism. Republican and Democratic lawmakers have introduced bills to establish a bipartisan commission to study the Capitol attack. Similar blue-ribbon probes of 9/11, the causes of urban uprisings in the 1960s, and other threats

helped shape public opinion about the nation's security and guide its responses. One goal of such a panel, advocates say, would be to create an accepted public record of U.S. extremist violence over the past decade. "We need to know what led the mob to the front gates in order to solve this problem," says Jonathan Reiber, former head of strategic cybersecurity policy in the Defense Department and now chief strategist at cybersecurity firm AttackIQ. "If we do not take this moment to examine online extremism and what has happened to our country, then something worse will happen."

All of this makes Biden's 100-day timeline to assess the far-right threat and devise a plan to counter it seem ambitious. When asked whether the American public could expect a report, a list of recommendations or something else at the end of that period, the NSC declined to comment.

What's clear is that the fight against domestic extremism will be a defining issue for a President who said he chose to run because of Charlottesville and whose Inauguration was overshadowed by the Capitol riot. Biden has promised to unite the country while delivering the "defeat" of white supremacy and domestic terrorism. It's not clear it's possible to do both.
—With reporting by JULIA ZORTHIAN □





Health

THE VACCINE GAP

WHY THE COVETED SHOTS ARE NOT REACHING PLACES HIT HARDEST BY COVID-19
BY JANELL ROSS/DALLAS

SHERRI MIXON
AT THE FOOD
PANTRY SHE
MANAGES
IN DALLAS,
ON FEB. 13

IT TAKES ABOUT EIGHT MINUTES TO try and save a life.

Or at least that's how long it takes a volunteer with a tablet, standing in the parking lot at the T.R. Hoover community development center in South Dallas on a bitterly cold February morning. During the pandemic, the small nonprofit situated in the neighborhood that developers in the 1920s dubbed "the Ideal community" has taken on an ever evolving list of roles. It's a job-search center. It's a drive-through food pantry. And, of late, T.R. Hoover is an in-person coronavirus vaccine registration site aimed at helping Ideal's mainly Black residents, and anyone else who finds their way here, do what for several weeks the county's online-only registration system has failed to do: put them in line for a shot in the arm.

In January, as first national and then local news began describing the impending arrival of coronavirus vaccines, people visiting T.R. Hoover's drive-through food pantry started asking questions. Most were directed at executive director Sherri Mixon, who was born and raised in Ideal. It's where she is, without question, a voice of authority, regarded as a repository of important knowledge, drive and information. What did she know about the shots? What did she think of the shots? How could they get

PHOTOGRAPHS
BY ZERB MELLISH
FOR TIME

Health

a vaccine? Then, when could they get a vaccine, and how in the world could they get on the list for a shot?

On this Tuesday morning, Mixon stands wrapped in a plaid shawl and knit cap watching volunteers help those arriving for the food distribution. Her brother hoists orange net bags filled with potatoes, onions, grapefruit, tuna and other canned goods, as women equipped with iPads tell visitors they can help them register for vaccine appointments. Right here. Right now.

Around 11 a.m., a Black man in a pink surgical mask and forest green pickup truck rolls up and asks for help with registration. He's 68 and has a "touch of high blood pressure but thank God, so far, no sugar [diabetes]," he tells a volunteer. She enters his name, address and health information that indicates he's at high risk of contracting and dying of the coronavirus. She wears a blue mask beneath a face shield and, to make it easier to fill in the online form, one glove. It's 29°F outside. The whole thing takes 7 min. 51 sec.

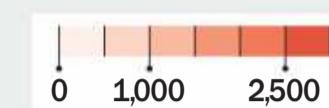
"Everybody should be doing something to help amend some of the gaps," says Mixon.

In Dallas County, and almost every other part of the nation, those gaps emerged in a vaccine rollout that aggravated rather than addressed the inequities that have made the pandemic so much deadlier for some populations. In February, as Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data showed that Black, Latino and Native Americans were at least twice as likely as white people to die of COVID-19, it was white Americans who secured most vaccine doses. In the 23 states that try to track the race or ethnicity of those vaccinated, most reported white people were getting vaccinated at disproportionately high rates, according to a Feb. 1 analysis by the Kaiser Family Foundation.

Dallas County, which includes the city by the same name and other municipalities, is a case in point. Non-Hispanic white residents make up 28% of the population but were nearly 63% of those registered to receive vaccinations as of Jan. 24, about three weeks after online-only registration had opened to people ages 65 and up.

But when local elected officials tried to correct the situation—by prioritiz-

WHERE THE VACCINES WENT

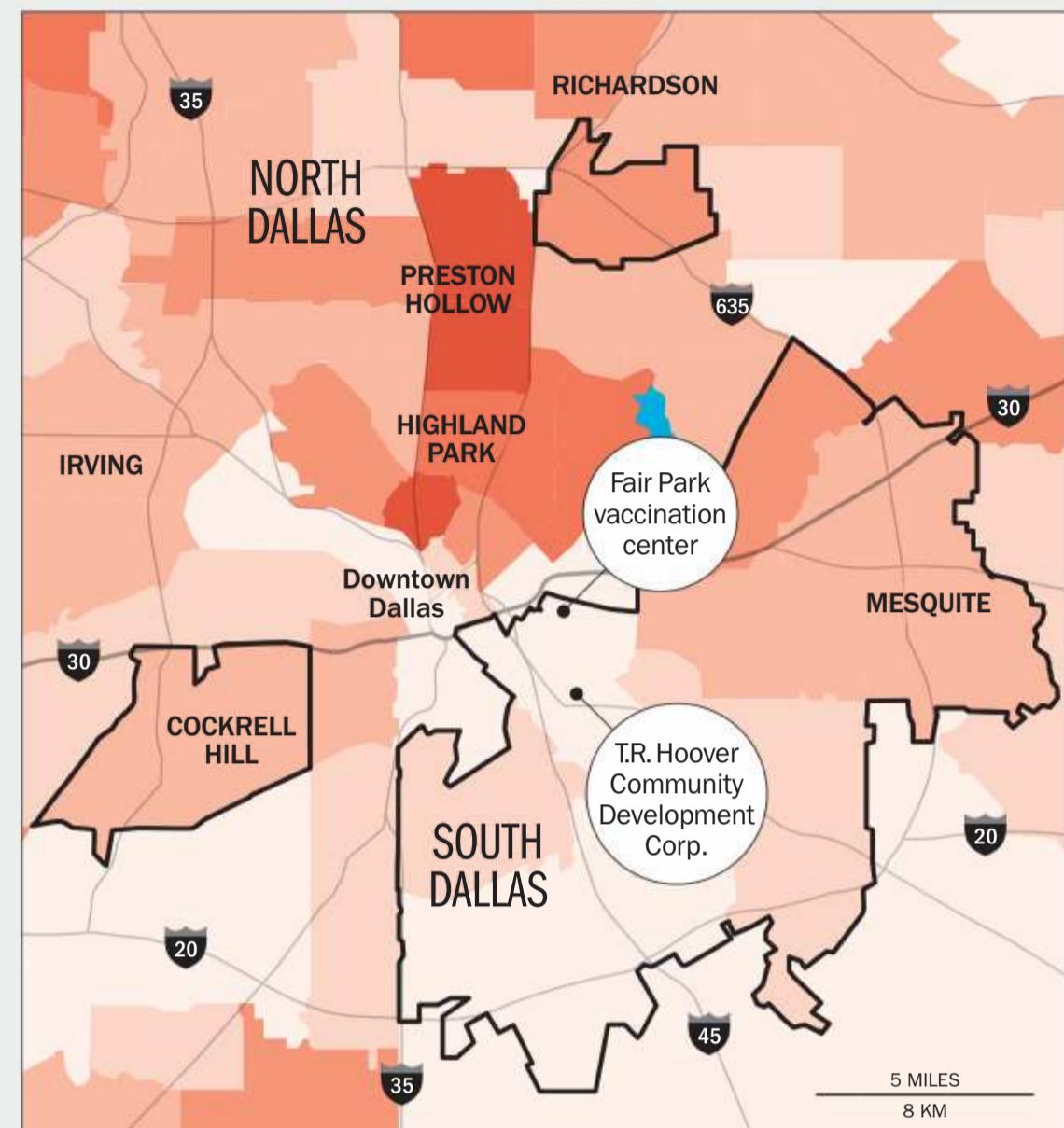


As of Jan. 18, 81,040 vaccine doses had been distributed in Dallas County—most going to white and affluent neighborhoods in North Dallas

WHERE THEY WERE NEEDED MOST



Dallas County identified 11 ZIP codes for vaccine priority based on data indicating their residents were at the highest risk of becoming seriously ill or dying from COVID-19



SOURCES: PARKLAND HEALTH & HOSPITAL SYSTEM; PARKLAND CENTER FOR CLINICAL INNOVATION

ing people in neighborhoods like Ideal, where the need was greatest—the state beat back their efforts, and Dallas County returned to age-based vaccine targeting. That delivered another advantage to white Americans, who tend to live longest. So what might have been a case study in addressing structural inequality instead demonstrated why many Black Americans mistrust the medical system.

"Sometimes it's in the mistakes that we learn," says Janice Bowie, a behavioral scientist and professor at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Disparities

Solutions. "And unfortunately, in this case, some of these mistakes, you know, have cost people their lives."

LIKE IDEAL, MUCH OF SOUTH DALLAS was deemed a Black residential zone in the early 20th century by law, custom and preference of both powerful and ordinary white people. In Ideal, and in neighborhoods around the country where mostly Black and more recently Latino families live, scars and new wounds of inequity are obvious.

Even Mixon, who has been running T.R. Hoover for more than 20 years, is sometimes taken aback by how easy it is to spot the differences between North and South Dallas, whose unofficial dividing line is Interstate 30. Before the pandemic, Mixon took some students attending an after-school program at T.R. Hoover on a field trip that required a drive through North Dallas. Several kids wanted to know where the power lines were. Mixon was surprised they had noticed.

In Ideal and much of South Dallas, power and other utility lines are largely aboveground, suspended along and across streets on giant poles. In much of

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**EVERYBODY SHOULD
BE DOING SOMETHING
TO HELP AMEND
SOME OF THE GAPS.'**

—SHERRI MIXON



ALMERE JONES OUTSIDE
HER HOME IN DALLAS' IDEAL
NEIGHBORHOOD ON FEB. 24

North Dallas, they are buried, the more expensive but wind- and ice-storm-proof option that often comes with installation of high-speed Internet lines. In South Dallas, where not even Dallas-based AT&T offers high-speed Internet in some sections, rival Spectrum's service is so spotty that on some of Ideal's streets, people on one side can get online while people whose front doors are about 40 ft. away cannot.

That's the kind of thing that made Mixon realize the county's registration system was driving a new form of disparity. "I was issuing groceries out here," Mixon says. "I would have different ones come up and say, 'Ms. Mixon, I need to

get registered for the shot,' 'I don't know how to maneuver through the computer,' or more or less have Internet. I understood all of that. I just went in here to the center and grabbed me a laptop."

IT WAS LATE JANUARY, and Almeree Jones, 78, was in bed, resting her eyes. If she had been sleeping, she would have earned it.

Jones retired from the *Dallas Morning*

News plant in the late 1990s and a second time from working as a Dallas school cafeteria worker in 2015. She rises early to drive two young granddaughters she's raising to school when classes are in person. Then Jones, who walks with a limp, cleans up the whirlwind of hair bows and breakfast plates left behind in the four-bedroom house she's been renting to own for almost 15 years in Ideal.

Since her husband of 48 years died in 2016, Jones has held together her family of five adult children and 28 grandchildren and great-grandchildren. And with a family that size, there's almost always something to do, someone to help. A ride here. A few words of support. For five family members, a bed in Jones' home.

But this was a rare morning that delivered a chance to stay in bed. Then, Jones heard someone at the door, unusual in the pandemic. It was Terry Taylor, a neighbor and friend so solid that she helped Jones bathe after her stroke and brain surgery. Taylor had news. An organization around the corner, the T.R. Hoover Community Development Corporation, was helping people register for the coronavirus vaccine, right now, in its parking lot.

"So I got up ... and put my clothes on and drove up to the center, and I had one of the ladies help me do it," Jones says. She got her first shot on Feb. 4 and has scheduled her second.

"It's so many people of color who don't know how to register, where to go register," says Jones, who knows she's in a better position than many in South Dallas. "And, when you look at the vaccine sites on TV ... you see more Caucasian people than you do Black people and Hispanic people because, I don't know if they got a chance to register first or what."

To understand how distant from vaccine equity things are here, it is important to grasp a term that comes up in Dallas a lot: the COVID vulnerability index, which was created by the Dallas-based Parkland Center for Clinical Innovation (PCCI). The nonprofit health care analytics company provides data to improve care and reduce health disparities. Its CEO, Steve Miff, says that unless data is applied in a way that drives equity, "It's just cool math."

The vulnerability index predicts the risk of COVID-19 infection and death, based on one's home address. It

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calculates the proximity and volume of COVID-19 cases in the area, the average number of people sharing homes or living in high-density settings, the share of residents who must depend on public transportation and several other factors, including the area's rate of chronic disease, number of senior citizens, access to food and opportunities for social distancing. Most people in areas hard hit by COVID-19, such as South Dallas, will rank high on the vulnerability index. Most in North Dallas will not. The index was supposed to help ensure equity in vaccine appointments.

So when mass vaccinations began Jan. 11 at the county's vaccination center in South Dallas, a 227-acre site called Fair Park that in normal times is home to the State Fair of Texas, the Cotton Bowl and several museums, it was clear something was amiss. One person watching things that day was John Wiley Price, the only Black member of the Dallas County Commissioners Court and a Democrat who represents most of South Dallas. Like a lot of counties that are home to major American cities, including Los Angeles and Philadelphia, people of color comprise a majority here. The population is about 41% Latino, 24% Black, nearly 7% Asian and about 1% Native American. That made what Price saw confounding.

"I said to myself, Where did all these white people come from?!" Price says. Almost all in line and on golf carts ferrying people with mobility challenges from the parking areas appeared to be white.

Dallas County judge Clay Jenkins, a white Democrat, noticed it too. He was there trying to ensure that things went smoothly, trying to spot problems.

Jenkins was so perplexed that he assigned a staff member to find out how so many white people—the least likely demographic to die of COVID-19—got vaccines that first day. By close of business, Jenkins' staff had figured it out.

A white Dallas city-council member in an affluent North Dallas district had shared, in a digital newsletter, a link sent by the county to someone registered to get a vaccine. The link served as confirmation of the registration and provided next steps for making an actual appointment. Two more council people representing similar districts also shared the link. Then, someone posted a link on Next-



door.com. Soon, thousands of people had used shared links to make appointments, whether they were eligible or not.

Local officials intended to limit the first appointments to those 75 and older, but Jenkins and Price saw that many people at Fair Park were far younger, and most were white.

Jenkins approached some and asked where they worked, thinking they might be first responders willing to stay a few hours and help manage the crowd. "Some looked at me with blank stares," he says. "Some told me that they were FBI agents but forgot to bring their badges." When Jenkins asked which ZIP codes they lived in, "They were the most affluent ZIP codes in Dallas, where our police officers generally don't live."

THREE OF THE FIVE commissioners on the county's commissioners court insisted on a major correction at their next meeting on Jan. 19. Price and county commissioner J.J. Koch, who is white and the only Republican commissioner, crafted a plan to ensure "the vaccine can reach the most vulnerable populations."

VISITORS TO THE T.R. HOOVER CENTER ON FEB. 24 GET HELP REGISTERING FOR VACCINES

In short, it said that of those eligible for the vaccine, people living in 11 ZIP codes deemed the county's most medically vulnerable would get top priority. A 65-year-old with health issues in one of these ZIP codes, for example, might be vaccinated before a 75-year-old from a low-risk neighborhood.

Opponents warned that the situation was fluid; some ZIP codes might see spikes in cases soon, but their residents could be shut out of appointments. Jenkins, cognizant of his North Dallas constituents, was one of them. "What that means is that North Dallas won't be getting any vaccines to any appreciable degree for many months," he said, questioning the legality of the move. "You are about to do something that you are really going to regret."

"Well, I will be the judge of that," Koch replied.



The plan was approved 3-1, with one abstention. Jenkins advised the Republican-led state's department of health, which sets rules for vaccine hubs, of the plan; one day later, the state told Dallas County that its vaccine doses would be cut and its status as a vaccine hub revoked if the plan went forward. Even as they urged "equitable" distribution of doses, state officials said the hardest-hit areas could not be prioritized above others. Later that day, the county rescinded the plan.

When the Biden Administration took office, it shifted away from the Trump Administration's vague assurances that after medical workers and people in long-term-care facilities had been vaccinated, other Americans soon would be able walk in and request a jab at their neighborhood pharmacy or health care provider. Instead, Biden wanted mass-vaccination hubs controlled by states, counties and cities, and equity would be a priority. He named Marcella Nunez-Smith, a public-health researcher, dean and associate professor at Yale University, chair of a White House task force to

focus on health disparities. But in Dallas County, people responsible for mass vaccinations were scrambling, and it quickly became obvious, Koch says, that the "standard of success is getting shots in arms."

Shots in arms keep the vaccine supply coming, Koch says. Vaccination disparities do not shut it off.

And disparities were virtually guaranteed, not just because of things like Internet access. The system was tilted in favor of wealthier white people by prioritizing the 75-and-older crowd initially for vaccines. That eliminated many in South Dallas, where living to 75 is relatively rare. In Ideal, life expectancy sits at an area low of 67.6 years. Of the 11 targeted ZIP codes, three have average life expectancies below 75; none reaches the county average of 78.3 years. An analysis produced by PCCI found that in the weeks when vaccine registrations were limited to those 75 and older, 71% of the people registered in that age range were white. About 8% were Black and 11% were Latino.

BY THE TIME I visited Mixon at T.R. Hoover, the county and city had acknowledged that the registration system had given North Dallas a huge advantage and that things had to change. Officials added more in-person sign-up locations. They announced plans for a door-to-door registration drive and for a call center so more people could register by phone. The share of Black people signed up to get the vaccine rose by a sliver from almost 11% on Jan. 24 to almost 12% by Feb. 7. During that period, Latino registration increased from 19.5% of the total

to just over 20%. And the proportion of white registrants shrunk from about 63% to about 54%. The numbers don't put registrations close to a mirror of the population or those at greatest risk, but they are moving in that direction, slowly. Black and Latino Americans continue to express greater amounts of hesitancy around the vaccine, and the rollout has offered them little reassurance.

Dallas, a county that tried to address vaccine equity overtly, is a place that people are watching. PCCI's COVID vulnerability index and the clinical implications for it will be published in April in the *New England Journal of Medicine's Catalyst in Innovations Delivery*, focused on health care delivery. And the federal government has stepped in with a plan to offer the type of targeting local officials tried, prioritizing people in 17 hard-hit ZIP codes.

"This pandemic has been a transformative moment for us," says Bowie, the Johns Hopkins behavioral scientist. "And it's what we will do with it, as we move forward and move through—this is really going to tell a lot about who we are as a country."

As the cold air forces an indoor retreat, Mixon and I sit down, masked and separated by several feet, in T.R. Hoover's computer lab. Theodore Roosevelt Hoover, Mixon's great-grandfather and the center's namesake, brought the family to Ideal in the early 20th century. He and his seven brothers left their mark on the landscape by building houses. Mixon tries to build better, and now longer, lives in what some locals still call "the Ideal."

Down the hall, staff and volunteers are discussing plans to create a database drawn from voter-precinct lists and from names of people who have had contact with T.R. Hoover. Volunteers will call everyone listed to see if they need help registering for a vaccine.

Mixon pokes her head into the meeting and then tells me the group has voted to buy two pay-as-you-go phones to put the registration effort into action.

But she looks a little forlorn. After a moment, she explains that two weeks ago, her neighborhood fishmonger lost his father to COVID-19. She's just heard the virus has killed her fishman, too. —With reporting by JULIA ZORTHIAN □

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I SAID TO MYSELF,
WHERE DID ALL
THESE WHITE
PEOPLE COME FROM?!

—JOHN WILEY PRICE



A photograph of Kim Ng sitting in a dugout. She is wearing a dark blazer over a white t-shirt with a small logo on the chest, dark pants, and black dress shoes. She is looking off to the side with a thoughtful expression. The dugout has wooden benches and a metal railing.

Sports

LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELD

Kim Ng made history as the first female GM in Major League Baseball. Now she has a job to do

BY SEAN GREGORY

Ng in the dugout of Marlins Park in Miami on Feb. 9

PHOTOGRAPH BY ROSE MARIE CROMWELL FOR TIME

Sports

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KIM NG TOOK HER SEAT ON THE CHARTERED jet. As assistant general manager of the Los Angeles Dodgers, she was joining the team on a road trip in 2008. Soon the Dodgers players started filing onto the plane, and a flight attendant began taking drink orders from staffers. When she reached Ng—pronounced *Ang*, rhymes with *hang*—the flight attendant leaned in close. “So what did you do to get on this plane?” she asked.

After nearly two decades in baseball front offices, Ng had become accustomed to the condescending glances, outright hostility and attempts at intimidation that come with being the only woman in the room. But this was, well, something else entirely. So Ng decided, as she had so many times in her professional life, to have some fun with the situation.

“Do you really want to know?” Ng said conspiratorially, teasing a salacious secret.

“Yeaah,” the flight attendant replied, barely containing her enthusiasm.

“See all these guys?” Ng said.

“Yeaah.”

“They all work for me,” Ng said.

Speaking during a video interview from a hotel room in Miami where she had been staying for the past month or so, Ng laughs recalling this conversation. “She slinked away,” Ng says. “The point was, *Why* are you asking me this?”

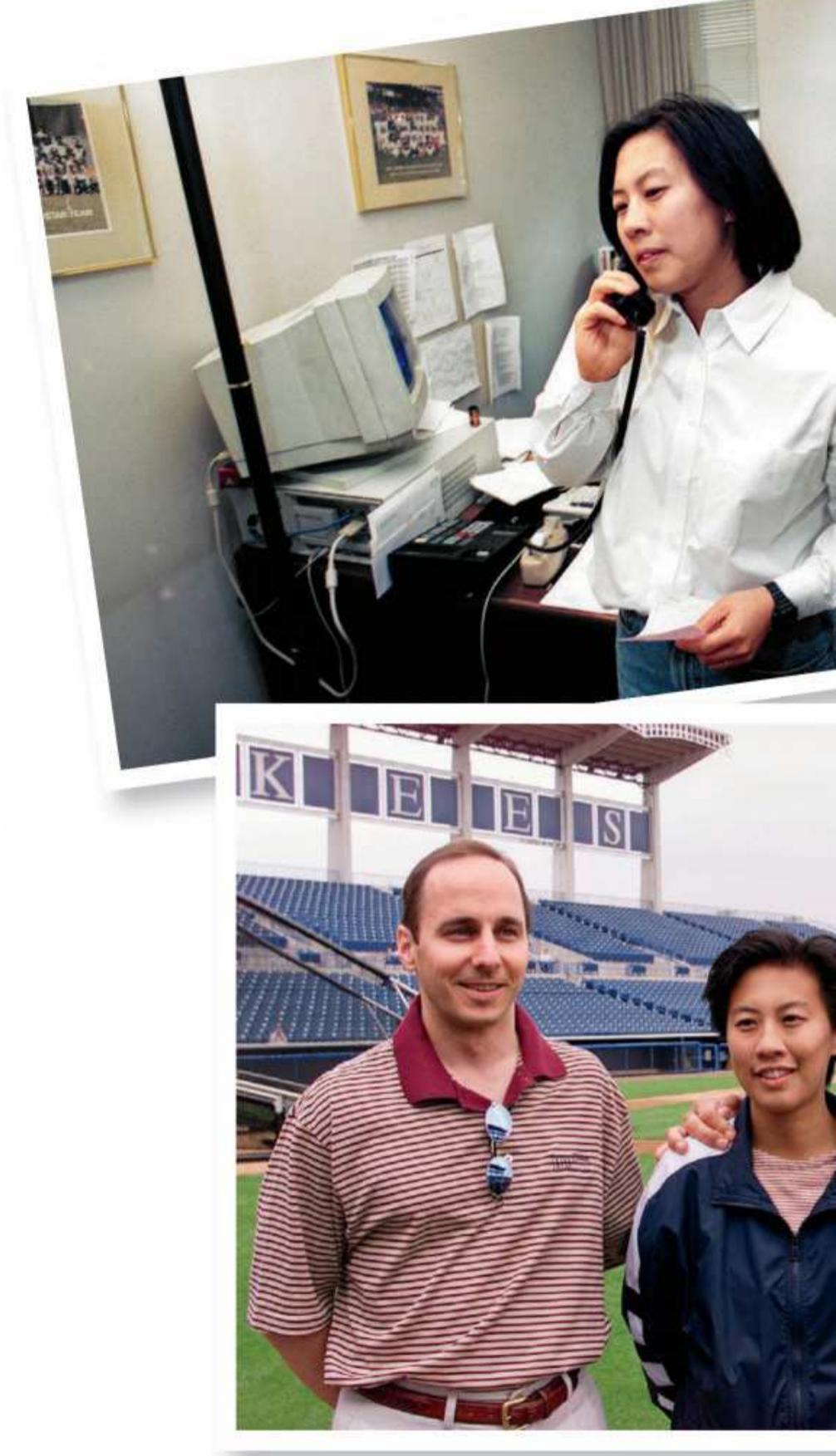
Ng was named the general manager of the Miami Marlins in November, becoming the first female GM in the history of major North American men’s pro team sports and the first East Asian American to lead a Major League Baseball (MLB) team. She had interviewed for GM positions at least 10 times over the years, only to be passed over for someone else. But her hiring by the Marlins was not just a personal victory—it was widely celebrated as a breakthrough with the potential to place more women in traditionally male power roles, in baseball and beyond.

Richard Lapchick, whose Institute

for Diversity and Ethics in Sport at the University of Central Florida publishes an annual report grading the hiring practices of sports leagues—MLB most recently got a C for gender hiring—hails Nov. 13, 2020, the day that Ng’s new position was announced, as the “most noteworthy day for baseball since Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier in 1947.” Michelle Obama and Hillary Clinton sent Ng kudos via Twitter; two of Ng’s inspirations when she was growing up, Billie Jean King and Martina Navratilova, also cheered the enormity of the moment on social media. On the night of President Joe Biden’s Inauguration, Ng even participated in the virtual festivities, sharing words from Ronald Reagan’s 1981 Inaugural Address celebrating peaceful presidential transitions. “It is unbelievable yet totally deserving that Kim has ascended to a position of power, influence and leadership,” King tells TIME. “Kim Ng being a GM of a major sports team is a strong indication that if you can see it, you can be it.”

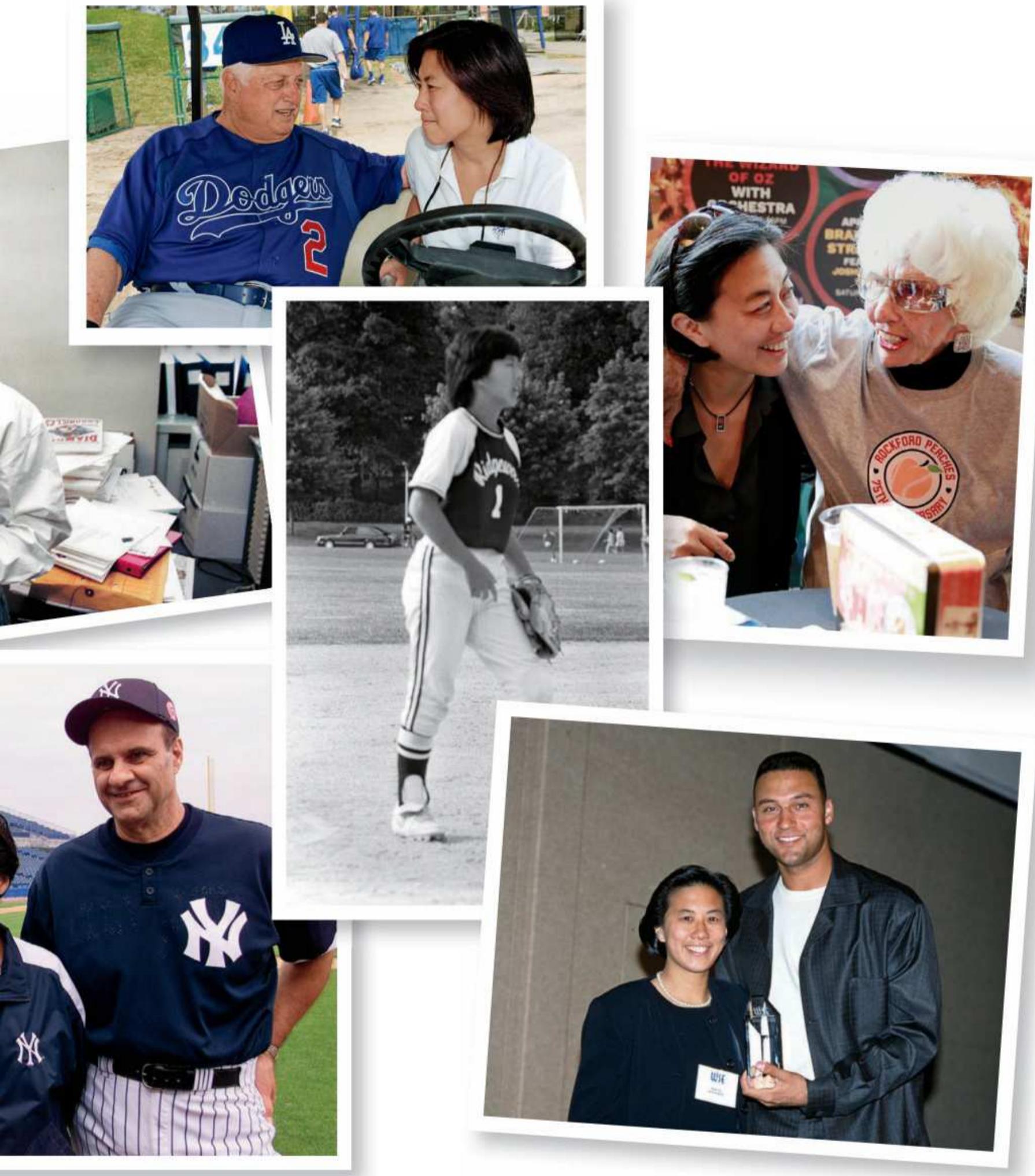
Women have made notable advances across men’s sports during the past year. In September, an NFL game was the first to feature female coaches on both sidelines, Callie Brownson of the Cleveland Browns and Jennifer King of the Washington Football Team, as well as a female official, Sarah Thomas, who would later become the first woman to referee in a Super Bowl. In December, San Antonio Spurs assistant coach Becky Hammon became the first woman to serve as head coach in an NBA game when she took over for her ejected boss, Gregg Popovich. And Ng’s ascension is hardly the only sign of progress in baseball: last summer, Alyssa Nakken of the San Francisco Giants was the first woman to serve as an on-field coach in an MLB game, and in January, the Boston Red Sox hired Bianca Smith as a minor league coach, the first Black woman to coach in pro baseball history.

But the boys’-club stench lingers: in February, the Los Angeles Angels suspended pitching coach Mickey Callaway after the *Athletic* reported accusations that he made inappropriate advances toward at least five women in sports media; Callaway has denied harassment. The previous month, the New York Mets fired general manager Jared Porter after ESPN revealed that he had sent lewd photos and



a barrage of unsolicited texts to a woman working in media. “We need more women in baseball,” Ng says. “I think that’s what it points to.”

As the most visible female executive in men’s sports, Ng can go a long way toward shattering the outdated idea that female leadership won’t translate in that male-dominated world. At her introductory press conference, Ng, fully aware that bad actors can point to one woman’s lack of success as an indictment of all women holding top decisionmaking spots, said that when she got the job, “there was a 10,000-lb. weight lifted off of this shoulder. And then after about half an hour later, I realized that it had just been transferred to [my other] shoulder.” She acknowledges that the burden isn’t fair. “But it doesn’t matter,” she tells TIME. “That’s just the way it is. In baseball, we talk about



working off the ideal. But you don't always get that. So you just have to keep rolling."

NG, 52, GREW UP playing stickball in Queens, N.Y. One manhole cover served as home plate, a parked car to the right was first base, another manhole cover down the street was second, and a parked car to the left was third. She was always the only girl. "I grew up a tomboy, for sure," Ng says. "Always the oddity."

Her father, who died when Kim was 11, had introduced his daughter to baseball. She slept under a poster, sponsored by Burger King, of the 1978 World Series champion New York Yankees. Baseball's slow pace—the average sports fan's biggest complaint about the game these days—actually drew her in. "It gave me time to ask questions," Ng says. "It gave me time to socialize and to be curious, and

Clockwise from top: Ng with Tommy Lasorda in 2005; playing softball at Ridgewood High School in 1986; at a 2018 celebration for a women's pro baseball team; receiving an award from Derek Jeter in 2000; with Yankees GM Brian Cashman and former manager Joe Torre circa 2000; as Yankees assistant GM in 1998

not necessarily be completely entranced."

When her family moved to Long Island, she took up organized softball. She was then the star of her team at Ridgewood High School in New Jersey and continued her career at the University of Chicago, where she hit .388 as a junior. She played multiple infield positions and emerged as the unquestioned team leader. "She was one of those loud people on the field," says Rosalie Resch, an assistant athletic

director during Ng's years on campus. "There was no question how many outs there were." In one photo from the time, Ng is kneeling at the front of the dugout, eyes homed in on the Chicago hitter, more immersed in the action than anyone else.

Her senior year, Ng served as president of the school's Women's Athletic Association, a group of students representing the interests of female athletes, and wrote her public-policy thesis on Title IX, the landmark law mandating equal opportunities for female student-athletes. She decided to pursue a career in sports, maybe in marketing or sports information. But soon after graduation in 1990, Ng interviewed for a baseball-operations internship with the Chicago White Sox. Dan Evans, then the team's assistant GM, was impressed with her smarts—and the fact that she didn't get flustered when she entered his office and found a spit cloth on his shoulder and his 3-month-old baby napping in a crib.

He hired her for the unpaid gig, which led to an awkward conversation between Ng and her mother. "Here I am paying \$25,000 a year for the University of Chicago," says Ng's mother Virginia Cagar, who wanted her daughter to go into banking like she had. "I asked her, 'Well, what's your salary?' And she hemmed and hawed and finally came out and said, 'Ahhh, nothing. I'm working for free, Mom.' I said, 'Return on investment. What happened to it?'"

At one point, Ng had three jobs: she'd finish work with the White Sox, then change in her Toyota Tercel on the way to her assistant coaching gig with her alma mater's softball team. Then she'd head to a research assistant's position at the University of Chicago's Chapin Hall, which focuses on children's policy. She bought a cushion at Walmart and crashed on the dorm-room floor of her younger sister, who was still a University of Chicago student. "A total housing violation," Ng says.

But it paid off as she started rising through the White Sox ranks. She'd hold the radar gun, do data entry, alphabetize draft cards. She'd carry legal pads around the office, peppering Evans with questions, taking diligent notes. "She learned everybody's job because she was willing to help with anything," says Grace Guerrero Zwit, who has worked nearly 40 years

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with the Chicago White Sox and is now the team's senior director of minor league operations. One time, a male staffer asked Ng to fetch a coffee. No thanks, she said, I don't need a cup right now. "Some of the older guys and baseball scouts, they were just like, What is this girl doing here?" says Zwit. "They just didn't get it. She didn't back down from anyone."

Ng soon took the lead in arbitration, baseball's strange ritual that calls for a team to make the case before a panel that one of its players should not get as big a raise as he and his agent think he deserves. She recalls a case she presented in front of Scott Boras, the most powerful agent in baseball, and a White Sox player she asked to remain nameless. She started off nervously, which gave the player an opening to stare her down. "That just got me going," Ng says. "Your competitive nature takes over and it's like, 'O.K., if that's what's going to go on here, then I'm going to get there too.'" The White Sox won the case.

Ng left Chicago in 1996 and joined the American League office as director of waivers and records. Although the job title sounded as if her office should be placed at the back of the library among the stacks, the position helped her connect with executives throughout the league, who relied on her to avoid making technical mistakes in executing trades and other transactions. Brian Cashman, as assistant GM with the Yankees, was impressed with her acumen, so when he was elevated to Yankees GM in 1998, he offered Ng the chance to replace him in his previous role. She would now be working for the notably demanding and volatile Yankees owner George Steinbrenner.

She had another phone conversation with Mom. "Maybe, Kim," Cagar told her, "George Steinbrenner will let you go to night school for your law degree."

The Yanks won three straight World Series. Grad school was very much out. "She was one of the knights at the round table during one of the most historic times in Yankees history," says Cashman. Mom started to warm to the whole baseball career. "It was a very gloating period," Cagar says. "Especially when she could get me a parking space at Yankee Stadium in the players' lot."

In 2002, Evans—who had become the GM of the Los Angeles Dodgers—hired

Ng as his assistant GM, and the idea of getting a top job began to crystallize in her mind. It was always going to be a challenge, but in 2003, she got a taste of just how unwelcoming the sport could be. At the hotel bar one night during the general managers' meetings in Arizona, former major league pitcher Bill Singer—then a scout for the New York Mets—asked why she was there and mocked her Chinese heritage with a fake accent. He soon was fired. (When contacted by TIME in February, Singer declined to comment.)

"I was just extraordinarily pissed," Ng says now. At a meeting with Dodgers and Mets officials at the hotel after the incident, Singer started to apologize. "I just said, 'Stop, stop,'" Ng says. "And then I had to tell him what I thought in front of a dozen people. I just told him to save it. Because the only person that was going to feel better after he spoke was him. I said it was really interesting that he picked the only person in the room who wasn't going to throw him through a window after what he said."

NG HAS SPENT her whole career dealing with people's preconceived notions of her. "People treat you differently," she says. "There's always going to be testing." She recalls going into meetings accompanied by a 6-ft.-3 guy on her staff who was 20 years her junior. "All the conversation will be toward him," Ng says. "All the eye contact will be at him. And he's looking around going, 'Who is this? What's going on?'" This sort of thing happens again and again. Ask other women, Ng says. "Because I've given this example, and they all nod their heads, like, Absolutely."

Ng toiled for three decades before running her own baseball team, despite being an early adopter of baseball analytics. In Chicago, Ng became conversant in the advanced statistics that

'It's pretty crushing when you get turned down. To put myself through that was not always fun. But I thought it was necessary.'

started enveloping the game at the turn of the century. These new tools to evaluate players granted a small army of Ivy League quant types—all men—access to top GM jobs. Ng brings those data skills to her new position, along with an appreciation for the human side of evaluating a player's potential and an ability to build trusted relationships throughout the game. "You have a lot of people walking this planet who are extremely smart," says Cashman. "Or they're extremely relatable and not very smart. She's a double threat, where she has a demeanor that allows her to connect."

Ng left the Dodgers in 2011 to join the Commissioner's Office, where she oversaw international baseball development and scouting activities. One of her tasks was directing baseball activities in the Dominican Republic, where for years local agents—called *buscones*—have skimmed off exorbitant portions of the signing bonuses awarded to young prospects. These men had little interest in changing the system. But Ng held firm. "I called somebody else who was there, and he said, 'Oh, she just gave them an ass whipping,'" says Peter Woodfork, MLB's senior vice president of minor league operations. "Everyone initially was like, she needs security. And afterward, they were like, I think she's just fine."

Still, her dream job, architect of one of baseball's 30 clubs, continued to elude her. Ng was at times offered interviews she didn't think were sincere. The teams, she strongly suspected, were just checking a box. But she felt a duty to power through the process, if not for herself, then for women following in her path. "It just had to be somebody who kept that notion of a woman running a club alive," Ng says. "It's pretty crushing when you get turned down. To put myself through that was not always fun. But I thought it was necessary."

After losing out on jobs with the San Diego Padres in 2014 and San Francisco Giants and New York Mets in 2018, Ng heard last fall from former Yankee great Derek Jeter, CEO and co-owner of the Marlins. He had known her from their Yankees days; he even presented her with an award at an event for women in sports business in 2000. During their final Zoom call, Ng launched into her closing pitch before Jeter stopped

her, making clear the job was hers. Ng paused. Jeter wondered why she wasn't joyous. "In work contexts, that's one of your tools, that people don't necessarily know what you're thinking," Ng says. "I've trained myself to do that. Plus, I was just in disbelief."

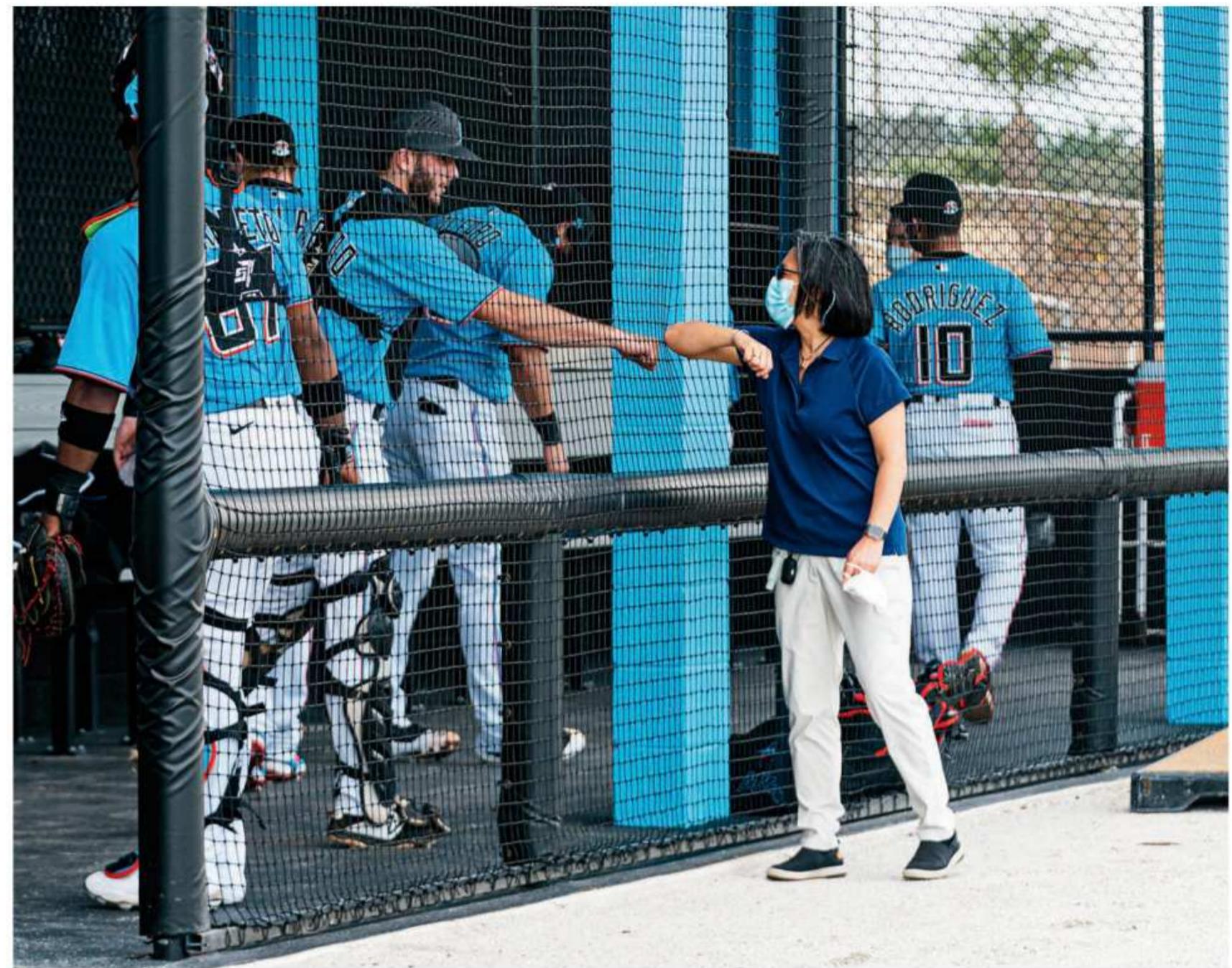
Finally, she smiled. Many others did too. A group chat of women in baseball—about 80 strong—buzzed when the news of Ng's hiring broke. "It's important for people like me to have female bosses and role models and mentors," says Jennifer Wolf, life skills coordinator for the Cleveland Indians. "But it's also important for girls who are growing up now, and boys growing up now, to see that being a person in a leadership role is not limited to white men."

Samantha DiGennaro, a PR-firm CEO who played softball with Ng at the University of Chicago, was leading a Zoom meeting when she spotted the news on her cell phone. (She cops to defying her own no-looking-at-phones edict.) "I started welling up a little bit," she says. "They were tears of joy, tears of pride, tears of nostalgia from my years playing on the field with her. But they were also tears of reckoning. For every woman who has a dream."

Before her hiring was announced to the public, Ng summoned her four younger sisters to their mother's senior community in New Jersey. Sitting on lawn chairs near a gazebo, Ng played them a clip on her iPad of Jeter presenting her with the award from all those years ago. "I'm scratching my head, thinking, Why is she doing this?" says Cagar. Then Ng told her family that she and her husband were moving to Miami. "Some faces among her sisters lit up," Cagar says. "They're a little faster than I am." Ng told her mother that Jeter had hired her to be Miami's GM. Although COVID-19 precluded the kind of group hug you see after the final out of the World Series, they all screamed in unison and jumped in place. Cagar uttered three words.

"Long. Time. Coming."

THE OUTPOURING OF SUPPORT surprised Ng. She says at least 500 people have told her they are now Marlins fans. Sheryl Sandberg reached out on email. So did Ng's eye doctor from the early 1990s: "He said, 'This is Dr. So-and-So from LensCrafters.'" Cagar visited her



Ng greets Miami Marlins prospect Cameron Barstad on Feb. 18, the opening day of spring training, in Jupiter, Fla.

dentist a few months ago wearing a Marlins mask. "She looked at me," Cagar says. "And I kind of gave her the eye signal." Gloating time, once again. Yes, Cagar told her, Kim Ng is my daughter. "And she was delighted," says Cagar.

Some see significance beyond gender. "For MLB, China is a potentially huge market," the *South China Morning Post* wrote in a November editorial. "With Joe Biden as President-elect, some Chinese hope there will be a reset of bilateral relations. Sport often makes great diplomacy. And who can be more inspiring at the moment than Chinese-American Kim Ng?"

Her task—building the Marlins into a consistent winner—won't be easy. Ng won't have the big-market resources that were available to her in New York or Los Angeles: Miami typically ranks in the bottom third of MLB clubs in payroll. South Florida has been a boom-and-bust baseball market, mostly bust: although the Marlins went on out-of-nowhere runs to World Series titles in 1997 and 2003, the team has finished 21 of its 28 seasons—including every single year in the 2010s—with a losing record. (The team was 31-29 and won a playoff series in the abbreviated 2020 season.)

With the ongoing pandemic, working

conditions aren't ideal. Her first team-wide address, to some 140 Marlins players and staffers throughout the organization, was on Zoom. "Your teammates will rely on you more this year than in any other year," she told them, "because much of this is about staying safe, and keeping your teammates safe." During Miami's first day of full-team spring training in February, Ng moved around the fields, watching batting practice from the first-base dugout, checking out bullpen throwing sessions. "I was really trying not to make them nervous in any way," says Ng. "Unfortunately, I'm pretty easy to pick out in a crowd of people."

Ng knows more eyes are now on the Marlins, thanks to her historic role. "I think there are degrees by which I will be judged," Ng says. "If the Marlins don't make it to the World Series, I don't think people are going to see it as a failure." She pauses. "I'm sure Derek will see it as a failure," she says with a laugh. "But look, I also have great confidence. I don't think we're going to fail. We all want the same thing. And that's to bring another world championship to Miami."

On that victory plane, there will be no question what she's doing there. Everyone will know Kim Ng. —With reporting by BARBARA MADDUX □

Nation

SLOW MOTIONS

Criminal court cases are backlogged nationwide because of COVID-19, leaving victims and defendants adrift

BY MELISSA CHAN

ON MARCH 28, 2020, JANIE MARSHALL LOST HER footing and stumbled near another woman while both were being treated for non-COVID-19 ailments at a Brooklyn hospital. With the pandemic raging, an encounter that days earlier might have ended in a friendly apology or a cluck of sympathy quickly turned ugly. Authorities say the other woman, Cassandra Lundy, shoved Marshall, 86, for having “got into [Lundy’s] space” and violating new social-distancing orders aimed at containing the virus. Marshall—who had dementia and was in the hospital for stomach issues—fell to the ground, hit her head and later died.

The city’s medical examiner ruled the death a homicide, and Lundy, now 33, was charged with manslaughter and assault. It was the city’s first homicide associated with COVID-19, and, nearly a year later, one more piece of evidence that the U.S. system of justice can be counted a casualty of the virus. Among its many impacts—none of them good—closed court-houses and canceled jury trials mean that neither victims nor defendants can be assured of attending their trials in person, much less the anxious families of those involved. And there’s no telling when that will change.

“Every time I think about my aunt, I well up in tears,” says Marshall’s niece, Eleanor Leonard, 74. “I want this over. And I won’t have peace, and I don’t think my aunt has peace in her grave, until this woman is convicted.”

SINCE COVID-19 WAS DECLARED a national emergency in March 2020, every state and Washington, D.C., have canceled or scaled back in-person criminal court proceedings. The snarled justice system has left hundreds of thousands of families waiting for trials and other resolutions while creating a cascade of civil rights issues for the accused. More defendants, especially those with health problems, are striking plea deals to avoid sitting in virus-infested jails while awaiting their day in court, defense attorneys say. And virtual courts are exposing the disadvantages of the poor, who are less likely to have Internet service, as a staggering number of new criminal cases stack up. New York City alone is bogged down with about 49,000 pending criminal court cases, and Maine has 22,000, officials say. Florida’s court system says it needs \$12.5 million to crawl out from beneath a mountain of more than 1.1 million stalled cases. California’s courts were recently given \$25 million by the state’s judicial council to do the same.

In San Antonio, a moratorium on in-person criminal jury trials has extended the pileup of indicted pending felony cases to roughly 9,500—a nearly 67% increase since March 2020, according to Ron Rangel, a criminal district court judge in Bexar County, Texas. There, the family of slain firefighter Scott Deem is growing weary in anticipation of a court date that never seems to come. Deem, 31, died battling an arson fire in a gym on May 18, 2017, authorities say. While a grand jury indicted the gym’s owner, Emond

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK CLENNON FOR TIME



Eleanor Leonard outside the Kings County supreme court in Brooklyn on Feb. 15

1.1 MILLION

Number of cases stalled in Florida courts

50

Number of states that have curtailed or canceled in-person criminal court proceedings since March 2020

Johnson, on felony murder and arson charges later that year, he has still not faced trial. “It’s never-ending,” says Deem’s mother Susan Deem.

Deem’s family was hopeful Johnson would be tried in 2020 after a judge in November 2019 rejected a defense motion to move the trial out of the county. “But then the pandemic hit,” Deem’s mother says. With the trial still looming, Susan Deem, 52, says it’s a constant reminder of what was lost when her son died—a loving father, whose third child was born three months after his death, and a courageous public servant. “Every time there is some kind of hearing, it just brings back everything all over again,” she says. “That’s the hard part. I wish it would just get over and done with.”

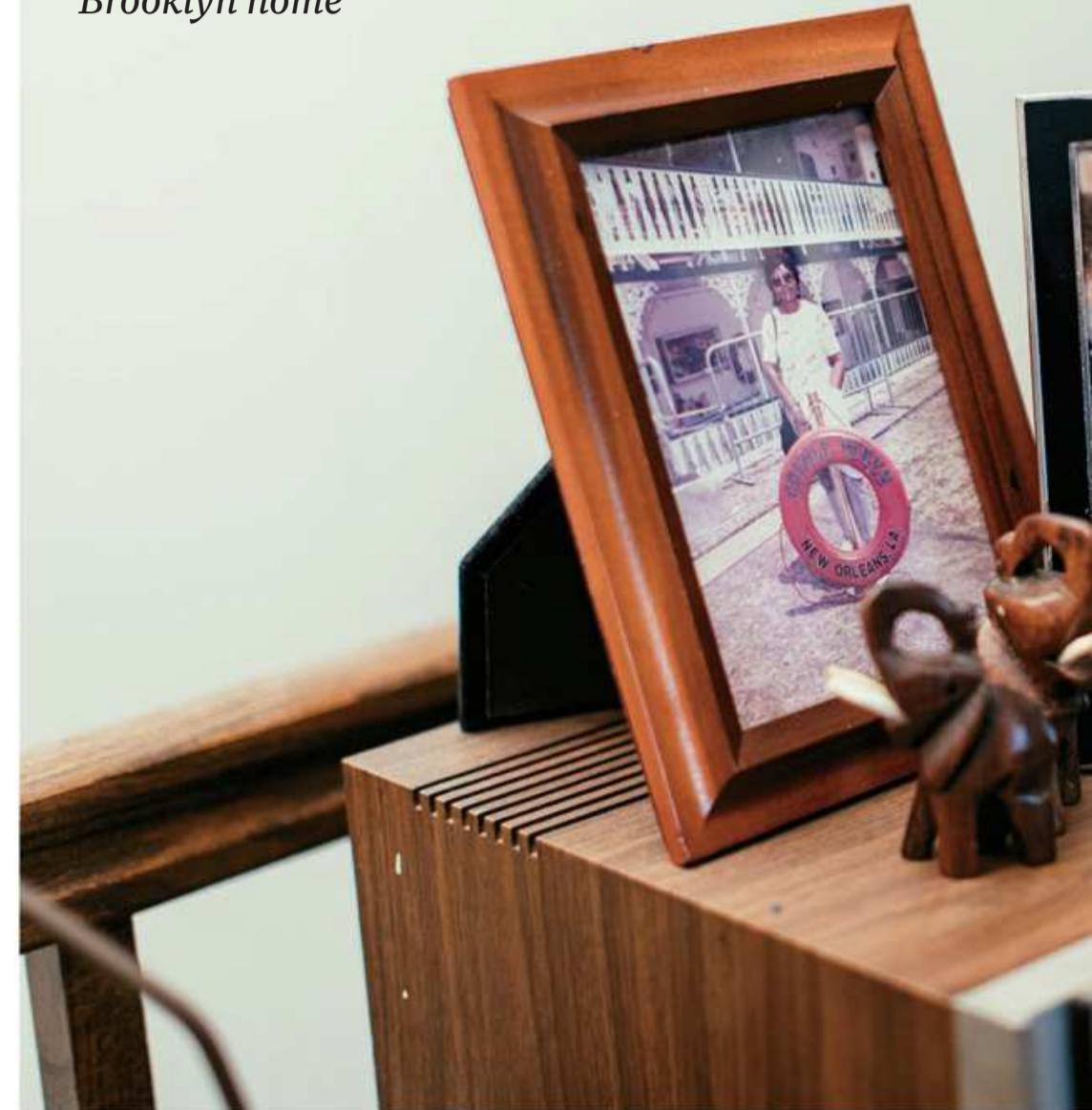
If the current state of the public-health crisis is any indicator, that may not happen for a long time. In January, COVID-19 killed more people in the U.S. than in any other month so far, and the nation’s death toll is more than 500,000, according to data from Johns Hopkins University. In Bexar County, where Johnson’s trial would be held, jury trials have been frozen at least until the end of March 2021. Rangel, who’s tasked with determining whether to lift the moratorium then, says he “currently cannot foresee” doing so.

THE FIRST FEW COURTS in the U.S. to stop jury selection and postpone new criminal and civil trials did so around the time of Marshall’s death, in March 2020, when health officials began urging millions of Americans to stay at home and keep 6 ft. away from others when venturing out. Even the U.S. Supreme Court postponed oral arguments for the first time in more than 100 years. By fall 2020, some criminal trials had resumed with restrictions, including in areas of New York State, where each county was allowed to hold one criminal trial at a time in courtrooms outfitted with plexiglass barriers and jury seats spaced several feet apart. But the reopening was short-lived. A surge in COVID-19 cases around the holidays forced another round of restrictions. At the end of November, about two dozen U.S. district courts nationwide resuspended jury trials and grand-jury proceedings, marking a “significant pause” in efforts by federal courts to resume full operation, court officials said. Today, even in jurisdictions where in-person proceedings have resumed, limits on how many people can be in a courtroom at one time for things like jury selection continue to slow the system.

“We’re in sort of this holding period,” says Paula Hannaford-Agor, director of the Center for Jury Studies at the National Center for State Courts (NCSC).

In a prepandemic world, state trial courts typically resolved 18 million felony and misdemeanor cases annually, according to an NCSC study in August, and an estimated 8 million to 10 million U.S. citizens reported for jury duty each year. Hannaford-

Photos of Janie Marshall are on display in her niece’s Brooklyn home



Agor does not see jury trials returning to any semblance of normality until at least 2022. About 45 to 60 people are needed for jury selection in most typical felony cases, she says. More than 600 prospective jurors were summoned for Harvey Weinstein’s New York rape trial, which ended in his conviction just before COVID-19 toppled courts. “Most courts are not set up to be able to have that kind of group size while maintaining social distancing,” Hannaford-Agor says. “Everybody keeps thinking, ‘Well, we’re kind of getting to the end of this.’ I don’t think we are.”

WITH MOST TRIAL PROCEEDINGS at a standstill, a host of new problems plague the nation’s criminal-justice system. The longer it takes to bring a case to trial, the greater the chance that key witnesses will die or forget details. There are also long-standing racial and economic inequities underscored by remote courts. Low-income defendants and defendants of color, the demographic most likely to have lost jobs during the pandemic, have struggled to get access to the Internet or to devices needed for virtual trials, hearings or conversations with attorneys, according to Tina Luongo, attorney in charge of the criminal-defense practice at the Legal Aid Society, who is based in New York City. “People lost their jobs; they’ve lost their homes,” Luongo says. “The last thing they’re thinking about is, Can I get on Skype or Microsoft Teams?”

Even more alarming to public defenders is how multiple states have suspended laws that set deadlines for prosecutors aimed at protecting defendants’ rights to speedy trials. Defense attorneys say



that without that deadline pressure and with no clear end in sight to their cases, more clients are pleading guilty in exchange for time served or probation. “There’s not that light at the end of the tunnel that says, ‘If I can just have my hearing or trial, I’m going to make my case,’ ” Luongo says. “Imagine what that feels like.”

Plea deals were overwhelmingly common before the pandemic. Of the nearly 80,000 defendants facing federal criminal cases in 2018, about 90% pleaded guilty and only 2% went to trial, according to a Pew Research Center analysis of data collected by the federal judiciary. At the state level, jury trials in 2017 accounted for fewer than 3% of criminal dispositions in 22 jurisdictions with available data, the NCSC says. Add the fear of languishing in overcrowded jails—where prisoners are twice as likely as the general population to die from COVID-19, a recent report found—and the offer of a plea deal looks sweeter, even though a criminal conviction can stigmatize someone for life and affect their ability to obtain housing, jobs and education. Still, with more than 2,400 COVID-19 deaths behind bars, according to the Marshall Project, immediate concerns about becoming infected may outweigh future repercussions.

“The impacts on the rest of your life only matter if you’re alive,” says Skailer Qvistgaard, a Massachusetts trial attorney. “It doesn’t matter if you can’t find housing if you died in jail.”

Qvistgaard says one of his immunocompromised clients was ready to challenge his case in court after insisting he had been falsely accused of assault and battery. But after nearly two months sharing a jail

cell in a facility with COVID-19 cases, the 39-year-old pleaded guilty in October in exchange for time served. “His goal was to stay alive,” Qvistgaard says. “There was no other way to get him out.”

The Legal Aid Society says a similar situation prompted Michael Hilton, a 64-year-old client, to plead guilty in the fall to nonviolent parole violations, including not staying at a court-appointed shelter and failing to report to his parole officer. The non-profit says Hilton, who has a weakened immune system because of HIV, feared exposure to the coronavirus at the shelter. He was unable to let his parole officer know he would miss their meeting because the parole system was in an “exceptional state of disarray during the pandemic,” according to Laura Eraso, a Legal Aid staff attorney. Rather than fight the case and risk more time in jail, Hilton took a plea agreement in October, which got him released from New York City’s Rikers Island under supervision.

“The pandemic is exerting a real influence on people’s basic rights and dignity and their ability to go free,” says Nicole Gonzalez Van Cleve, a criminal-justice researcher and Brown University sociology professor. “These aren’t really choices anymore.”

CASSANDRA LUNDY’S ATTORNEY requested four times that she be freed on bail after she was charged in Janie Marshall’s death in April 2020, but the court rejected each bid, prosecutors said. “I just thought of the irony of it,” says Marshall’s great-niece, Antoinette Leonard-Jean Charles. “She hit my aunt, trying to prevent COVID, and there she was surrounded by it” in jail. An appeals court eventually lowered Lundy’s \$200,000 bail to \$30,000, and Lundy was released on July 15. Her attorney and Brooklyn Defender Services, which is representing her, did not respond to requests for comment. On Feb. 10, the case was adjourned until May.

When, or if, Lundy stands trial, Eleanor Leonard, Marshall’s niece, hopes to search Lundy’s eyes for signs of remorse. “I would just like to face her to see why she would do that to an old lady,” she says. Then, if given the chance, Leonard would want Lundy to hear how, in one moment, her family was robbed of a “caring, loving person” who was a role model and a trailblazer. Marshall was an accountant at the Social Security Administration and the first African American to lead the department in which she worked, her family says. “She was a sophisticated, pro-Black woman, who made you proud to be African American,” says Leonard-Jean Charles, 41.

Marshall’s great-niece shares stories about her at any opportunity and has been the family’s point person in the case. But she feels helpless, with nothing to do but wait. “When the courts are closed, you don’t know when you’re going to be able to do anything,” she says. “I have no way of making sure she gets justice or that she’s not forgotten.” □

2X

Likelihood
COVID-19 will
kill a person
confined in
prison

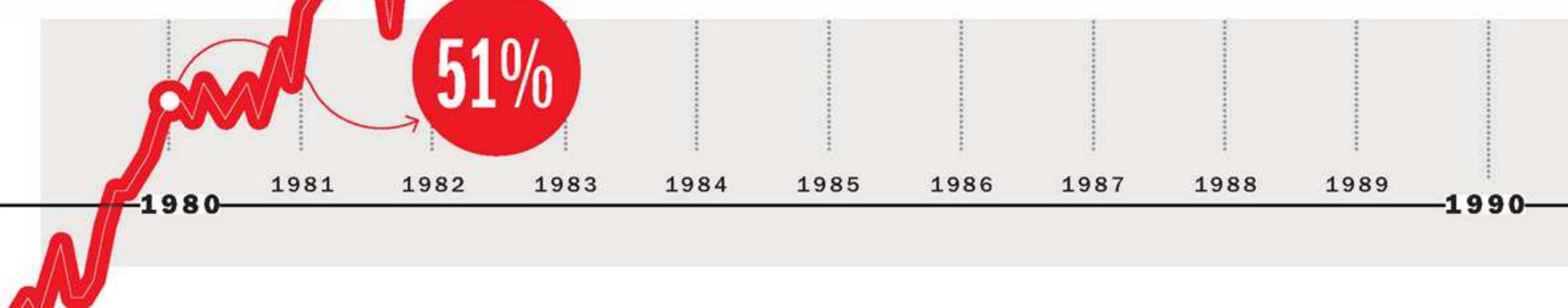
60

Number of
people needed
for jury selection
in most typical
state felony
cases

SPECIAL REPORT

**WOMEN and the
PANDEMIC**

WOMEN'S ENTERED THE WORK BEFORE IT OVER THE C

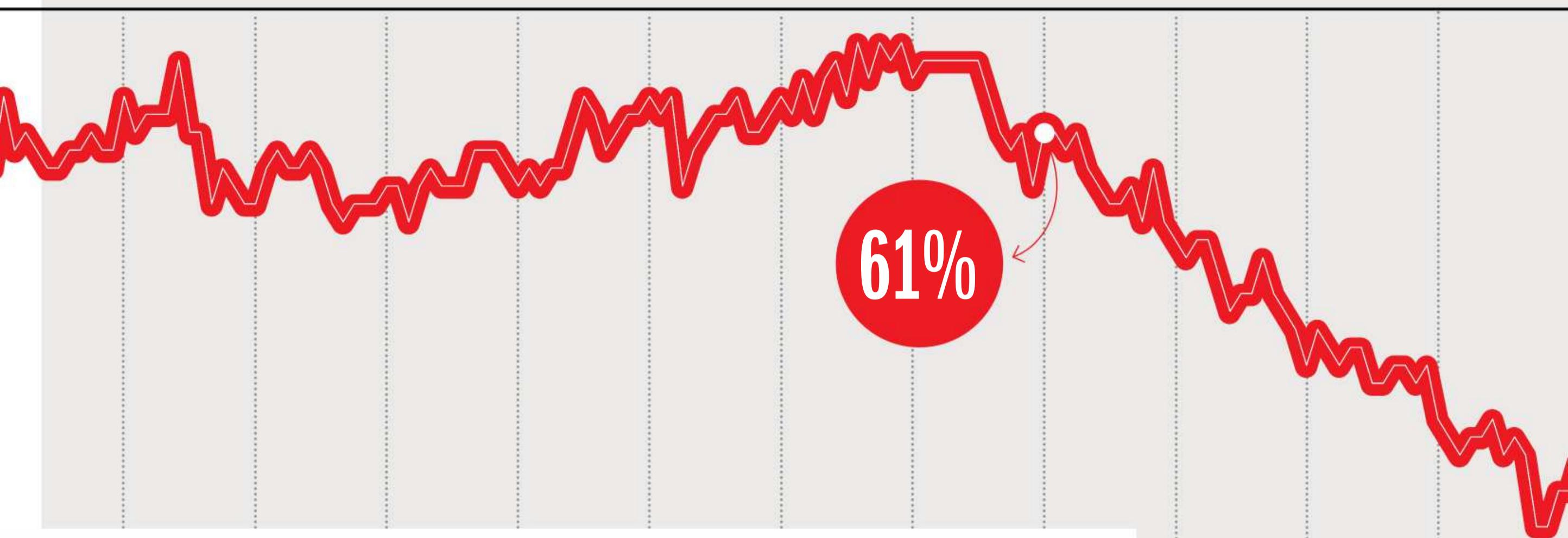


STEADILY

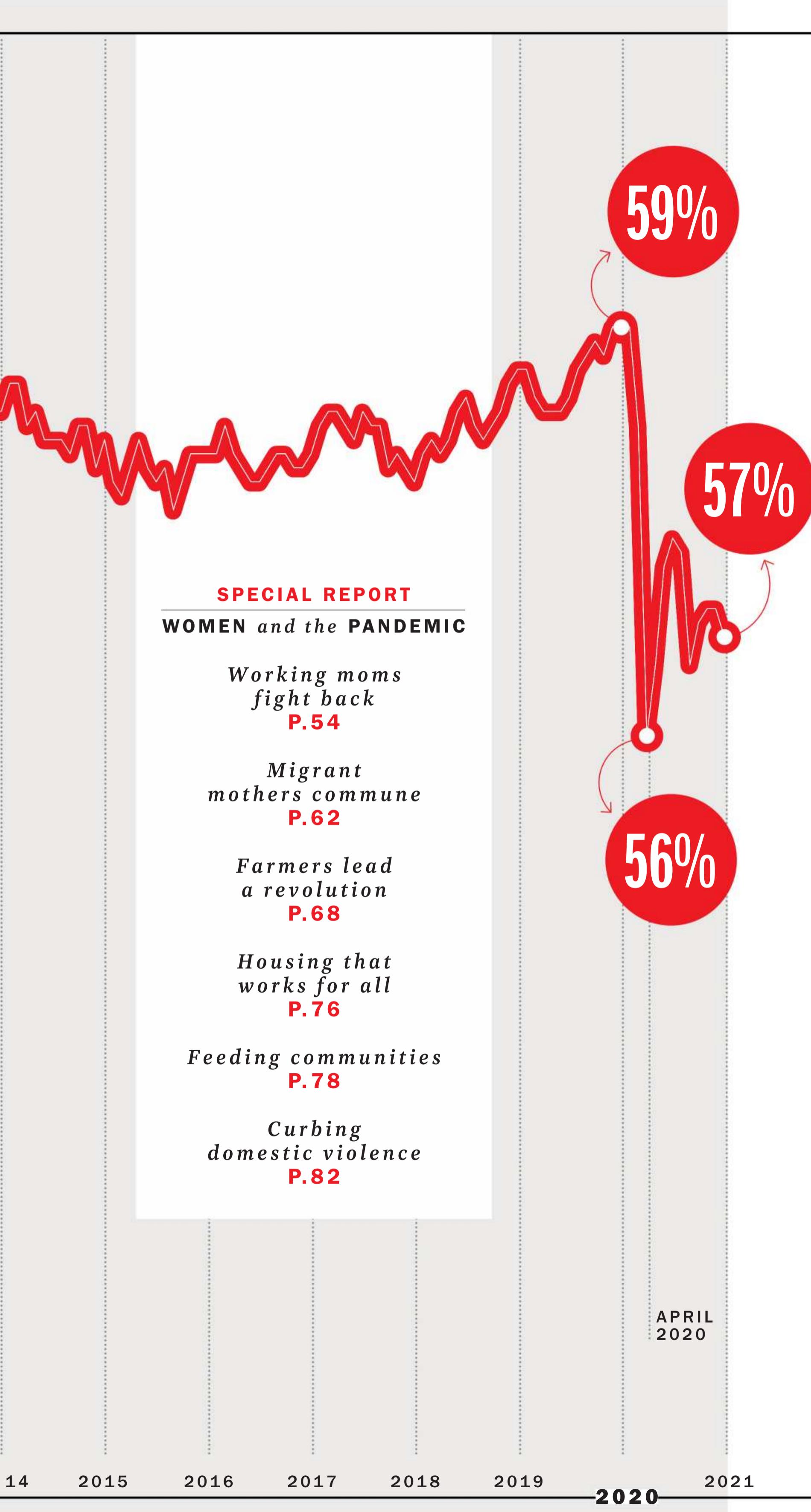


LFORCE

HE TURN CENTURY.



**... BUT THEIR
PARTICIPATION
SLID AFTER 2008,
THEN PLUMMETED
TO A 33-YEAR LOW
DURING COVID-19**



In times of crisis, women carry the weight. Fortitude comes in many forms

BY JAQUIRA DÍAZ

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, WHEN I WAS IN my mid-20s, after suffering from major depressive disorder and anxiety for most of my life, I found myself at the emergency room during an episode of substance-induced psychosis. My father and stepmother found me, at the very beginning of the episode, having paranoid delusions. Someone had tried to poison me and now they were coming, I told them. “Do not answer the door.”

Somehow, I listened when they said I needed to see a doctor. “We’ll be with you the whole time,” my father said. At the hospital, after checking my vitals and asking me to describe what was wrong, the triage nurse talked to my father. He explained my history with depression, my mother’s schizophrenia. I was given an emergency bed.

A psychiatrist—a tall, middle-aged blind man—approached with his guide dog. He asked questions while my father and stepmother watched, worried, nervous. “When was the last time you slept? Do you ever feel disconnected from yourself, or from reality? Do you hear voices?”

"I'm not crazy," I insisted. I was afraid I was going to be hospitalized, or medicated against my will, which had happened to my mother many times.

The doctor reassured me. "Everyone here wants the best for you. Right now, we're just trying to understand." I glared at him, then at my father, who looked miserable, tears welling. My stepmother took my hand, and there was such kindness in her eyes that in that moment she seemed like an angel.

And suddenly it clicked. Something happened in my brain, like a fog had lifted, and I could see clearly: my stepmother was an angel. I took in all my surroundings. The hospital bed, the curtain half open, my parents waiting. The angel was there to help me cross over. I had died. They had been keeping this from me.

"Am I alive?" I asked my parents. "Or did I die?"

They both burst into tears and wrapped their arms around me while I asked again and again, "Am I alive? Please tell me the truth. Am I alive?" I felt the heat of them on my body, their tears on my skin, and I doubted any of it was real.

I pulled away, and didn't like what I saw on their faces. "I'm not crazy," I said again. I remembered my mother, who'd spent so much time in mental hospitals, psychiatric wards, her whole life cycling between being overmedicated, under-medicated, ignored, treated like a hysterical woman who couldn't care for herself. How many times had she told me, "All these doctors, and for what? They don't ever listen to me."

There was movement on the other side of the curtain, nurses calling out to one another, someone wheeling a cart down the hallway. And then, out of the corner of my eye, the psychiatrist, his guide dog at his side, and another fog lifted. He was no doctor. He was a demon, come to take me to hell, along with his hellhound.

I started screaming.

More nurses burst through the curtain. Someone took my wrists. The

psychiatrist, the nurses, everyone stopped speaking to me, and spoke only to my father. "Her heart is racing," someone explained. "Dangerously high. She could have a heart attack."

"Do it," my father said. He left the room as they held me down.

My stepmom pulled back the curtain. It was time now. There was a needle, then an IV. The demon and his hellhound stood at the edge of the bed.

Above me, the overhead lights were bright, so bright.

I STARTED ORDINARY GIRLS, my first book, shortly after that first episode of

**I was
STRUGGLING
with almost
every aspect
of my life**

psychosis—in October 2007. I was in treatment, getting better, and working was helping me find a way back to myself, even though I was writing about surviving sexual violence, about my mother's mental illness and about my own struggles with depression and suicidal ideation. I couldn't really get my head around what I was doing—I was just trying to make sense of my life. I was trying to figure out how to keep living.

More than a decade later, when the book was released, I was happy for the first time. I was still struggling with anxiety and depression, but I had never been this happy. I was engaged to the love of my life, and we shared homes in Miami Beach and Montreal. I was doing what I loved, writing and teaching. I was in the middle of my book tour, which

had started as a small 10-city tour, and grew into a several-months-long affair with over 40 readings, speaking engagements and lectures all over the country. Then overnight, at the start of the pandemic, everything stopped.

We didn't know it yet, but my fiancé and I would be separated for five months. I was in Miami, and because of the COVID-19 travel bans instituted by the Trump Administration, they were forced to travel back home to the U.K. One day I was sharing my life and work with my partner, spending time with family and friends, talking to my mother every day, traveling three times a week to talk about work I loved, planning our wedding. And then, suddenly, I was living alone, separated from my partner, from my family, from my friends. All of my remaining book-tour events were canceled, so I lost most of my income for the year. We had to cancel our wedding. My partner's interview with U.S. Immigration was postponed again and again, and then finally canceled—they had to remain in the U.K. until the travel bans were lifted. And then my mother got sick, spending months in the ICU in a South Miami hospital after a terrible year of recurrent pneumonia. The doctors advised us to make plans, to say our goodbyes.

Like so many other women have over the past year, I was struggling with almost every aspect of my life. The recession caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is disproportionately affecting women, and while women in the U.S. appear to be impacted most, this is a global problem: according to the McKinsey Global Institute, during the pandemic, women have lost their jobs at 1.8 times the rate of men. A January 2021 report by the National Women's Law Center has found that in the U.S., women's labor-force participation rate is 57%, on par with the rate in 1988. Approximately 40% of women over 20 have been without work for six months or longer, with white women's unemployment rate at 5.1%, while

Asian women saw a rate of 7.9%, Black women saw a rate of 8.5%, and Latinas saw a rate of 8.8%. And women who were forced to leave their jobs to care for their children—who are now at home because of COVID-19 school closures—are not officially counted as “unemployed.”

A study by CARE, a nonprofit that fights global poverty, found that the pandemic has caused a crisis in women’s mental health, and that accessing the quality health care services they need has been significantly harder during this time. After months in isolation, I started to experience that firsthand: I didn’t leave my apartment for days, weeks. Time became meaningless. I stopped sleeping, stopped eating, stopped reading and writing, stopped doing everything and anything I loved. It wasn’t so much that I chose to stop, but that I just couldn’t, even though I tried. I’d try melatonin one night, Benadryl the next. I’d doze off for two, three hours, and then wake in despair. I called friends, desperate for sleep, or feeling absolutely exhausted with life, or convinced that I was having a heart attack, or that we were all going to die. I didn’t hug another person for a month, then two, three, four, five. When I finally slept, after swallowing my last four sleeping pills, I didn’t wake for a day and a half.

The day after winning an award for my book, I called a suicide-prevention hotline.

THERE IS A HISTORY of mental illness on both sides of my family. We have all been in and out of therapy at some point, on and off medication. Five of my mother’s six siblings suffer from depression or bipolar disorder. My maternal grandmother, like my mother, spent her life battling schizophrenia and depression, and threatening to end her life. Ten years ago, she died by suicide. When I got the news of her death, I was both surprised and not surprised at all.

Being alone during a pandemic, just me and my thoughts in that apartment, I started to feel numb. I couldn’t

remember feeling joy, even though months before I had been celebrating my work, had been planning a life, had been able to pick up a collection of poetry, read a single poem and feel a sense of connection with the world, something meaningful and artful and complex. Now the pandemic had me questioning whether any part of my world had any meaning at all, if there was any point to all of this. I was convinced I’d never see my partner again, I’d never see my family again, that my mother would die in that hospital, alone, without me there to hold her hand. How could I keep going when I didn’t have

had to do and was fully capable of taking it on. Finally, when I couldn’t take any more sleepless nights, I made an appointment with a therapist.

I ARRIVED IN THE U.K. in early August, after months of weekly psychotherapy. I was finally able to read, and write. I was sleeping without medication. I had committed to getting better, and was doing the work. I quarantined for two weeks before moving in with my partner. At the end of August, we got married, in a small, private ceremony in their mother’s living room.

I never stopped thinking about how fortunate I am, how privileged. I grew up poor, and that meant that as a teenager, when I first started showing symptoms of major depressive disorder, my family couldn’t afford treatment. It was never an option. During the pandemic, when so many people have lost their jobs, their homes, their health insurance, I’ve been lucky: even though I lost most of my income, I’ve still been able to work from home. I don’t have children to care for. I can still afford weekly therapy. I was able to pay for an international flight, leave the U.S. for six, seven, eight months at a time. Most women are not this privileged.

Living in the U.K., and watching the U.S. from abroad, even temporarily, has given me new perspective. I’m grateful for every day, for my health, for my family and friends, for my spouse. I’m always conscious of how fortunate I am, and I can finally say I am truly happy, the happiest I have ever been. I try to remember that I may not always be this happy, that depression tries to convince me that there’s no point. But there is. I’ve learned that for me, there is a way to keep making art, to keep living: I prioritize my mental health, I stay focused on the things that feel meaningful and purposeful. And sometimes I ask myself, “Am I alive?” And the answer is always, “Yes. I’m alive.” And I know it’s exactly how I want to be.

Díaz is the author of *Ordinary Girls*

*I didn’t LEAVE
my apartment for
days, weeks.
Time became
meaningless*

a reason?

The truth was that I didn’t want to die. The truth was that as soon as my partner left, as soon as the work and the planning and the traveling stopped, when there were no more parties or family and friends, as soon as I was alone, I recognized what I’d been doing my whole life. I’d spent my 20s and early 30s avoiding the problems. Even though I’d had periods of happiness, even though I’d been productive and high-functioning, I had somehow managed all that without dealing with any of my mental illness. I hadn’t taken care of myself—I’d spent 15 years avoiding therapy, starting and abandoning it as soon as it got hard. And now, the isolation was forcing me to see how I needed to face all the ways I’d let my illness get out of control when I knew what I

• Lauren Martinez and her family in Cape Coral, Fla.



LOVE OR MONEY

These women wanted to CARE FOR THEIR KIDS and KEEP THEIR JOBS. Now they're suing the employers who FIRED them

BY ELIANA DOCKTERMAN

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WHEN LAUREN MARTINEZ ARRIVED home after work to find her teenage daughter feverish and vomiting, she knew her pandemic plans were about to fall apart. It was May 2020 and her day care had closed, so Martinez, an assistant office manager at a dentist's office in Florida, had been relying on the 14-year-old to care for her infant son between middle-school classes online. "It was not ideal," she says. "But there was literally no option but her." Martinez's husband worked at the same office, and the family needed both incomes.

Martinez had returned to work from maternity leave about a month earlier, and she had hoped to drive home every day around noon to nurse her son. But by that particular day in May, she had pretty much given up on breastfeeding. She says she wasn't provided private space to pump at work or the time to do so. "I was so engorged," she says. "I would literally have to change my clothes every day because I would be leaking that whole time. I don't think men understand that." Still, she tried to get home when she could to offer at least a few minutes' relief to her daughter.

But seeing her child sick and vulnerable that evening, Martinez knew this setup was unsustainable. "There's something about when you're a parent and your children get sick, they get more childish. She seemed like such a baby to me at that moment," she says. "I was like, I can't do this to her anymore." Martinez texted her boss and asked to work remotely. Her request was denied. "I think he liked the Lauren before—no-responsibilities Lauren—better than this new mom who needed accommodations," she says. "Now I was annoying or something."

Within days, she was out of a job. "I didn't know what law had been violated





or if anything had been violated,” she says. “It just felt so wrong to me.” In July, she filed a lawsuit claiming that her former employer broke federal law in refusing to grant her leave and firing her. According to the complaint, when she asked to work from home, the company told her, “If you cannot come in due to childcare … the position is vacated. Meaning you no longer have a job here.” Then, the lawsuit states, when she complained to HR, she was ordered to return to work, but upon doing so, she was written up for poor attendance. After she objected, she was fired. Her manager, she alleges, later asked Martinez’s husband to have her delete the texts the manager had sent her. Her husband refused and quit, leaving them without any income in an economic shutdown. “I was like, We’re going to be homeless,” she says. (A representative for the company declined to comment on the lawsuit but said the owners of its practices have offered many COVID-19-related benefits to its staff.)

More than 2.3 million women have dropped out of the labor force since February 2020, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. A Census Bureau and Federal Reserve analysis found that 1 in 3 women not working in July cited childcare issues as the reason, and Pew found that mothers of children 12 and under were three times more likely than fathers to have lost work between February and August. Latina and Black women have been hit hardest, and women’s labor-force participation reached a 33-year low in January. Economists have dubbed this recession a “shecession.”

The Center for WorkLife Law tells TIME that since the start of the pandemic, they have received seven times more calls than usual to their help line with questions and complaints about discrimination, but most mothers have no recourse. Congress hastily passed the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) in March 2020, which offered up to 12 weeks of paid leave to some workers whose children’s schools and day cares had closed. But the legislation strictly limited who qualified, and the benefits expired at the end of 2020.

“You’re screwed in 2021,” says

- Tamara Brown and her son near their home in Southfield, Mich.

Benjamin Yormak, Martinez’s lawyer. “We’re getting phone calls now all the time: ‘My childcare crapped out on me, and I got fired.’ My answer has to be, unless you fit into this tiny, tiny, tiny box, society’s failed you.”

At least 58 lawsuits have been filed in the U.S. from April 2020 to February 2021 that allege an employer denied emergency parental leave, did not inform employees of their right to take emergency leave, or fired employees for asking to work remotely or take leave while schools and day cares were closed. Most plaintiffs claimed their former employers violated their rights under FFCRA, but some in cities like New York, where caregivers are a protected class, sued for

‘I think he liked the Lauren before—no-responsibilities Lauren—better than this NEW MOM who needed accommodations.’

—Lauren Martinez

violations of human-rights laws.

Still, even for those who have the opportunity to fight in the courts, the chances of restitution are hazy. Federally mandated paid parental leave is new to the U.S., so most of these parents are entering uncharted legal territory. But many of the women TIME spoke to for this story described how wrong it felt to be forced to choose between caring for their children in the midst of a public-health crisis and earning income to support them. “It’s so unfair,” says Martinez. “And I don’t even think we’re realizing the scope of it.”

A MOTHER’S PLACE in the American workforce has always felt tenuous at best. The U.S. remains the only

industrialized country that doesn't mandate paid parental leave nationally, and the federal government doesn't fund universal pre-K even though studies show that access to early childhood education boosts the number of women in the workforce and economic prosperity. The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) mandates that employers offer 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave, but about 40% of American workers are not covered by this law. Only nine states and Washington, D.C., have passed their own paid-family-leave legislation. And just 20% of private-sector workers get paid family leave from their employers. Many parents cannot afford to take unpaid leave, and those who do take time off often feel pressure to return to work or worry that they will seem dispensable. The concern is justified. Thomas A. McKinney, an attorney bringing several suits involving parental leave in New Jersey, says mothers have become an "easy target" for companies looking to lay off employees during the pandemic.

Kristen Horine, who worked for a company in Ohio that designs parks, says she initially resisted taking family leave when her manager said she was eligible under FFCRA. She was used to working nights and weekends, and she and her husband were trading off childcare duties for their toddler and kindergartner at home. It was stressful, but not impossible. Ultimately, though, she told herself that leave could be an opportunity to bond with her sons.

"I was thankful that I had this time with them," she says. "But there was this immense amount of anxiety and fear about what would happen in the future, with the pandemic but also with my career ... I started to see all of my projects that I had been working on—that I had poured my heart into—divvied up between other coworkers. And my biggest fear was they would start to look at projections and who had clients and who didn't have clients, and I wasn't there."

Just before the end of her leave, Horine and several coworkers who had taken family leave were told that because there was no longer enough work, they were all fired. Horine has now joined two other parents in a lawsuit against their former employer. It alleges that when the company cut staff at the end of June, the

only employees laid off were the ones who had taken family leave, even though expanded FMLA was put in place to provide not only relief but also an assurance that if a worker takes leave, she would return to her same job or an equivalent one at the end of it. (Horne's former employer declined to comment.)

Horne points out that this same company once asked her to bring her sons to a park that it had helped design for a recruiting video in which talking heads mention family values seven times. She says this emphasis on family was one of the reasons she felt comfortable uprooting her family and moving from Philadelphia to take the job.

For working parents, such cognitive dissonance is not unique to this year. It's a grand American tradition. In surveys, most Americans still say it's not ideal for a child to be raised by two working par-

turned from the front, the government dismantled the program. "We just don't have an infrastructure of care that's publicly supported in this country in a really robust way," says Melissa Murray, a law professor at New York University. "When we think about caregiving, we assume it is a private responsibility. And when something like this happens, it becomes obvious how cobbled together this whole network is. More important, it also becomes painfully obvious that the real public support for caregiving in this country is school, which I don't think people fully appreciated before the pandemic."

So it was a historic day on March 18 of last year when Congress passed FFCRA, which, among other things, expanded FMLA to include up to 12 weeks of paid leave for employees whose children's schools or day cares had closed. Most of those covered were entitled to two-thirds of their salaries, capped at \$200 per day.

Still, the bill contained carve-outs that chiseled away at its efficacy: Companies with more than 500 employees were exempt, which meant that America's biggest, wealthiest companies didn't owe their workers any family leave. Companies with fewer than 50 employees could seek an exemption, so few employees at small businesses were covered. Health care providers and emergency responders weren't entitled to leave. In total, CAP estimates that 68 million to 106 million private-sector workers did not qualify for leave under FFCRA.

'In the middle of this PANDEMIC, you still want your child to have some form of normalcy.'

—Tamara Brown

ents. And yet prepandemic, two-thirds of U.S. families were two-income households, and 41% of mothers were the breadwinners. A mass exodus of women from the workforce isn't just a women's problem: the Center for American Progress (CAP) and the Century Foundation estimated that if women remained out of the workforce at the same levels as last spring for a year, it would cost the country \$64.5 billion.

But the U.S. government has never been all that eager to establish programs that would make working mothers' lives more manageable. During World War II, Congress approved funding for a universal childcare system so women could produce fighter planes and combat gear in factories. But as soon as the men re-

TAMARA BROWN'S 11-YEAR-OLD loves to bake. "Sometimes it's strawberry shortcake," she says. "But his brownies—that is his thing. He will say, 'Let me show you, Mom, how to do it,' like I never taught him. That's our bonding time."

Lately, though, when he opens the fridge, eggs or other ingredients might be missing. "There are moments where he says, 'Mama, we don't have this,'" Brown says. She waits for him to turn his attention to something else so she doesn't have to explain that she's been choosing between buying certain groceries and paying for utilities.

Before the pandemic, Brown, a single mother, had been looking to buy a house. Now she's worried about making rent. "We're living on a need basis, not a

want basis,” she says through tears. “And it hurts me sometimes because it’s like, ‘Kid, if only you knew.’ It’s not him being selfish. It’s just him not knowing ... He still to this day thinks I’m working. It’s not to lie to him. In the middle of this pandemic, you still want your child to have some form of normalcy.”

In March 2020, the month Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer declared a state of emergency, Brown was sent home from her job at a leasing agency. Her son’s school had closed, and she had no childcare options. Soon after, Brown took in a relative whose mom had COVID-19, and that relative, whose bed sat just feet away from Brown’s son’s, got sick too. “On the news, seemingly everybody that had COVID was terminally ill,” says Brown. “And I have a son in tears and scared. The only thing I could do is say everything would be O.K. when I know I don’t have the answers.”

While the three of them were quarantining, the leasing agency reopened its office. Brown explained she didn’t feel ethically she could file paperwork alongside coworkers when she had been exposed to the virus, but according to a lawsuit she filed against her former employer, she was never notified of her right to paid leave under FFCRA. Instead, she says, she was told she would be laid off if she did not return to work. (The company says in court papers it “complied with all notice requirements under the FFCRA,” and it offered no further comment to TIME.)

These days, Brown gets up every morning, logs on to her computer and pretends to work while her son is preoccupied with school assignments. Really, she’s been filling out job applications for 10 months. “I’m not a quitter,” she says.

Other mothers who spoke to TIME shared deep anxieties about finding work. One worried that her need for flexible hours around her infant’s schedule meant men or women without children were being hired instead of her. Horine is concerned that now that so many jobs can be done remotely, the applicant pool has grown exponentially.

And while schools may return to in-person learning full time in the fall, day-care centers have taken such a big hit that even when the economy reopens, women with younger children still might not be able to get back to work. A survey by the National Association for the Education of Young Children published in July found that without government help, 40% of childcare programs would shutter. “People are going to find there’s not childcare slots to go back to unless we make a massive investment to stabilize the industry,” says Melissa Boteach, vice president for income security and childcare/early learning at the National Women’s Law Center (NWLC).

Amanda Andrews, also a single mom, hasn’t worked since April. She describes her previous gig as a doughnut-shop cashier in Rhode Island as “perfect.” The hours were just right for her to drop off her youngest child at day care before work and pick up her middle schooler and high schooler when school let out. When schools and day cares closed, Andrews, like Martinez, turned to her eldest, her 14-year-old son, for help. It worked for a few weeks. Then as he tried to balance childcare with remote school, his grades began to slip. “There was a few times the teacher emailed me telling me my 2-year-old was jumping on his back and trying to play with him, or she’s like, ‘I’m hungry. Can you make me food?’” she says. “So I knew it was

interfering with schoolwork. And then he’s like, ‘No, Mommy, it’ll be O.K., let’s try it again.’ And again, his grades declined a little bit more. I could see that my son was worried about me losing my job because it was our only income.”

Andrews texted the store manager to ask for family leave. The manager never responded but allegedly told Andrews’ supervisor that Andrews had “quit,” according to copies of text messages in the complaint she filed in court. When Andrews was told to turn in her keys, she pleaded with her managers—“I didn’t quit”—and says she got a text back: “There are hours available ... you ... are physically able to work and are not. Legally that’s quitting.” (The employer hasn’t yet answered the complaint, and its attorney did not respond to multiple requests for comment.) She didn’t sleep for days. “That was all I knew,” she says. “For 12 years, that’s what I did. Especially during a pandemic, I knew I wasn’t going to get another job, not anytime soon.” Andrews can afford only about half her rent. Fortunately, her landlord has allowed her to pay what she can.

The issues will not end when Andrews and others find new jobs. “Absent public action, this period is going to leave long and deep scars,” says Boteach. Studies show that when a woman leaves the workforce—for parental leave or longer-term caregiving—she doesn’t just lose income over that period of time. Those losses compound over a lifetime. When a woman re-enters the workforce, she often returns to a job with lower wages to get her foot in the door. She then advances more slowly up the corporate ladder. “All that has implications for your retirement security,” says Boteach. “It’s not an accident that women are more likely to be poor than men in their older years.”

For now, Andrews is focused on survival. She doesn’t discuss the job loss with her family. She wants her kids to be kids, free of adult problems. But they know something is wrong. “They hear me on the phone asking my father if I can borrow money so I can pay the electric bill. It’s embarrassing,” she says. “My daughter had savings—\$287, I think it was. She comes to me with her piggy bank and says, ‘You can use this to pay some bills.’ I’m like, ‘No, no, no, Mommy is good. Mommy is good.’”

The pandemic
**PARENTING
CRISIS**
by the
numbers

41%

Proportion of
mothers who were
breadwinners for
their family before
the pandemic

2.3
MILLION

Number of women
who have left the
workforce since
February 2020

1 in 3

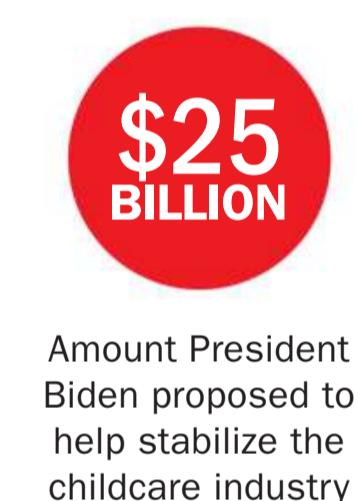
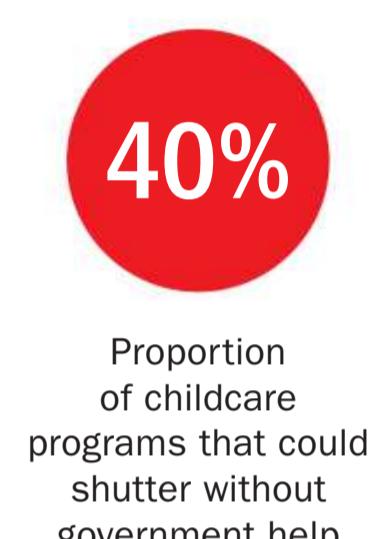
Proportion of
women who were
not working in July
who cited childcare
as the reason

FFCRA WASN'T IN EFFECT for a particularly long time, so experts are hesitant to speculate about how these suits will play out or what the verdicts will mean for future family-leave disputes. But attorneys say their clients may not see any restitution for two to three years because of the COVID-19 backlog in the courts.

Help may be on the way. In January, President Joe Biden released a plan to get parents back to work that involved extending emergency paid leave to Sept. 30 and eliminating the exemptions for companies with more than 500 or fewer than 50 employees. The proposal included over 14 weeks of leave to caregivers while schools and day cares are closed, as well as \$1,400 per person for working families on top of the \$600 Congress passed in December. Biden also called for \$25 billion for the childcare industry.

On Feb. 27, the House passed a \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief bill, which included provisions to help working parents but varied from the Biden plan in meaningful ways—notably, it mandates that federal employees have access to paid leave if they need to care for a child, but uses tax credits to incentivize most businesses to provide this benefit for private-sector workers rather than requiring them to do so. The bill still needs to pass the Senate, but even if Congress does take action, a change in law won't be sufficient. Mothers will not be able to escape the burden of gendered expectations around childcare without a larger societal shift. "We have this durable stereotype in the U.S.," says Murray, the NYU professor, "that if women work, they manage to somehow reconcile their work life with their 'real work,' which is within the family. If they can't, it's a personal failure."

Only two of the 23 employment attorneys contacted by TIME said they had received a single call from a man about the way he was treated as a caregiver during the pandemic. Horine is suing with a father named Nathan Leppo who was fired during the family leave he took to watch his sons while his wife worked as a pharmacist. "Other employees would be like, 'You're taking FMLA for your kid?'" he says. "There's this stigma toward fathers that we shouldn't be as loving or sing to our children or get



them to bed or give them baths. It's an issue a lot of men are afraid to talk about."

Studies show that men don't take parental leave even in the rare cases when they have the option, despite research that suggests fathers who do are less likely to get divorced and more likely to feel close to their kids long-term. "Until men see unpaid caregiving as much their responsibility as women do, you're going to see women more likely pushed out of the labor force," says Boteach. Women overall still make 82¢ for every dollar men make, with Black, Latina and Native American women earning far less, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. In heterosexual couples, it often makes financial sense for the woman to be the one to leave her job or risk losing it by taking on childcare duties.

Rachel Tarantul, a nutrition and breastfeeding counselor in New York, had always prided herself on being a working mom, offering advice to new mothers who came into her hospital for help caring for newborns. So after her children's school closed last spring, she asked if she could work from home. "I was ignored for a long time," she says. "And then finally, they denied it. I felt depressed and defeated. I thought that I held some value within the company, but it seems I didn't." In a lawsuit filed in February, Tarantul claims that in refusing to grant her an accommodation, her former employer violated a New York City law that prohibits discrimination against caregivers. (The employer contends in court documents that it was not required to grant an accommodation in this case.)

Now as the family's expenses swell—their grocery bill has tripled with their three children no longer getting breakfast, lunch and snacks at school—Tarantul is grateful for her husband's salary but spends much of her time preparing those meals. "They are starting to resent me because I guess they're not used to me being their teacher, their mother, basically their everything," she says. Her situation has started to feel claustrophobic, particularly since the family had to sell her car. "Your car is your independence," she says. "Now I have to wait for when someone comes home so I can leave." Still, there was never a question about which spouse would step back from work. "Well, he's the breadwinner," she says.

Martinez, too, says it was a given that she'd be the one to ask for an accommodation, even though she and her husband worked for the same company. "I would always be the person, you know, because I'm the woman," she says. "I don't think they would have been too happy if he had said he needed to work from home. I think they would have looked at it, like, 'No, Lauren can stay home. You have to come to work.'"

Martinez, who is pregnant and due in May, is working on getting her real estate license; her husband has found some work; and her daughter and stepson, who lives with them part time, are back in in-person school. But Martinez still worries about putting her youngest kids in day care before they can wear masks. "It's really scary, but I know I'm just gonna have to do something because we have to pay our bills. I still feel like I don't have many options," she says. She's trying to enjoy the time with her family even under difficult circumstances, and she says she's been open with her daughter about the lawsuit. "We talk a lot about everything," she says. "First and foremost, I think she's proud of me." —With reporting by LESLIE DICKSTEIN and SIMMONE SHAH

• Kristen Horine
at the Rocky River
Reservation, a
public park in
Cleveland

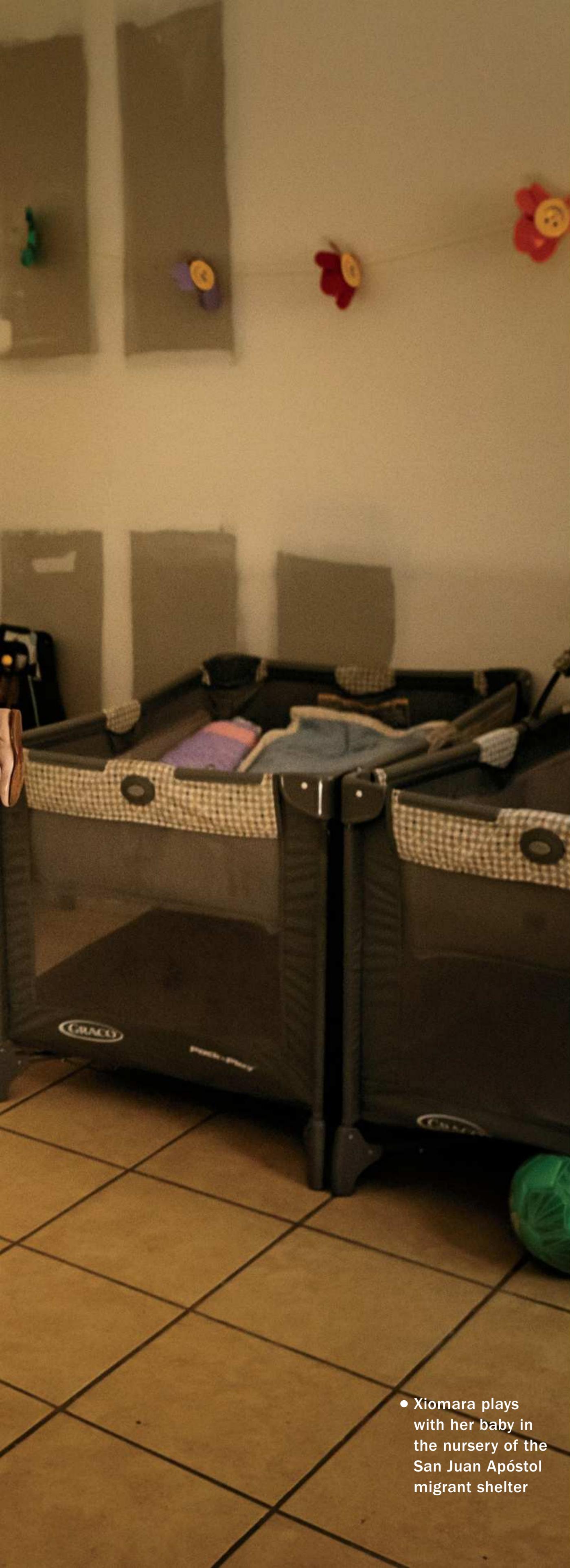
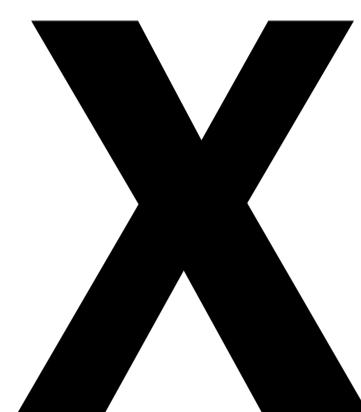




TAKING CARE

*COVID-19 worsened the
HUMANITARIAN CRISIS at the
U.S.-Mexico border. A new program supports
PREGNANT PEOPLE stuck in limbo*

BY JASMINE AGUILERA



• Xiomara plays with her baby in the nursery of the San Juan Apóstol migrant shelter

XIOMARA WAS ALREADY HAVING LABOR PAINS WHEN SHE presented herself to U.S. Border Patrol officials to make a claim for asylum. She had fled gang violence in El Salvador six months earlier, working under the table in Mexico to afford bus tickets for her and her three young children to make it to the border. When she finally arrived, nine months pregnant and feeling contractions, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) offered to take her to a hospital. But she had heard about family separations and was worried about losing her kids if she were hospitalized, so instead she was sent back to the streets of Ciudad Juárez at night, alone with the children and with another on the way.

"It was sad, and I started to cry," Xiomara, 33, tells TIME in Spanish. "I really thought they would let me through to the U.S." Instead, she says, officials kept telling her "that I shouldn't have showed up." It was May 23; the U.S. government's rule, which states that any migrants showing up at the border be immediately turned away to Mexico, even if they wish to make a claim for asylum, an international right, because of the risks posed by COVID-19, was put in place in March. Since then, CBP has conducted more than 444,000 "expulsions" of this type at the U.S.-Mexico border.

After a kind stranger in Juárez told Xiomara the name of a shelter he knew, she took her children, ages 10, 6 and 4, only to find it was full. But it didn't matter: in any event, Xiomara and her children would have to quarantine in a hotel for two weeks before being allowed into any shelter. An official from the Hotel Flamingo—which has since been dubbed Hotel Filtro, or "Filter Hotel" for its reputation with migrants—came to pick her up. There, Leticia Chavarría, a Juárez physician and fierce advocate for migrant women, offered to examine her at no cost.

It was the first time Xiomara had seen a doctor throughout her pregnancy, but not for lack of trying. A doctor's visit in Mexico would have cost her more than 3,000 Mexican pesos—about \$143. She didn't have the money.

It is impossible to know how many pregnant people have ended up stranded in Mexico as a result of Trump-era immigration policies, including expulsions; the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP), otherwise known as "Remain in Mexico" policy; or "Metering," which required those planning to claim asylum to take a number and wait in Mexico before making an



initial claim. MPP alone has kept more than 71,000 people waiting in Mexico for their asylum claims to be adjudicated in the U.S. since the policy began in January 2019. As of January of this year, more than 29,000 people still have active MPP cases, according to Syracuse University's Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, a research organization. Given how many women have arrived at the U.S.-Mexico border in the past two years, it's reasonable to estimate that there have been thousands who were pregnant, or became pregnant while they waited to cross into the U.S.

Though the MPP agreement grants asylum seekers access to Mexico's health care system, actually using it is difficult. Migrants from across Latin America may not know how to navigate the Mexican health care system, have the right documents with them or be able to afford care, and

Above: Psychologist Galarza leads a group-therapy session with children living at the San Juan Apóstol shelter. Right: Migrant women mop the sanctuary floors of the associated San Juan Apóstol evangelical parish, while a baby rests nearby

face discrimination because of their immigration status.

"This is a total vulnerability that these women face," Chavarría tells TIME in Spanish. "They're women; alone with children; and, on top of that, migrants; on top of that, pregnant."

Being an asylum-seeking woman can increase the risk of a stillbirth or abortive outcomes, according to German researchers who studied pregnant asylum seekers in South Germany between 2010 and 2016. The physical stress alone can complicate their pregnancies, to say nothing of the emotional stress. Chavarría has encountered women experiencing miscarriages or other dangerous complications, without health care.

Luckily for Xiomara, her chance meeting with Chavarría led to becoming one of the first members of Las Zadas (short for *embarazadas*, meaning "pregnant" in Spanish), a project launched in June by immigration lawyer Taylor Levy, along with a midwife and several community organizers in Juárez, to try to keep pregnant asylum seekers from falling through the cracks. Las Zadas—the only program of its type along the border—provides free health care, legal advice, products for babies, and pre- and postnatal care like vitamins, menstrual pads and breast pumps. Some of the women live together at San Juan Apóstol, a Juárez shelter for migrant women, while receiving treatment, so they can support and advocate for each other.



On June 6, just 14 days after Xiomara was turned away from the border, Chavarría helped her to a hospital where she delivered a healthy baby girl. But her journey wasn't over: still in limbo, Xiomara and her four children have now been living at San Juan Apóstol for eight months.

AS COVID-19 BEGAN spreading throughout the U.S. in March 2020, immigration courts temporarily shut down, increasing wait times for those under MPP. The Department of Justice's Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) would announce court closures on its website, or via Twitter, and many asylum seekers missed the notices. They'd show up at ports of entry ready to make their case to a judge, only to find out their court date had been canceled.

Beginning at 4 a.m., Levy would stand at the Juárez side of the Paso del Norte international bridge connecting Juárez

to El Paso, Texas, several times a week to meet those asylum seekers and break the news. "There were a lot of women coming who were visibly pregnant, just devastated by the fact that the courts had been canceled," Levy says. "It was during those cold dark mornings, where I started thinking about creating this project."

Some of the women told Levy they had never seen a doctor, didn't know

where they would give birth and that they had been turned away from hospitals. "[It was] really kind of scrappy from the beginning," Levy says of Las Zadas' early days. Levy gave free legal advice, while midwife Anna White provided prenatal care. If a woman needed shelter, she'd be referred to San Juan Apóstol, where coordinator Karina Breceda could assist her. There, Chavarría and Patricia Galarza, a Juárez psychologist, offered free physical and mental health care.

"[My team is] basically on call 24/7," Breceda says. "There's a lot of peace, and a lot of healing with the work that they're doing. The situation here in the city [Juárez], it's sometimes a very unsafe place and the women go through crises."

In Mexico, asylum seekers are often victims of kidnapping, robbery, rape and extortion. Human Rights First, an advocacy organization, has documented more than 1,500 public

***'There's a lot of
PEACE, and a lot of
HEALING with the
work they're doing.'***

—Karina Breceda



Shelter coordinator Breceda cooks soup with migrant women in the kitchen

claims of violence against asylum seekers under MPP. Xiomara, who says she fled gang members in El Salvador and is a survivor of sexual assault, says giving birth triggered the difficult traumas she was grappling with. “I felt very strange; I’d look at [my daughter] and it was almost like I didn’t want her,” Xiomara says, citing a common symptom of postpartum depression. Therapy at San Juan Apóstol helped her, she says, “and four months after [the baby] was born, I was able to be affectionate with her.”

The support of the other women in the program can be just as valuable. Isa, 32, an asylum seeker from Honduras, first found refuge with her young son at a shelter housing roughly 1,300 people in Juárez, but food was scarce, she says, and overcrowding kept her on constant alert. Seven months ago, Isa was brought to live at San Juan Apóstol, and three months later, she gave birth to a healthy baby girl. The women gathered around, oohing and aahing over the baby and celebrating her birth.

Each day they’re up by 6 a.m., feeding the babies and rotating shifts of laundry,

cooking and washing dishes while the children play together. If one feels overwhelmed, others serve as a buttress, helping her with childcare and breastfeeding, and sometimes even stepping in as wet nurses. They often break out in song; “El Color de Tus Ojos” (The Color of Your Eyes) is one of Isa’s favorites.

All told, Las Zadas has supported about 120 women, and helped bring an estimated 68 babies safely into the world.

DESPITE THE CARE AND COMMUNITY, Isa says the wait in Mexico has made her anxious. On Feb. 19, the Biden Administration began processing some asylum seekers in Tijuana into the U.S., the first step in unraveling MPP. Slowly, an estimated 25,000 asylum seekers, including Isa, will be able to enter the country.

“Now that we know we’re so close we feel even more desperate,” Isa says in Spanish. “We really don’t know how much longer we’ll have to be here.” She hopes to reunite with a friend in New York, who has a safe place for her to stay while her asylum case is decided. Her ultimate goal is to afford a good education for her children. “I want them to have a future,” she says. “Any future that they want, and security as well.”

Xiomara’s case is more complicated. While MPP is winding down, expulsions continue at the border, with no clear answer from the government whether these migrants will have a second chance to apply for asylum. She wonders aloud if participating in this interview might help her chances.

“First and foremost, all I want is safety for myself and my children. I have faith in God that things will get better,” Xiomara says. “That’s all I can do.” □

The
**BORDER
CRISIS**
by the
numbers

29K

Asylum seekers currently waiting to enter the U.S. from Mexico under MPP

444K

Number of “expulsions” that have taken place at the U.S.-Mexico border due to COVID-19 restrictions

1.5K

Public claims of violence against asylum seekers under MPP

68

Babies born to mothers in the Las Zadas program at the U.S.-Mexico border

Reset with

The image shows a smartphone with a black frame, displaying the front cover of a magazine. The magazine cover has a light blue background. At the top left is the 'TIME' logo in large, bold, black letters, with 'for' in smaller black letters and 'HEALTH' in white letters on a red rectangular background. To the right of the logo is a photograph of a woman in a white tank top and white leggings, performing a dynamic pose with one leg extended back and arms raised. On the left side of the phone screen, there is a vertical image of a man with long dark hair and a beard, wearing a blue t-shirt and blue jeans, standing outdoors with his hands on his hips. To the right of the phone, on the main cover, is a large, bold title 'Get Fitter, Faster'. Below the title are several article titles: 'The Case for Interval Training', 'Benefits of Light Exercise', and 'How to Burn the Most Calories'. The overall composition suggests a promotional offer for the magazine's digital content.

TIME
for **HEALTH**

**Get
Fitter,
Faster**

**The Case
for Interval
Training**

**Benefits
of Light
Exercise**

**How to
Burn the
Most
Calories**

**Why
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to Dial
Down
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CARRYING THE REVOLUTION

*Women are on the **FRONT LINES** of India's farmer protests—and making themselves **HEARD***

BY NILANJANA BHOWMICK

PHOTOGRAPHS BY KANISHKA SONTHALIA FOR TIME

A gender-rights activist from Haryana, Sudesh Goyat has been at the Tikri protest site since the very beginning, helping mobilize women and organize for Jan. 18 to be recognized as Women Farmers Day. “Women work equally in the fields with the men. It’s only right they should be here to protest,” she says. “The awareness among women about their own power has never been higher than now.”

T

THE MESSAGE TO WOMEN WAS CLEAR: Go back home. Since November, hundreds of thousands of farmers had gathered at different sites on the outskirts of the Indian capital to demand the repeal of three agricultural laws that they say would destroy their livelihoods. In January, as the New Delhi winter set in, the Chief Justice of India asked lawyers to persuade elderly people and women to leave the protests. In response, women—mostly from the rural states of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh—scrambled onto stages, took hold of microphones and roared back a unanimous “No!”

“Something snapped within us when we heard the government tell the women to go back home,” says Jasbir Kaur, a sprightly 74-year-old farmer from Rampur, Uttar Pradesh, who has been camping at the Ghazipur protest site for over three months. She was stung by the suggestion that women were mere care workers—though she does do some cooking and cleaning at the site—rather than equal stakeholders. “Why should we go back? This is not just the men’s protest. We toil in the fields alongside the men. Who are we—if not farmers?”

Questions like this have rarely been asked by women like Kaur, long used to having their contributions to farming overlooked as part of their household duties. But this wave of protests—the world’s largest ongoing demonstration and perhaps the biggest in human history—has prompted thousands to make their voices heard. Indians of all ages, genders, castes and religions have been united by a common goal: to roll back new agricultural laws passed in September by Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government. The laws, suspended in January by the Supreme Court but not yet repealed, would allow private corporations to buy directly from farmers, which they say would leave them at the





• **LEFT** The protests have drawn women of all ages. While some speak onstage, others are simply determined to be present. “I am an illiterate woman,” says Gurmer Kaur, center, at the protests with her friends Surjit Kaur, left, and Jaswant Kaur, right, all in their mid-70s. “I cannot talk well, but I can sit tight—and I will sit here till the next elections if these laws are not called off.”

• **RIGHT** Amandeep Kaur, 41, from Talwandi, Punjab, is employed as a community health worker and as a farmer to support her two daughters. Her husband died by suicide five years ago; because she did not know her rights, she didn’t receive government compensation given to families of farmers who die by suicide. The new laws, she says, “will kill us, will destroy what little we have. How am I going to negotiate with businessmen?”



mercy of buyers and eliminate the traditional wholesale market system, with its minimum set price for certain crops.

Women, who form the backbone of Indian agriculture, may be particularly vulnerable to corporate exploitation. According to Oxfam India, 85% of rural women work in agriculture, but only around 13% own any land. “Women are not seen as farmers. Their labor is immense but invisible,” says Jasbir Kaur Nat, a member of the Punjab Kisan Union, who is mobilizing farmers in Tikri, the protest site

at the border of Haryana and Delhi.

Before the protests, some women had never stepped out of their homes without a veil, let alone spoken onstage in front of thousands of men. Many arrive at the sites in tractors, a powerful—and previously male—symbol of farming in India. “Women are changing women here,” Nat says. “They are claiming their identities as farmers.”

All of this is happening in India’s patriarchal heartland, where femicide, sexual violence and discrimination are rampant. “We have been working to bring

• Sarjit Kaur, left, and Dilbeer Kaur, right, from Rampur, Uttar Pradesh, have been at the protests for two months. "We are here to show solidarity and support," Dilbeer says. Prime Minister Modi is "making us leave our farms and sit here to fight for our rights. We are here to get these laws repealed, and we will be here till we get it done."



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Inspired by women singing, reciting protest poetry and chanting slogans at Tikri, 18-year-old farmers Sahumati Padha, left, and Hiraath Jhade came from the central state of Chhattisgarh. “I wanted to bring our story to them and to the rest of India,” Padha says. “We need to be seen.”

about gender equality in these parts for so long—but the process has been slow,” says women’s-rights activist Sudesh Goyat. During the first days of protests in Tikri, she says, she was the only woman from Haryana there. But after the court suggested women leave, they “started to pour in. They came with their families. They came with other women. They came alone. It’s no less than a miracle,” she says.

The protest sites present a unique opportunity: men and women from

different communities live side by side without much privacy and under harsh circumstances. Activists hold regular discussions on women’s social and economic contributions, as announcements from the stage about treating women as equals echo throughout the day.

Whether such sentiments will spread beyond the protests is unclear, but for now, female farmers are being seen, heard and acknowledged. “We have looked upon them as mothers, sisters, wives,” says Sukh Deep Singh, a young



Urmila Devi, 41, works in the fields with her husband in Bahadurgarh village, near the Tikri site. “Both of us get it done together. I don’t know about rights,” she says. “I have never thought about it too much. There’s a family to run and mouths to feed.”

farmer from Punjab. “But now we see them in a different light.”

The women see themselves differently too. “I didn’t know what I was capable of beyond the expectations of me as a woman, a wife and mother,” says Sudesh Kandela, a 55-year-old farmer from Haryana, who had never before been to a protest or taken her veil off outside her home. “But I am here now,” she says, clenching her fists, “and I cannot be oppressed. I cannot be intimidated. I cannot be bought.” □



• Nilam Gupta Bartiya ran a clothes boutique in Kolkata, West Bengal, but closed it to come to Ghazipur and join the protests. "This protest is about humanity," she says. "There are people coming from various states to show their support. I feel emotionally attached to the farmers, especially the women farmers."

CEYENNE DOROSHOW

on a **HOUSING PLAN**
that won't leave anyone out

BY CADY LANG

Ceyenne Doroshow founded Gays and Lesbians Living in a Transgender Society, or G.L.I.T.S., in 2015 to help trans and sex-worker communities with issues like housing and health care. These needs became increasingly urgent after the onset of the pandemic in 2020, one of the deadliest years on record for trans and gender-nonconforming people. In response, Doroshow and her team at G.L.I.T.S. began fundraising; they bailed LGBTQIA+ inmates out of COVID-ravaged jails and housed them in safe Airbnb rentals; secured rent money for the Black trans community; and ultimately bought a \$2 million 12-unit residential building that would be a free safe place for Black trans folks to live. The G.L.I.T.S. House in Queens, N.Y., opened in November. Nearly four months later, all of the units are filled and personally customized for each tenant by an interior decorator. In a nation where more than half a million people were homeless even before the pandemic, Doroshow spoke with TIME about the way forward.

Why was housing insecurity important for you to address with G.L.I.T.S.?

► I was homeless as a youth, and I was homeless as an adult. There was no place where I felt safe. I often had to go on my own to find safety and then lie on papers so I could have sustainability. I never want my community to have to go through those hoops and stunts.

What do you ask of your tenants, with the aim of creating a sustainable housing solution?

► All I ask is that you strive to be the best you can be. And that is having a future plan. This is not a shelter. This is not emergency housing. This is about building leaders, creating people that can

*'Letting us create what we know is going to save our **COMMUNITY**.'*



take the lead, can take charge, and when I'm gone they can do this work of buying property in New York City for [their] community.

What do you think could help ensure that everyone, especially the most vulnerable, has access to safe and stable housing?

► Discretionary funds and letting us create what we know is going to save our community. I got tired of asking government and everyone for help, and I really didn't want to, to be honest. It is often heartbreaking to see how we can work for agencies and not be supported, but we can create our own likeness and get the support of the nation behind us. Because only we know how to take care of us. Only we know how to create the blueprint to sustainability when we have had to live this stuff. We've had to be hunted, chased, unemployed and homeless.

Housing programs fail when they don't have a plan. What happens when the pandemic is over, where are those people going? Are they going back to the streets? Are they getting jobs? Are they going to school? These are the questions that need to be asked, because nobody's asking them. With our vision, our community will not be left behind.

How did you build a community during a pandemic?

► I think by the love and compassion we have shown our community. When I bought this property, I thought of everything. I thought of the safety of the neighborhood. I thought of the healing surfaces in a state park right across the street from us. That is healing to see the greenery, to know that you're not hearing a shoot-out every day, that it's not a drug-ridden neighborhood, that you don't have to get on an elevator with somebody that might kill you because of who you are. We have to create these things to show that we care about our own people. Because then maybe society will care, just a little more.

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COMMUNAL MEALS

Facing a frayed federal safety net, A SMALL ARMY OF WOMEN are getting food to those who need it

BY MARIAH ESPADA AND ABBY VESOULIS

JUST BEFORE 3 P.M. ON A WARM WEDNESDAY IN FEBRUARY, 30-year-old Jammella Anderson—donning heart-shaped glasses, a Black Lives Matter tee and 2-in. platform boots—strolls up to a small bicycle-repair shop just north of Albany, N.Y. She's here to persuade Troy Bike Rescue to let her use an electrical outlet so she can plug in a new refrigerator just outside the shop's front door.

"It's just two prongs," she explains to one of the employees. "All I need is an outlet."

Anderson, who works as a part-time doula and yoga instructor, is here on behalf of the one-woman organization she launched in August, Free Food Fridge Albany—an ad hoc network of half a dozen publicly accessible refrigerators that local farmers, market operators, restaurant owners and individual shoppers stock with free food multiple times each day to serve hungry people in the community. If Troy Bike Rescue's owner agrees to give Anderson access to his electrical supply, Free Food Fridge Albany will be up to seven fridges citywide—a small but crucial service that helps thousands of local low-income families get enough to eat each month.

Even in flush times millions of Americans, including 11 million children, lack access to nutritious, affordable food. But in the past year the problem has become especially acute. When COVID-19 crippled the blue collar job market in March, the number of Americans who were "food insecure"—defined as those unable to access enough nutrition to live an active, healthy life—spiked from 11.5% in 2018 to an estimated 15.6% in 2020, according to an October projection by Feeding America, the largest domestic hunger-relief organization. For months, Americans have mobbed soup kitchens, waited in miles-long lines of cars to get rations from food banks and posted GoFundMe pages asking friends and strangers to chip in to cover groceries.

State and federal safety-net programs have not kept up with this crisis of demand. While Congress passed a relief package last March, it wasn't until April that the Department of Agriculture boosted Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits by 40% in all 50 states. And even then, the language of the law excluded many of the poorest families—



PHOTOGRAPHS BY NAIMA GREEN FOR TIME



- Jammella Anderson next to one of her Albany, N.Y., food fridges. Most share the same inviting verbiage: FREE FOOD. COMIDA GRATIS

including the 12 million who were already receiving the maximum monthly SNAP allotment: \$646 for a four-person household in the majority of states. Eight months later, in December, Congress passed a second relief bill boosting benefits by 15% across the board, but that uptick is scheduled to expire this summer. Unless Congress extends it, millions of Americans will again be left to make ends meet with the pre-pandemic monthly amount—an average of about \$1.39 per person per meal—which is based on a formula that hasn't been revised since 2006.

Meanwhile, millions of Americans are falling through the cracks because they make just a hair too much each month to qualify for federal food assistance or are plagued by other financial burdens (like health care costs or student loans) that bleed into their grocery budgets. Deloria Floyd, 41, who is juggling nursing school and a full-time secretarial job at a hospital inundated with COVID-19 cases, makes roughly \$37,000 per year, enough to disqualify her from federal assistance but not enough to cover healthy groceries to get her through 12-hour shifts. Without access to Anderson's free food fridges, Floyd says, "I would be hungry. I would be losing weight."

In the absence of a government solution, Anderson and an army of Good Samaritans around the country, many of whom are women of color, have stepped up. In New York City's South Bronx, which is part of the poorest congressional district in the country, Tanya Fields runs the Black Feminist Project, an organization that helps locals grow their own food on a city-owned plot of land. In Los Angeles, the group Feed Black Futures, run by Ali Anderson (no relation to Jammella), provides organic, locally sourced produce to Black families who've been affected by incarceration, parole or probation. In Chicago, Erika Allen, Laurell Sims and their team at the Urban Growers Collective train new farmers and deliver hundreds of thousands of pounds of foods that

are appetizing and enriching via a mobile food shop, standing produce outlets and emergency relief efforts. And in North Carolina, Eboneye Bailey runs a roving produce market named the Bulb that employs a take-what-you-need, give-what-you-can model. "If you want something done right, you call a woman," Bailey says of food initiatives that have emerged in response to scarcity, "because we will handle it."

Some of these activists were drawn to the work of providing accessible meals because they've known hunger in their own lives. Jammella Anderson, for example, was raised by a single mom in a family that relied on food stamps and Section 8 housing. She says her childhood shaped her understanding of her fridge clients' needs and behaviors. Aware of the bureaucratic hurdles that her mother had to navigate to get federal aid, Anderson made the decision not to require the people who use her fridges to provide any proof of their financial situation or even give their names. She's also not bothered when folks take as many groceries as they can carry, often emptying the fridges in a matter of hours. "If you grow up food-insecure like we have," she says, "you sometimes want to take a lot because you don't know when you're going to get it again."

To Anderson, access to a decent meal is a human right, not a luxury. "People used to ask all the time, 'What if people steal the food?'" she says. "I always say, 'You can't. Because it's free.'"

THE PROBLEM of food insecurity in the U.S., one of the richest countries in the world, is ubiquitous across regions and ethnicities, but Black and Latino households are most vulnerable. They were more than twice as likely as white ones to experience food insecurity during various points in 2020, according to reports by the Urban Institute. The disparities remain today, though the percentage of food-insecure people across all races and ethnicities is getting higher. While 17% of white individuals in America faced food insecurity in February 2021, according to snapshot polling analyzed by Northwestern University, the rates among Black and Hispanic-Latino Americans were 30% and 31%, respectively.

These racial discrepancies are the

SPECIAL REPORT**WOMEN and the PANDEMIC**

result, in part, of a pattern of prejudice dating back decades. Until the 1960s, for instance, some states, including Louisiana and Illinois, denied Black families with children a cash benefit, a precursor of the modern program Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), if their labor was needed during harvest season. White families were often exempt from the cut-off. “Because it was Black families who had worked in the fields or chopped cotton, it was only Black families whose assistance was withheld,” says Elisa Minoff, a senior policy analyst at the Center for the Study of Social Policy. Through the 1970s, the federal food-stamp program also penalized the poor by making families buy food stamps, some of which could be used only on items that the Department of Agriculture had deemed surplus, like cornmeal and beans.

Anderson takes the opposite approach, asking local donors to avoid stocking the fridge with excess “scraps.” Instead, the fridges are stuffed with high-quality foods, like prepared spaghetti and meatballs from a local Italian bistro or grass-fed beef from a nearby farm. “Why are you undeserving of good, healthy food and rich-nutrient food just

**FOOD INSECURITY
by the numbers****\$1.39**

Average amount SNAP provides in food stamps, per person per meal

1 IN 6

Approximate proportion of food-insecure Americans in 2020

SOURCES: CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES; FEEDING AMERICA

because you can’t afford it?” she says.

While SNAP and other federal food-aid programs have changed substantially since the ’60s, they still leave millions of Americans struggling to get enough to eat. A single person making more than \$1,064 a month after taxes does not qualify for any SNAP funds at all, and those who do qualify often can’t feed their families on the amount provided, which maxes out at \$2.60 per meal. Food-justice advocates also point to other factors—like the dearth of good grocery stores, outreach to vulnerable communities and reliable public transit in low-income areas—as contributing to the problem. Troy Bike Rescue, where Anderson is trying to set up another fridge, is a 31-stop bus ride and transfer from the nearest supermarket. In Garner, N.C., 52-year-old SNAP recipient Karrie Nelson says her current \$200 monthly food-stamp allotment—almost twice as much as usual, thanks to the pandemic-relief increases—is less problematic than the fact that she can’t afford a car and public transit is insufficient. She estimates that she spends \$450 per month on ride-share apps to commute to and from her job at a local grocery store, where she

Anderson picks up groceries from Honest Weight Food Co-op, left, and potatoes from Denison Farm, right, to fill the fridges



makes \$12 an hour. "I can't save because I'm spending half my paycheck getting back and forth to work," she says.

That's not an isolated problem, says Dr. Megan Sandel, who works with malnourished children and extremely low-income families as a co-director of the Grow Clinic at Boston Medical Center. Sandel says that by setting income ceilings low, not factoring in a recipient's obligatory expenses like transportation, and reducing benefits every time somebody gets a modest pay bump, SNAP and other welfare programs often punish beneficiaries for building assets. If Nelson gets a raise that helps her buy a car, she may lose SNAP, forcing her to choose between gas and food.

These and other policy failures "play out on the bodies of babies," Sandel says. Kids whose caregivers lose SNAP benefits are at greater risk of poor health, studies show. At the Grow Clinic, Sandel sees hundreds of malnourished children per year, including 2-year-olds who still fit into clothes meant for 1-year-olds and toddlers whose hair doesn't grow, because of a combination of not getting enough nutrient-dense food and not getting enough food, pe-

Anderson commissions local artists to decorate her fridges. This one on Lark Street was painted by a local kombucha vendor

riod. Since March 2020, her clinic's caseload has jumped 40%.

President Joe Biden is aware of the problem. Within his first week in office, he proposed the American Rescue Plan, which called on Congress to extend SNAP increases through the fall, and signed an Executive Order that directs the USDA to re-jigger its formula to better reflect the costs of healthy foods.

But even if SNAP allotments increase, the number of hungry people is expected to remain high long after the virus is under control. "People get into a hole, and it takes a long time to get out," says Elaine Waxman, a senior fellow at the Urban Institute. After the Great Recession, it took 10 years for food-security rates in America to near prerecession levels.

Many of the women serving their communities say they're not holding their breath for a government solution. "We've been taking care of ourselves for a long time," says Fields of the Black Feminist Project. "As much as the white folks think that food stamps and safety-net programs are what got us through, it hasn't been. It's been each other and the alternative models and systems of care that we've created."

Back in Albany, Anderson grapples with the understanding that she—armed only with a 2015 black Ram van she named Marigold, some help from generous neighbors and unflagging resolve—can't feed everyone on her own. On that February day, Anderson has already jammed Marigold with cases of kombucha, spinach and apples and is hoping to squeeze in more produce from a donor who runs a nearby farm. For now, she takes solace in helping to feed those she can. A few days later, she reports that she's finalizing details with Troy Bike Rescue, which has agreed to give her a power outlet. That's hundreds more people who don't have to skip a meal. □

FINDING A WAY OUT

*To combat skyrocketing
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE,
women in Russia are doing
what their government won't*

BY MADELINE ROACHE

AS NASTYA WAITS FOR HER HUSBAND KIRILL TO COME HOME from work, thoughts run through her head. She smooths the creases from the tablecloth and lays the table in the dimly lit kitchen of their apartment in Moscow, careful to place the knife and fork perfectly straight next to Kirill's plate. "Sometimes he loses his temper, but no one's perfect," she thinks. "I can't do anything right."

When Kirill returns, he stares at the food his wife has prepared, then, when she asks what's wrong, begins hurling insults. "You're useless, even in the kitchen," he says, becoming more aggressive as Nastya tries to reason with him, grabbing her and pushing her to the ground. She calls the police begging for help but knows they won't come. When she calls her father, Kirill grabs the phone and convinces him everything is fine. "She's just being dramatic," Kirill says, pressing his hand over Nastya's mouth to silence her.

Nastya and Kirill aren't real—they are characters in an interactive exercise—but they might as well be. Game 116, as it's called, was launched in 2018, but it's perhaps even more relevant now than it was then. The exercise, which puts users in Nastya's shoes and asks them to choose options to handle Kirill's wrath, is an attempt to highlight domestic violence that activists say has soared in Russia during the pandemic.

That's true around the world. As lockdowns trapped women at home with abusers, advocates and authorities report that calls for help from abuse victims doubled and tripled. In response, more than 120 countries have strengthened services for female survivors of violence during the COVID-19 crisis.

RUSSIA IS AN EXCEPTION, taking little concrete action. In April, the Kremlin denied that domestic violence was a problem and claimed it had decreased, even as Russian organizations reported they were struggling to keep up with a spike in calls for help. With shelters across the country closed because of the pandemic, some women were even fined for violating quarantine rules by fleeing their abusers. It wasn't until May that the government declared domestic violence an emergency that allowed someone to break quarantine.

Though Russia has since lifted mandatory lockdowns, unemployment and economic despair sparked by the pandemic



Anna Rivina,
in the Moscow
office of
Nasiliu.net, a
nonprofit that
supports victims
of domestic
violence

portend dangerous times ahead. "When a cycle of violence begins, it's not going to go away just because the pandemic goes down," says Marina Pisklakova-Parker, director of ANNA, one of the nonprofits led by women that are working to fill the vacuum left by Russia's failure to address the problem.

Game 116 is the brainchild of a Moscow advertising agency, Room 485, which created it in collaboration with women's rights activists, including Pisklakova-



Parker and Anna Rivina of Nasiliu.net (its name, which is the same as its URL, translates to “no to violence”), another nonprofit working on domestic violence. The name Game 116 comes from Article 116 of the Russian criminal code, which defines battery as causing “pain” but not resulting in physical damage.

The project was personal for many involved. The actor who portrays Nastya had left an abusive partner shortly before production began, while Sophya

Katulska, a director at Room 485, who wrote the script, based it on her own experience in an abusive relationship. By forcing users to choose how Nastya reacts throughout the scenario and showing the outcome, Katulska says she wants to do away with the idea that “correct” behavior can stop abuse in a relationship.

That message is clear. No matter what Nastya does—crying, screaming for help, fighting back or apologizing—she cannot placate Kirill. He suffocates

her with a pillow, strangles her or walks away, leaving Nastya to live in fear of his next outburst.

A fifth of all Russian women have been physically abused by a partner, and an estimated 14,000 women in the country die as a result of domestic violence each year—more than nine times the number of deaths in the U.S., though Russia’s population is less than half the size. At least 155 countries have passed laws criminalizing domestic violence. But in Russia, there is no such law; the government has even made it easier for domestic violence to go unpunished. In 2017, its parliament passed a law making any domestic violence that does not cause “significant injury”—defined as requiring hospital treatment—an administrative rather than criminal offense. First-time offenders can walk away with fines as low as 5,000 rubles (\$88).

Since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia’s government has failed to pass more than 40 draft laws to protect victims of violence at home. The dearth of legislation not only allows abusers to go unpunished but also leaves women without access to legal protection. Police often refuse to respond to or investigate cases, typically dismissing violence at home as a private matter. “Call me when he kills you” was how one police officer responded to a woman’s call for help, says Yulia Gorbunova, a researcher at Human Rights Watch, who has interviewed domestic-violence victims across Russia. In the spring, the government postponed discussion about the latest draft law on domestic violence until after the pandemic. “It would have been a perfect time to do it,” she says.

ANNA coordinates efforts by 150 groups across Russia and the former Soviet states, and Nasiliu.net offers free legal and psychological help to victims of abuse. But they face increasing hostility from the Kremlin and the Russian Orthodox Church, which has enjoyed a staggering rise in influence during President Vladimir Putin’s years in power. There was fierce backlash to a 2019 bill that would have introduced restraining orders—a first in Russia—and harsher punishments for first-time offenders, including short jail sentences instead of just fines. More than 180 Russian Orthodox and conservative groups signed an



open letter to Putin asking him to block the law, claiming it was the work of a “radical feminist ideology”; the church also said it had an “antifamily” focus. The bill didn’t pass.

“If you don’t support conservative radical values, then you basically don’t fit into any policy,” says Pisklakova-Parker, who established ANNA in 1993 and created the nation’s first domestic-violence help line. She says she has been the subject of a smear campaign by ultraconservative groups that claim she works for the U.S. government. The Kremlin has effectively cast groups fighting domestic violence as “traitors” and requires those that receive foreign funding and engage in “political activity” to declare themselves “foreign agents,” a derogatory Soviet-era term for political dissidents. State funding for these groups has been slashed: in 2020, Putin’s annual grants program gave only \$26,968 to organizations protecting victims of domestic violence, an 88% drop from 2019, according to the investigative news outlet OpenMedia. All but one of an estimated dozen domestic-violence crisis centers and legal-aid organizations were denied funding for 2021.

DESPITE GOVERNMENT HOSTILITY, public opinion appears to be increasingly on the side of women. According to state-run polls, in January 2017, 59% of Russians supported decriminalizing domestic violence, but by August 2019, that figure fell to 26%. In December 2019, 70% of Russians supported a law to help protect women against domestic violence. When Nasiliu.net was close to shutting down in 2019 because of a lack of funds, donors gave Rivina enough money to expand the organization.

Businesses have also started to take a stand. In 2019, one of Russia’s largest banks, Alfa Capital, fired a top manager after his wife accused him of beating her. When TV presenter Regina Todorenko suggested in April that women are to blame for being abused, brands dropped her as their spokesperson; she later apologized and donated \$28,000 to Nasiliu.net. And survivors are becoming more visible: Margarita Gracheva, whose husband chopped off her hands with an ax in 2017, has become a household name, regularly appearing

The domestic violence crisis in NUMBERS

137

The average number of women killed by a family member worldwide each day

40%

The increase in calls to the ANNA hotline from 2019 to 2020

74%

Proportion of Russian women who consider domestic violence a serious problem, compared with 45% of Russian men

- An art performance, *Quarrel With Me*, in St. Petersburg in May addresses the topic of domestic violence during Russia’s lockdown

in the media, including on state-run TV.

In the face of government resistance during the pandemic, nonprofits have stepped up. In June, ANNA extended its hotline to operate 24/7 and set up a chatbot for women who might not be able to speak by phone; Nasiliu.net also offers volunteers to accompany women to police. Pisklakova-Parker and Rivina worked with hotels and volunteers who offered rooms in their homes to take in women and children and organized transport and food packages. “We basically took over everything the state should have been doing,” says Pisklakova-Parker.

Activists are also using social media and digital campaigns to change Russian minds about domestic abuse. Katulska, 39, says violence at home was seen as normal when she was growing up, shrugged off with the attitude of “if he beats you, it means he loves you.” Many Russians still hold that view. The ad agency Room 485 launched an Instagram campaign in 2020 with the hashtag “if he beats you it doesn’t mean he loves you” and is developing another Instagram campaign to raise awareness on how to deal with abuse in relationships.

Since 2018, Nasiliu.net volunteers have created social media campaigns featuring video clips of famous Russian men saying it’s unacceptable to hit women. Last year, more than 100 volunteers attended a Nasiliu.net program that pairs volunteers with victims who need someone to speak on their behalf to lawyers and other third parties. “The majority of people who have been through domestic violence are not ready to struggle for themselves,” Rivina says. The 30-year-old has become so well known for her activism that some visitors to Nasiliu.net will speak only with her.

Still, one of Rivina’s biggest challenges is convincing the government that organizations like hers are not the enemy. “We are the ones standing for family values,” she says, “by trying to make a home the safest place.” □

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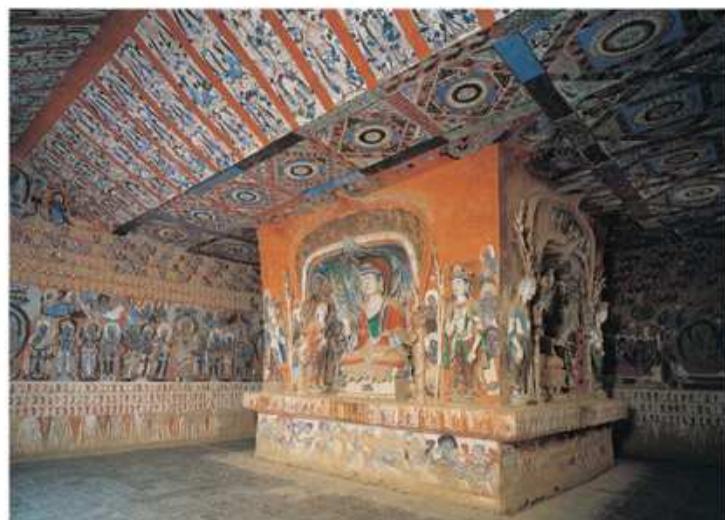
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CHINA WATCH

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FROM LEFT: Paintings in the No. 428 cave of the Mogao Grottoes recount stories and philosophies of Buddhism. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY Tourists ride camels at the Echoing-Sand Mountain in Dunhuang. WANG BINYIN / FOR CHINA DAILY Tourists at Yumen Pass in Dunhuang in December. CHEN MEILING / CHINA DAILY

Grand glory writ large in the dust of the Silk Road

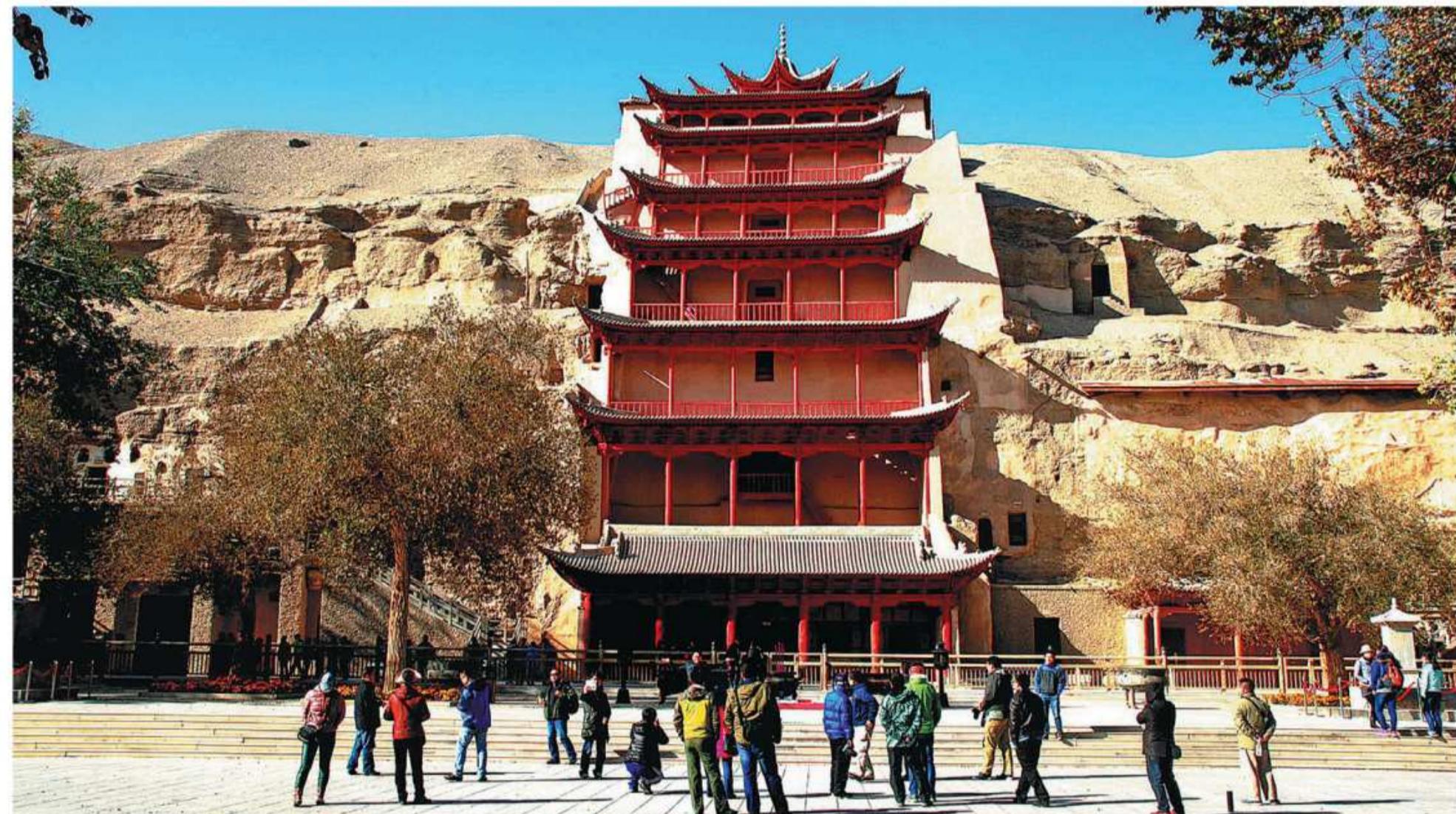
In the Dunhuang
Grottoes and its
environs, voices of the
past can be heard

BY CHEN MEILING
and MA JINGNA

Bumping one's way slowly on the back of a camel across the desert of Dunhuang, Gansu province, a modern-day visitor can easily imagine the past, when traders trudged along the ancient Silk Road, chatting and laughing in good spirits as they looked forward to a good harvest.

Dunhuang, which means grand glory, was a major gateway linking China with the West. Traces of exchanges between different civilizations can be found in the mottled murals and Buddhist statues of its iconic Mogao Grottoes, the rolling sandstone of Echoing-Sand Mountain, a quiet oasis in the Gobi Desert, mysterious ancient graves and numerous earth-tone ruins. All of these attract more than 10 million tourist visits from around the world every year.

Zhang Yuping, a taxi driver in Dunhuang, said that during peak season in July and August the small city is packed with tourists. Room prices at four-star hotels



Tourists visit the Mogao Grottoes, a UNESCO World Heritage site with numerous ancient murals and Buddhist statues, in Dunhuang, Gansu province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

and above can be as high as 1,000 yuan (\$150) a night, and he, like the other 1,000 or so local taxi drivers, work around the clock.

"Some tourists are curious about remote, exotic desert scenery, and some have a strong interest in Buddhist art," he said.

Zhang said one of his most memorable fares was an intellectual from Beijing who hired his car for two days and visited every grotto except the farthest one, Yulin, 160 kilometers (99 miles) from downtown, because

of a tight travel schedule.

"Ten minutes after I dropped him off at the airport he called back to say he had canceled the flight and was determined to go to the Yulin Grottoes," Zhang said. "He told me he might not be able to sleep if he just left."

The customer also paid extra money to see all the specially protected caves at Mogao Grottoes, he said. Each entry costs 150 to 200 yuan.

Dunhuang, one of the first cities in China to open to the West, has long been a port of entry

along the ancient Silk Road. It borders the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region on the west, beyond which lies Central Asia — Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and other countries. Farther still lies Europe.

The path to civilization may be strewn with thorns, but the result of the journey has been remarkable. When the envoy Zhang Qian was sent by emperor Wu during the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220) to seek diplomatic alliances with countries and tribes in the West, he passed through

Dunhuang and thought it was an important base. So he suggested that the emperor build a city in the desert. As officials, soldiers and merchants moved to Dunhuang from inland areas, military fortresses were built at Yangguan Pass and Yumen Pass, and Dunhuang etched its name firmly in history.

Its construction also laid the foundation for cultural exchanges.

"A foreign culture will not remain in a cultural desert," said Wang Xudong, director of the Palace Museum in Beijing, in the book *The Grottoes Corridor of China*. "As with the human longing for an oasis, culture needs an oasis, too. Dunhuang bridges ancient Chinese, Indian, Greek, Roman and Egyptian civilizations."

For thousands of years traders speaking different languages came to Dunhuang to buy and sell Chinese silk, tea, porcelain, Western gemstones, spices, horses and fruit. The prosperous social and commercial activity has been depicted in paintings on the walls of ancient grottoes.

Ji Gang, a global partner at the consultancy Roland Berger, said as a trade city with multiple languages and a blend of cultures and ethnic characteristics, Dunhuang shows the diversity and inclusiveness of the country. Its architecture, colored sculptures, wall paintings and other artworks were created by ancestors from different regions and eras, and are a priceless treasure for China and the world.

The Mogao Grottoes are a UNESCO World Heritage site with their numerous ancient murals and Buddhist statues in 735 caves. They are a rich resource for artistic and historical exploration.

DUNHUANG BRIDGES ANCIENT CHINESE, INDIAN, GREEK, ROMAN AND EGYPTIAN CIVILIZATIONS."

**WANG XUDONG,
DIRECTOR OF THE PALACE
MUSEUM IN BEIJING**

by wind, water and thieves.

"That's why the remaining caves are so valuable," said Li Ping, head of the cultural promotion department at Dunhuang Academy.

The grottoes opened to the public in 1979, and the number of tourist visits surged from 26,000 then to a peak of 2.2 million in 2019. Last year, with visits reduced by the coronavirus, it welcomed 1.39 million visits. Now, it has about 20,000 foreign visits annually, mainly from Japan, the United States and South Korea.

The attraction offers guided services in six languages — Chinese, English, Japanese, French, Korean and German. All films, exhibitions and signboards have English translations.

In 366 a monk named Le Zun visited Dunhuang and witnessed a sunset on Sanwei Mountain. He believed the golden light was a sign of Buddha and regarded it as sacred land. He raised money and hired workers to dig the first cave on the mountain so he could sit in meditation.

During the following 10 dynasties, more Buddhist believers, including monks, officials, merchants and members of royalty, commissioned Buddhist statues and paintings, and the scale of the grottoes expanded.

However, as the Maritime Silk Road took over as the major channel for exchanges between China and the West, the role of land traffic to Dunhuang faded. After the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), construction of grottoes ceased. In 1528 residents moved inland, and Dunhuang became the home of nomads. The grottoes were forgotten for hundreds of years, and many parts were destroyed

Meeting peak demand

BY SHI FUTIAN

For trendy Chinese urbanites, grabbing a snowboard and hitting the slopes ranks high on the list of the most fashionable ways to spend a weekend.

The popularity of winter sports in China has grown greatly in recent years, fueled by a nationwide participation push in the buildup to the Winter Olympics in Beijing and Zhangjiakou, Hebei province, next year.

Chongli district of Zhangjiakou now boasts seven fully functional ski resorts, along with more than 190 hotels and apartment complexes, and 169 ski runs totaling 161.7 kilometers (100 miles).

With the improvement of services, the sector was showing strong growth before the COVID-19 pandemic struck. Chongli welcomed 4.42 million tourists in 2019.

"China's skiing and snowboarding population is growing fast," said Zhou Wenqian, president of Thaiwoo Ski Resort in Chongli. "From the perspective of consumption, demand is changing from just experiencing winter sports to making them a lifestyle choice."

"Skiing and snowboarding were not popular sports in China, but with the arrival of the Beijing Winter Olympics and a series of high-level international meets, more people have been attracted to them."

According to the 2016-25 ice and snow industry development plan approved by the central government, China expects to have 50 million people tak-



China's investment in winter sports extends to indoor facilities, encouraging young people to give activities such as curling a try. XINHUA

50 million

people are expected to take part in winter sports regularly according to the 2016-25 ice and snow industry development plan

ing part in winter sports regularly, with the sector projected to be worth 1 trillion yuan (\$155 billion) by 2025.

It is obviously a lucrative business, with consumers increasingly willing to splash out to look and feel good on the slopes.

"I started snowboarding in 2016, and each year I've spent 5,000 yuan to 15,000 yuan on the sport," Mei Shuyao, a Chongli regular and Beijing office worker, said.

"My spending depends on how far I travel to enjoy it. It's more expensive for me to go to Chongli or some other places further away than going to ski resorts in Beijing. But compared with true hardcore snowboarders, I'm just one of those on a small budget."

"Of all my equipment, my snowboard is the most expensive item. My clothes and boots are pretty affordable, but it's all worth it. After all, it's a sport that brings you a great sense of achievement."



Chinese ski resorts are reporting brisk business, with snow sports continuing to grow in popularity one year before the Beijing Winter Olympics. XINHUA

TIME



It's not just you

Big-hearted advice for anxious times



BY SUSANNA
SCHROBSDORFF

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Time Off

BURSTING
BUBBLES
What came after
the postfeminist
pop of Britney
and Buffy

INSIDE

THE MUST-READ
BOOKS OF MARCH

THE NEW ROUTE TO
A CLASSIC CULT FILM

ILLUSTRATION BY ARI LILOAN FOR TIME

Time Off is reported by Simmone Shah

TimeOff Opener

ESSAY

Puncturing the postfeminist fantasy

By Judy Berman

THE YEAR IS 2021, AND THE MOST-TALKED-ABOUT pop star in the world is Britney Spears. Yes, that's the same Britney Spears who hasn't released a new studio album since 2016 and who, two years ago, announced an "indefinite work hiatus." But one way of explaining the resurgence of interest in all things Britney is that she's now in the news because of how long she's been out of the news.

Specifically, Spears is suddenly ubiquitous—in headlines, on social media and in *SNL* sketches—thanks to "Framing Britney Spears," an episode of FX docuseries *The New York Times Presents* that is now streaming on Hulu. Directed by Samantha Stark, it offers a thorough chronology of Spears' career, with a focus on the conservatorship she was placed under in 2008, which gave her father Jamie Spears control over her finances and career. As the fans who have spent years agitating on her behalf put it: #FreeBritney.

That rallying cry has spread since the doc's Feb. 5 premiere, and the movement to liberate the 39-year-old performer and mom is rapidly gaining momentum. Media outlets and comedians have expressed regret over their treatment of her. Her ex Justin Timberlake—whom Stark singles out for manipulating their breakup narrative—apologized. On Feb. 11, a judge confirmed that Jamie Spears would have to share conservatorship with a third party, in a ruling that should moderate his power over his daughter.

It's been a heartening, if long overdue, corrective to decades of cruelty toward a woman who openly struggled with objectification, paparazzi surveillance, harsh media scrutiny and mental health. Spears isn't the only specter of turn-of-the-millennium femininity to inspire a recent public reconsideration. Days after "Framing" debuted, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel* actor Charisma Carpenter spoke out about what she called abuses of power by the shows' creator, Joss Whedon, touching off a new wave of mourning among fans for whom Buffy has been a symbol of empowered femininity.

This re-evaluation isn't likely to end anytime soon. In January, HBO Max announced it was bringing back TV's most influential depiction of womanhood in the late '90s and early '00s: *Sex and the City*. While still a cultural touchstone, the show has grown more controversial since its 2004 finale, as a powerful movement for inclusion in Hollywood casts its very white New York in an increasingly unflattering light and an economy in seemingly permanent post-2008 flux encourages a dimmer view of the characters' conspicuous consumption.

Whether you attribute them to a 20-year nostalgia cycle, a new wave of feminism or both, these blasts from the recent past add up to a larger reckoning with how pop culture treated women a generation ago. It was an era of unprecedented frankness around female sexuality, influenced by the adversarial but often overlapping zeitgeists of third-wave feminism—which emphasized individualism and sex positivity—and postfeminism, or the presumption that equality had for all practical purposes been achieved.

The good news was that old stigmas around femininity, sex work



and the enjoyment of pop culture faded. The bad news? Many women felt pressure to excel at everything—to be actualized in their careers and relationships, but also kitchen-savvy sex goddesses with flawless makeup. Meanwhile, amid a booming economy, the ecstasy of female purchasing power could drown out scrutiny of what was being sold, from breast implants to snarky tabloids. And then there was the tendency of the white, middle-class feminist establishment to ignore the millions of women who weren't in a position to buy their way to fulfillment. In 2021, the gender politics of those so-called postfeminist years can look prehistoric. This current reassessment is healthy—a way of deepening our understanding of the past and sharpening our priorities in the present.

POSTFEMINISM AND, to a lesser extent, the third wave were gifts to the entertainment industry. For the first time in decades, Hollywood could—with out looking retrograde—fill its frames with hot girls in tight clothes who lived to shop, primp and have sex. This new



The gorgeous, stylish and successful female icons of the late 1990s and early 2000s. Clockwise from top left: Britney Spears, the cast of *Sex and the City*, Sarah Michelle Gellar as Buffy Summers in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Destiny's Child*



archetype differed from the *Playboy* Playmates of the '50s in that its ideal femme also, figuratively and often literally, kicked ass. Aspirational for women and titillating to men, this image sold product.

Chick lit followed single career girls with disposable income, like Bridget Jones and "Shopaholic" Becky Bloomwood. On TV and in movies, we got the high-achieving, materialistic women warriors of *Sex and the City*, but also *Ally McBeal* and *Legally Blonde*. Teen fare like *Buffy* and *Bring It On* offered a junior version of the same—cutthroat high school girls for whom short skirts and lipstick were weapons of war. In music, the feminist acts that ruled the early '90s, from Salt-N-Pepa to TLC to Bikini Kill, begat a cadre of sparkly young singers who existed at the intersection of strength and sex appeal: Spice Girls, Britney, Destiny's Child.

A lot of these stories and characters were fun. Many served as talismans for female fans in a sexist society. But the public response to them was incoherent. Did we look up to these women because they were powerful and confident, or because they were pretty and rich—or both? Was it O.K. that women were contorting themselves to emulate them?

And why did we respond with schadenfreude when very young, very famous women like Spears, Amy Winehouse or Lindsay Lohan revealed themselves to be less than invincible?

Feminist consciousness and the cultural conversation at large have shifted since then. Social media has given marginalized voices a more prominent platform, while intersectionality—the idea that all aspects of our identities combine to form a matrix of privileges and oppressions—has moved from academic discourse to the mainstream. Amid the anti-rape activism of the early 2010s, many Black women pointed out that sex-positive feminism didn't have the same connotations for them as it did for their white counterparts.

But the greatest shift in the conversation around women in pop culture has been the increasingly widespread understanding that to move past postfeminist "raunch culture," as journalist Ariel Levy called it in her 2005 book *Female Chauvinist Pigs*, the entertainment industry itself needs to change. Could the air of straight-male fantasy surrounding Buffy Summers' heroism, from her low-cut costumes to her habit of jumping into bed with adult men (and monsters), have reflected the influence of the same

straight man now accused of mistreating those women? Didn't it matter that the stylish, hypersexual and often vapid female characters of *Sex and the City* and its ilk were often crafted by male creators? Or that aspiring female pop stars marketed to young girls had no choice but to run the male-gaze gauntlet of the music industry?

TWO DECADES ON, it seems obvious that an effective way to discourage women's self-objectification is to liberate women's bodies, stories and personas from male gatekeepers. Efforts to do so have taken on a new urgency since the #MeToo movement's rise in 2017, which punctured the postfeminist fantasy that gender equity and women's sexual sovereignty were already the norm in the entertainment industry, or any workplace. And over the past decade, though parity has proved elusive, women have slowly increased their presence behind the camera.

It's worth noting how many of the most culturally resonant representations of women during those years were also shaped by women, from Michaela Coel to Phoebe Waller-Bridge. Female creators have challenged the idea that ribald humor and sexual content must cater to patriarchal tastes. Pop has become the domain of women—Rihanna, Taylor Swift, grownup Beyoncé—who keep tight control over their images by assuming the roles of director, producer, curator, actor and entrepreneur.

As for Spears, it's great that we're finally talking about the objectification, gaslighting and ridicule she's suffered—and our complicity in it. But that doesn't mean we should pat ourselves on the back for finally showing her empathy. Nor should we get too excited about how far we've come since the heyday of Perez Hilton and *Us Weekly*. As many veterans of the movement have noted, the traction feminism has gained within the cultural realm in the past decade has rarely extended to politics, where *Roe v. Wade* is in peril, rape still goes mostly unpunished, and a disproportionately high number of single moms live in poverty. If we take one lesson from "Framing Britney Spears," it should be that what passes for progress in one era is bound to look different to the next generation. □

The must-read books of March

By Annabel Guterman

THE BEST NEW BOOKS ARRIVING THIS MONTH ARE written by authors both established and emerging. March brings with it much-anticipated new fiction from Viet Thanh Nguyen and Kazuo Ishiguro, as well as buzzy debuts from Alexandra Andrews and Gabriela Garcia. Many of these books push us to consider the places we frequent and how they've shaped who we are, from Jasmine Mans' new poetry collection centered on the meaning of home to W. Ralph Eubanks' tribute to Mississippi and its outsize role in the American literary landscape. These, plus reflections on history, performance, gender and more, are the best books to read in March.

WHO IS MAUD DIXON?
ALEXANDRA ANDREWS
MARCH 2

Entry-level publishing employee Florence Darrow is desperate to be a successful writer, like best-selling Maud Dixon, whose debut captured the world's attention even as her true identity remained a secret known to very few. The stars align in the strangest ways for Florence when she somehow becomes the personal assistant to the author, leading them on a research trip to Marrakesh, where things go haywire. It's there that this publishing satire transforms into a lively suspense novel as Florence is forced to reckon with the person she's become in her quest for fame.

WHAT'S MINE AND YOURS
NAIMA COSTER
MARCH 2

A debate over school integration divides a community in North Carolina and forever alters the lives of two families. At the center of the story are students Gee and Noelle, whose worlds collide at their newly integrated school. The convergence of their paths sets off a series of events that Naima Coster traces through the following 20 years in her piercing examination of race, identity and generational trauma.

INFINITE COUNTRY
PATRICIA ENGEL
MARCH 2

Talia is a teenager serving time at a correctional facility in Colombia. She's desperate to flee

and return home to her father in Bogotá, where a plane ticket to the U.S. is waiting for her. It's there that Talia's mother and siblings are living. Patricia Engel follows Talia's journey to reunite with her family, illuminating the struggles of the fractured unit. The result is a heartbreakingly powerful portrait of a family dealing with the realities of migration and separation.

KLARA AND THE SUN
KAZUO ISHIGURO
MARCH 2

In his first novel since winning the Nobel Prize in Literature, Kazuo Ishiguro brings readers to a strange world filled with humanlike robots called Artificial Friends (AFs). His narrator is a particularly

observant AF named Klara, who studies the behavior of the customers who come to the store where she's patiently waiting to be bought. What ensues is a quietly devastating narrative about the intersection of humanity, technology and love.

THE COMMITTED
VIET THANH NGUYEN
MARCH 2

In 2015, Viet Thanh Nguyen published his debut novel, *The Sympathizer*, to critical acclaim. The sweeping tale about the Vietnam War went on to win the 2016 Pulitzer Prize in fiction and sold over 1 million copies globally. Now Nguyen revisits the saga of his unnamed narrator through a sequel, which follows the protagonist, a South Vietnamese army veteran, as he attempts to live as a refugee in 1980s France.

THE CODE BREAKER
WALTER ISAACSON
MARCH 9

In his biography of Nobel Prize-winning chemist Jennifer Doudna, former TIME editor-in-chief

Walter Isaacson explores the story behind CRISPR, the technology that can edit DNA and is showing promise as a way to both test for the COVID-19 virus and potentially even protect human cells from infection. Isaacson chronicles the integral role Doudna played in the development of CRISPR and outlines the impact the technology will have on generations to come.

BLACK GIRL, CALL HOME
JASMINE MANS
MARCH 9

In her new collection, spoken-word poet Jasmine Mans examines her relationship to home and her journey navigating life in America as a queer Black woman. The pieces vary in form and subject, tackling everything from race to feminism to belonging. Together, they showcase Mans' power as a poet who can relay her experiences in lyrical, vivid terms.

HOW BEAUTIFUL WE WERE
IMBOLO MBUE
MARCH 9

The second novel from the author of *Behold the Dreamers* details



the plight of a fictional African village as it faces extreme environmental degradation at the hands of an American oil company. The consequences are severe and long-lasting—toxic water is killing children; pipeline spills are destroying farmlands. In surveying the damage over several



tells the story of an unnamed 30-something crippled by career burnout who is desperate for an “easy” job. Tsumura chronicles her narrator’s experiences as she moves between jobs that require little thought or effort. But as strange and magical moments arise, the protagonist begins to realize that perhaps the search for an easy occupation is harder than she thought. It’s a revelation that plays out through Tsumura’s sharp prose and biting observations on late capitalism.

**A LITTLE DEVIL
IN AMERICA**
**HANIF
ABDURRAQIB**
MARCH 30

Poet and critic Hanif Abdurraqib crafts a stirring account of the relationship between Black artists and American culture in his new book. A blend of cultural analysis, criticism and memoir, *A Little Devil in America* takes a close look at a wide range of Black performances, from a dance marathon to a game of spades to a performance by

Whitney Houston at the 1988 Grammy Awards. Throughout, Abdurraqib writes with urgency as he highlights what these performances mean, how they connect to his own feelings on grief, love and life, and where they fit into American history.

GIRLHOOD
MELISSA FEBOS
MARCH 30

In eight haunting essays, Melissa Febos unearths the trauma of her adolescence as she picks apart the burdens that accompany being a young woman. In sharing the darkness that clouded her coming of age, Febos asks pointed questions about the expectations placed on women and how they impact a person’s sense of self. Febos combines her own stories with investigative reporting to argue why we need to transform the way we think about girls as they grow up.

**OF WOMEN
AND SALT**
**GABRIELA
GARCIA**
MARCH 30

Jeanette is living in Miami, where she takes in the daughter of a

neighbor who has been detained by ICE. The decision comes as she wants to know more about her own family—a yearning that soon yields revelations about the legacy of those who came before her in Cuba. Flipping among the voices of several characters, Gabriela Garcia creates a thoughtful portrait of women coming to terms with the difficult decisions they’ve made in their lives—and the betrayals they’ve committed along the way.

LIBERTIE
**KAITLYN
GREENIDGE**
MARCH 30

Though Libertie Sampson grew up free in Reconstruction-era Brooklyn, she knows that freedom is limited. Her mother wants her to follow in her footsteps and become a doctor—something Libertie not only doesn’t want to do but also can’t because of her darker skin. As the young woman wrestles with what it means to be free, a notion made more complicated by time spent in Haiti, Kaitlyn Greenidge weaves together an intricate narrative about colorism, classism and community.

years, Imbolo Mbue crafts an aching narrative about greed, community and perseverance.

**A PLACE LIKE
MISSISSIPPI**
**W. RALPH
EUBANKS**
MARCH 16

From William Faulkner to Natasha Trethewey, some of the most prolific American

writers have hailed from Mississippi. Included in that list is essayist W. Ralph Eubanks, whose newest work of nonfiction seeks to understand the state’s influence on modern literature. Eubanks takes readers on a literary tour of his home state, charting the role Mississippi has played in shaping

the writers who lived there and the work they produced.

**THERE'S NO
SUCH THING
AS AN EASY JOB**
**KIKUKO
TSUMURA**
MARCH 23

The English-language debut from award-winning Japanese writer Kikuko Tsumura



The rise of the pandemic-era cult film

By Stephanie Zacharek

IF YOU SUBSCRIBE TO NETFLIX OR ANY OTHER STREAMING service, you know—or you’re at least made to feel—that even if you’re not yet ready to return to theaters, you’ll never run out of things to watch. That should be exciting. So why isn’t it? The unending supply of that thing with the deeply unromantic name *content* is dispiriting: we’ve become a league of prisoners waiting for our rations to be dropped from the sky. Of course, thanks to streaming, we can watch just about anything we want, of any genre or from any era. But what if we’re eager to connect with others who have also just watched the same film we did? From our individual snow-globe worlds, how do we assert our individuality while still feeling part of a film-watching community? How do we affirm for anyone, let alone ourselves, our sense of what is good, bad or outrageous?

Behold—the rise of the instant cult classic.

Before you protest that the phrase is an oxymoron, remember that we’re in the midst of a pandemic whose scope we couldn’t have imagined a little over a year ago. While this has been an inordinately painful period for most of us, time has also, weirdly, flown by. It used to take years for a film to become a cult classic, to find its way to audiences who would ultimately adore it—at first by word of mouth and midnight screenings, perhaps later via repertory programming or academic reassessments. A true cult classic tends to be an oddball outlier of some sort, either a mainstream picture that flopped at the box office—like the Coen brothers’ *The Big Lebowski*—or a low-budget film with some indefinable vitality—like John Waters’ *Pink Flamingos* or David Lynch’s *Eraserhead*. When we think

If you can't accurately call *Barb and Star* an instant cult classic, you can probably call it an instant cult favorite

◀ **Wiig and Mumolo in *Barb and Star Go to Vista Del Mar*, which has emerged as a favorite on social media**

of cult classics, it’s generally movies like Edward D. Wood Jr.’s *Plan 9 From Outer Space*, Robin Hardy’s *The Wicker Man* and Paul Verhoeven’s *Showgirls* that spring to mind, movies that draw viewers hypnotically over a span of years and decades.

But in the past year, our sense of time has become both compressed and elongated. Even before the pandemic, social media had become our chief way of communicating with one another about things we’d seen and loved. Once we all began working from home—or, more crushingly, not working at all—even the face-to-face conversations we might have had with coworkers were no longer an option. Cult movies are basically the result of communities of like-minded people finding one another over a period of time. As we reach the one-year mark of living these extremely interior lives, it’s little wonder that we’re collapsing that time, consciously or otherwise. We don’t want to wait months or years to find that merry band of outsiders who love the same odd little movie we do. We need their companionship right now.

TAKE *BARB AND STAR* *Go to Vista Del Mar*, a willfully ridiculous candy-colored comedy about a duo of 40-ish friends—played by the movie’s writers, Kristen Wiig and Annie Mumolo—who try to banish their middle-aged ennui with a sunny resort vacation. Recently released on streaming platforms by Lionsgate, *Barb and Star* is hardly an outsider’s movie. But you might call it a smart dumb comedy, an enterprise—along the lines of the Farrelly brothers’ *Dumb and Dumber* and Adam McKay’s *Step Brothers*—that transports you beyond caring whether or not your enjoyment of it marks you as a person of good taste.

Perhaps because nobody really knows how to market a film during a pandemic, *Barb and Star* emerged somewhat out of left field. But the movie’s stealth arrival worked in its

favor: the reviews were good, but more significantly, the word spread fast in the town square known as Twitter.

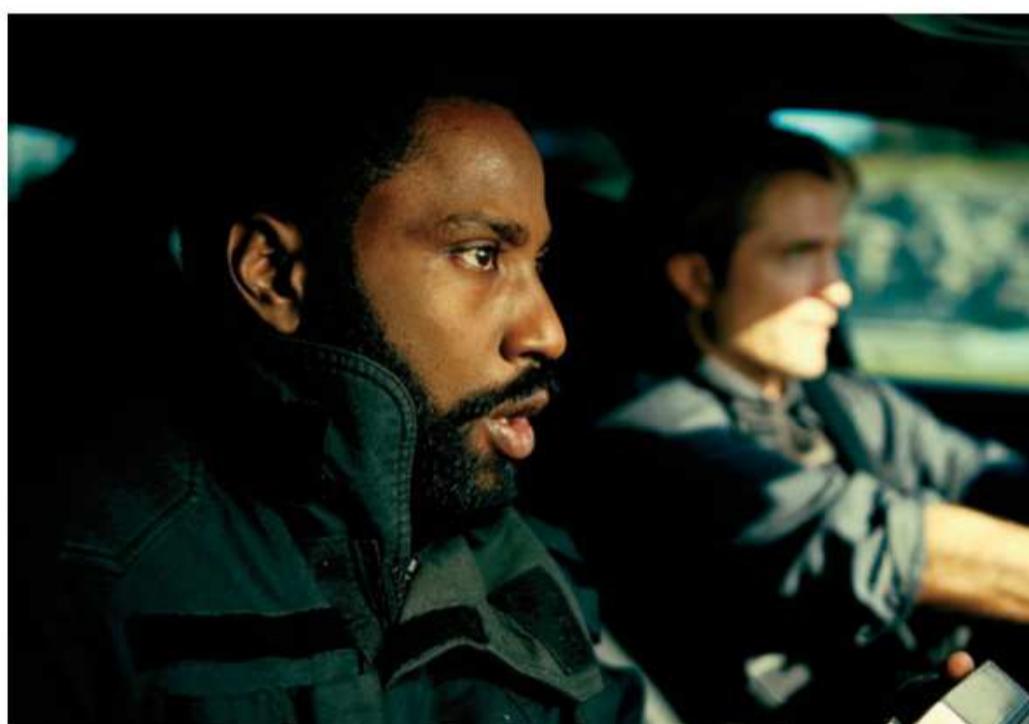
If you can't accurately call *Barb and Star* an instant cult classic, you can probably call it an instant cult favorite. Even if the film wasn't really a small, secret treasure, it still gave viewers the illusion they'd unearthed one. What's the harm in that? There has to be some value in belonging to a club of people who, from their respective caves of semi-misery, are laughing at the same thing at the same time.

BUT IN THE AGE OF STREAMING, the question of what makes a cult movie is up for debate anyway. How much of a pioneer are you when you discover a new-to-you movie that's available for everyone to see? (And as physical-media adherents will tell you, not every movie is available online—and those that are may not be accessible forever.) There must be some element of exclusivity, a sense that you alone have glimpsed the genius of a film that the mainstream world—whatever that means, in this era of hyperconnected niche groups—has rejected.

Christopher Nolan's intricate sci-fi thriller *Tenet* was released in U.S. theaters in early September. Because so few theaters were open at the time, Nolan fans who could see it were part of an elite group; everyone else was left out of the conversation. When the film became available to stream, in mid-December, it began to find ardent fans online—almost as if it had failed at the box office in the traditional sense and somehow needed to be rescued or revisited. What's more, *Tenet*'s complicated plot invites multiple viewings; the suggestion is that you need to be part of the brainy Nolan elite to even understand it. *Tenet* seems headed for cult status whether it deserves it or not.

Other types of spontaneous cult classics have bubbled to the surface on social media in the past few months. In November, the 2012 film *The Impossible*—starring Naomi Watts, Ewan McGregor and Tom Holland, and based on a true story about a family of tourists who survived the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami—quietly slipped to the No. 1 position on Netflix's

*John David Washington and Robert Pattinson in *Tenet*, now finding its audience via streaming*



The Age of Innocence, with Daniel Day-Lewis and Michelle Pfeiffer: a romance for pandemic times

most-watched movies. We shouldn't be ruled, or fooled, by algorithms: Who really knows why a bunch of people start watching one movie, impelling others to follow? But aside from two simple explanations—curiosity about Holland's pre-*Spider-Man* career and the fact that a lot of people find disaster films comforting—it's not really clear why *The Impossible* became a mini-cult favorite eight years after its release. One hallmark of true cult films is that their popularity seemingly arises from nowhere. In that sense, *The Impossible*'s resurgence fits the bill.

Besides, the movies that generate the most chatter on social media these days aren't always new. The Internet erupted with joy when Disney+ announced, in early February, that the 1997 version of Rodgers & Hammerstein's *Cinderella*—starring Whitney Houston and Brandy—would stream later

that month. You could write that enthusiasm off as pure nostalgia. But even nostalgia is a complicated emotion, especially at a time when it feels impossible to move forward. In that context, returning to a childhood favorite, especially a movie that might have made you feel seen and valuable as a kid, seems nothing but logical. And last summer brought us a milder but no less passionate glimmer of Twitter activity surrounding Martin Scorsese's 1993 version of *The Age of Innocence*, which everyone in certain circles seemed to be revisiting at once. What would Edith Wharton have made of this tiny gang of enthusiasts, fainting with pleasure over a 19th century love triangle? Our collective yearning for tenderness and connection has no sell-by date, certainly not in a pandemic.

Can a movie like *Barb and Star* end up a true cult classic, so entwined with our memories of living through a pandemic that it comes to stand as a symbol of it? Maybe we'll look back and recognize that it wasn't really that great—but at least it was there when we needed it. Amid all the “Big-screen moviegoing is dead” discussions, we still haven't reckoned with what it would mean to lose forever the experience of watching a preposterous film with a group of people all looking for the same sense of elation. If repertory theaters survive—and let's hope they do—in 20 or even 10 years' time we might see midnight “Movies of the Pandemic Era” festivals. We'll need some way to mark our shared experience, and to commemorate all that time—was it a year, a decade or a century?—we spent alone in front of our TVs. □

7 Questions

Lee Isaac Chung The director of the acclaimed film *Minari* talks about growing up in Arkansas, the cultural power of food and the Golden Globes

Did you initially believe that a movie about a Korean-American family farm in Arkansas could resonate so widely? I used to not trust that specificity about my own self: I didn't think it would be interesting to people. Having parents who are chicken sexers—I had trouble explaining that to kids at school! The fact we were able to get the film financed felt like a miracle. Now, to see the reception of people in all walks of life saying they see themselves in the story somehow—it almost shrinks the world a little bit. We all go through these specific circumstances, but there's something at the heart of our lives that we're all the same in some way; we have the same pain and the same joy.

The film is based on your parents' story. Do you know why they moved to the U.S.? When my dad was in junior high, all these American films started to be introduced into Korea for the first time. My dad started to watch westerns at dollar cinemas in Seoul and felt like America was a miraculous place. His family had lost a lot of land during the Korean War and the Japanese occupation. That affected him a lot as a kid. He always felt like he needed to come to the U.S. and get land. It's an old Hollywood pioneer story he was working on.

The film's characters arrive in Arkansas in the wake of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which spurred a huge increase in Asian-American immigration. Is that part of your family history as well? I remember reading all about that in college and realizing, "Oh, this is how we were able to come." Where I lived, I think we started off with maybe 10 Koreans in that area, and they were all chicken sexers. My dad started the first Korean church there. Year after year, the numbers would just grow. The idea that it was all caused by a law didn't dawn on me until much later. You never realize what the geopolitical things are; you just live through them.

“MY DAD STARTED TO WATCH WESTERNS AT DOLLAR CINEMAS IN SEOUL AND FELT LIKE AMERICA WAS A MIRACULOUS PLACE”

Isolation is a major undercurrent of the film. Was that something you felt growing up? It was real. But from my own perspective, I don't know how much of it is because of my Asian-American identity and how much of it is just teenage angst and loneliness. Maybe that's part of being Asian American: you're always questioning that aspect of your own perception.

Minari ties food very closely to identity. How do you believe the two are connected? I didn't have much of a taste for Korean food growing up. I remember the first time my sister went to school, my mom made a lunch box full of *gimbap* for her. Slowly, the kids noticed what she was eating and made fun of her, and she started to throw this *gimbap* away and would not tell my mom. I look back on that with this feeling of sorrow. It must have been tough for my parents, who went through such pains to preserve Korean food culture.

What is your relationship to Korean food now? Nowadays, Korean food is the only thing that I can eat, and it cheers me up. It's inexpressible, really; I don't know how it's tied to identity. But when I eat it, I do feel as though this is the food that has nourished my ancestors and made this body.

Minari won the Golden Globe for best foreign-language film, but was ineligible for best picture because half of the dialogue is not in English. How do you feel about that rule? Their category of "foreign" seems to be set upon language and not geography, and that seems strange to me given our country. As a thought experiment, I wonder, what if there was a Native American story in which they're speaking in their language? How would that be categorized? On the other hand, I'm trying not to let the awards define the film or why I want people to watch it.

—ANDREW R. CHOW



WHERE THERE'S
A REMOTE, THERE'S

HOPE



We all need a laugh right now. And your laugh can help change lives in the UK and around the world.
This year, we need each other more than ever.



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Friday 19 March at 7pm on BBC One and iPlayer

Red Nose Day is an initiative of Comic Relief, operating name of Charity Projects, registered charity in England & Wales (326568) and Scotland (SC039730).