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If He Wins

by
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How Far Trump Would Go

Eric Cortellessa is a staff writer at TIME, based in the Washington, D.C. bureau. He covers Congress, Donald Trump, and national politics.

Donald Trump thinks he’s identified a crucial mistake of his first term: He was too nice.

We've been talking for more than an hour on April 12 at his fever-dream palace in Palm Beach. Aides lurk around the perimeter of a gilded dining room overlooking the manicured lawn. When one nudges me to wrap up the interview, I bring up the many former Cabinet officials who refuse to endorse Trump this time. Some have publicly warned that he poses a danger to the Republic. Why should voters trust you, I ask, when some of the people who observed you most closely do not?

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As always, Trump punches back, denigrating his former top advisers. But beneath the typical torrent of invective, there is a larger lesson he has taken away. "I let them quit because I have a heart. I don't want to embarrass anybody," Trump says. "I don't think I'll do that again. From now on, I'll fire."

Six months from the 2024 presidential election, Trump is better positioned to win the White House than at any point in either of his previous campaigns. He leads Joe Biden by slim margins in most polls, including in several of the seven swing states likely to determine the outcome. But I had not come to ask about the election, the disgrace that followed the last one, or how he has become the first former—and perhaps future—American President to face a criminal trial. I wanted to know what Trump would do if he wins a second term, to hear his vision for the nation, in his own words.

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What emerged in two interviews with Trump, and conversations with more than a dozen of his closest advisers and confidants, were the outlines of an imperial presidency that would reshape America and its role in the world. To carry out a deportation operation designed to remove more than 11 million people from the country, Trump told me, he would be willing to build migrant detention camps and deploy the U.S. military, both at the border and inland. He would let red states monitor women's pregnancies and prosecute those who violate abortion bans. He would, at his personal discretion, withhold funds appropriated by Congress, according to top advisers. He would be willing to fire a U.S.

Attorney who doesn’t carry out his order to prosecute someone, breaking with a tradition of independent law enforcement that dates from America’s founding. He is weighing pardons for every one of his supporters accused of attacking the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, more than 800 of whom have pleaded guilty or been convicted by a jury. He might not come to the aid of an attacked ally in Europe or Asia if he felt that country wasn’t paying enough for its own defense. He would gut the U.S. civil service, deploy the National Guard to American cities as he sees fit, close the White House pandemic-preparedness office, and staff his Administration with acolytes who back his false assertion that the 2020 election was stolen.

Trump remains the same guy, with the same goals and grievances. But in person, if anything, he appears more assertive and confident. “When I first got to Washington, I knew very few people,” he says. “I had to rely on people.” Now he is in charge. The arranged marriage with the timorous Republican Party stalwarts is over; the old guard is vanquished, and the people who remain are his people. Trump would enter a second term backed by a slew of policy shops staffed by loyalists who have drawn up detailed plans in service of his agenda, which would concentrate the powers of the state in the hands of a man whose appetite for power appears all but insatiable. “I don’t think it’s a big mystery what his agenda would be,” says his close adviser Kellyanne Conway. “But I think people will be surprised at the alacrity with which he will take action.”

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The courts, the Constitution, and a Congress of unknown composition would all have a say in whether Trump's objectives come to pass. The machinery of Washington has a range of defenses: leaks to a free press, whistle-blower protections, the oversight of inspectors general. The same deficiencies of temperament and judgment that hindered him in the past remain present. If he wins, Trump would be a lame duck—contrary to the suggestions of some supporters, he tells TIME he would not seek to overturn or ignore the Constitution's prohibition on a third term. Public opinion would also be a powerful check. Amid a popular outcry, Trump was forced to scale back some of his most draconian first-term initiatives, including the policy of separating migrant families. As George Orwell wrote in 1945, the ability of governments to carry out their designs "depends on the general temper in the country."

Every election is billed as a national turning point. This time that rings true. To supporters, the prospect of Trump 2.0, unconstrained and backed by a disciplined movement of true believers, offers revolutionary promise. To much of the rest of the nation and the world, it represents an alarming risk. A second Trump term could

bring “the end of our democracy,” says presidential historian Douglas Brinkley, “and the birth of a new kind of authoritarian presidential order.”

Trump steps onto the patio at Mar-a-Lago near dusk. The well-heeled crowd eating Wagyu steaks and grilled branzino pauses to applaud as he takes his seat. On this gorgeous evening, the club is a MAGA mecca. Billionaire donor Steve Wynn is here. So is Speaker of the House Mike Johnson, who is dining with the former President after a joint press conference proposing legislation to prevent noncitizens from voting. Their voting in federal elections is already illegal, and extremely rare, but remains a Trumpian fixation that the embattled Speaker appeared happy to co-sign in exchange for the political cover that standing with Trump provides.

At the moment, though, Trump’s attention is elsewhere. With an index finger, he swipes through an iPad on the table to curate the restaurant’s soundtrack. The playlist veers from Sinead O’Connor to James Brown to *The Phantom of the Opera*. And there’s a uniquely Trump choice: a rendition of “The Star-Spangled Banner” sung by a choir of defendants imprisoned for attacking the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, interspersed with a recording of Trump reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. This has become a staple of his rallies, converting the ultimate symbol of national unity into a weapon of factional devotion.

The spectacle picks up where his first term left off. The events of Jan. 6, during which a pro-Trump mob attacked the center of American democracy in an effort to subvert the peaceful transfer of power, was a profound stain on his legacy. Trump has sought to recast an insurrectionist riot as an act of patriotism. “I call them the J-6 patriots,” he says. When I ask whether he would consider pardoning every one of them, he says, “Yes, absolutely.” As Trump faces dozens of felony charges, including for election interference, conspiracy to defraud the United States, willful retention of

national-security secrets, and falsifying business records to conceal hush-money payments, he has tried to turn legal peril into a badge of honor.

In a second term, Trump's influence on American democracy would extend far beyond pardoning powers. Allies are laying the groundwork to restructure the presidency in line with a doctrine called the unitary executive theory, which holds that many of the constraints imposed on the White House by legislators and the courts should be swept away in favor of a more powerful Commander in Chief.

Read More: *Fact-Checking What Donald Trump Said In His Interviews With TIME*

Nowhere would that power be more momentous than at the Department of Justice. Since the nation's earliest days, Presidents have generally kept a respectful distance from Senate-confirmed law-enforcement officials to avoid exploiting for personal ends their enormous ability to curtail Americans' freedoms. But Trump, burned in his first term by multiple investigations directed by his own appointees, is ever more vocal about imposing his will directly on the department and its far-flung investigators and prosecutors.

[video id=FlgFv0Ze autostart="viewable"]

In our Mar-a-Lago interview, Trump says he might fire U.S. Attorneys who refuse his orders to prosecute someone: “It would depend on the situation.” He’s told supporters he would seek retribution against his enemies in a second term. Would that include Fani Willis, the Atlanta-area district attorney who charged him with election interference, or Alvin Bragg, the Manhattan DA in the Stormy Daniels case, who Trump has previously said should be prosecuted? Trump demurs but offers no promises. “No, I don’t want to do that,” he says, before adding, “We’re gonna look at a lot of things. What they’ve done is a terrible thing.”

Trump has also vowed to appoint a “real special prosecutor” to go after Biden. “I wouldn’t want to hurt Biden,” he tells me. “I have too much respect for the office.” Seconds later, though, he suggests Biden’s fate may be tied to an upcoming Supreme Court ruling on whether Presidents can face criminal prosecution for acts committed in office. “If they said that a President doesn’t get immunity,” says Trump, “then Biden, I am sure, will be prosecuted for all of his crimes.” (Biden has not been charged with any, and a House Republican effort to impeach him has failed to unearth evidence of any crimes or misdemeanors, high or low.)

Read More: *Trump Says ‘Anti-White Feeling’ Is a Problem in the U.S.*

Such moves would be potentially catastrophic for the credibility of American law enforcement, scholars and former Justice Department leaders from both parties say. “If he ordered an improper prosecution, I would expect any respectable U.S. Attorney to say no,” says Michael McConnell, a former U.S. appellate judge appointed by President George W. Bush. “If the President fired the U.S. Attorney, it would be an enormous firestorm.” McConnell, now a Stanford law professor, says the dismissal could have a cascading effect similar to the Saturday

Night Massacre, when President Richard Nixon ordered top DOJ officials to remove the special counsel investigating Watergate. Presidents have the constitutional right to fire U.S. Attorneys, and typically replace their predecessors' appointees upon taking office. But discharging one specifically for refusing a President's order would be all but unprecedented.

Trump's radical designs for presidential power would be felt throughout the country. A main focus is the southern border. Trump says he plans to sign orders to reinstall many of the same policies from his first term, such as the Remain in Mexico program, which requires that non-Mexican asylum seekers be sent south of the border until their court dates, and Title 42, which allows border officials to expel migrants without letting them apply for asylum. Advisers say he plans to cite record border crossings and fentanyl- and child-trafficking as justification for reimposing the emergency measures. He would direct federal funding to resume construction of the border wall, likely by allocating money from the military budget without congressional approval. The capstone of this program, advisers say, would be a massive deportation operation that would target millions of people. Trump made similar pledges in his first term, but says he plans to be more aggressive in a second. "People need to be deported," says Tom Homan, a top

Trump adviser and former acting head of Immigration and Customs Enforcement. “No one should be off the table.”

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For an operation of that scale, Trump says he would rely mostly on the National Guard to round up and remove undocumented migrants throughout the country. “If they weren’t able to, then I’d use [other parts of] the military,” he says. When I ask if that means he would override the Posse Comitatus Act—an 1878 law that prohibits the use of military force on civilians—Trump seems unmoved by the weight of the statute. “Well, these aren’t civilians,” he says. “These are people that aren’t legally in our country.” He would also seek help from local police and says he would deny funding for jurisdictions that decline to adopt his policies. “There’s a possibility that some won’t want to participate,” Trump says, “and they won’t partake in the riches.”

As President, Trump nominated three Supreme Court Justices who voted to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, and he claims credit for his role in ending a constitutional right to an abortion. At the same time, he has sought to defuse a potent campaign issue for the Democrats by saying he wouldn’t sign a federal ban. In our interview at Mar-a-Lago, he declines to commit to vetoing any additional federal restrictions if they came to his desk. More than 20 states now have full or partial abortion bans, and Trump says those policies should be left to the states to do what they want, including monitoring women’s pregnancies. “I think they might do that,” he says. When I ask whether he would be comfortable with states prosecuting women for having abortions beyond the point the laws permit, he says, “It’s irrelevant whether I’m comfortable or not. It’s totally irrelevant, because the states are going to make those decisions.” President Biden has said he would fight state anti-abortion measures in court and with regulation.

Trump’s allies don’t plan to be passive on abortion if he returns to power. The Heritage Foundation has called for enforcement of a 19th century statute that would outlaw the mailing of abortion pills. The Republican Study Committee (RSC), which includes more than 80% of the House GOP conference, included in its 2025 budget proposal the Life at Conception Act, which says the right to life extends to “the moment of fertilization.” I ask Trump if he would veto that bill if it came to his desk. “I don’t have to do anything about vetoes,” Trump says, “because we now have it back in the states.”

Presidents typically have a narrow window to pass major legislation. Trump’s team is eyeing two bills to kick off a second term: a border-security and immigration package, and an extension of his 2017 tax cuts. Many of the latter’s provisions expire early in 2025: the tax cuts on individual income brackets, 100% business expensing, the doubling of the estate-tax deduction. Trump is planning to intensify his protectionist agenda, telling me he’s considering a tariff of more than 10% on all imports, and perhaps even a 100% tariff on some Chinese goods. Trump says the tariffs will liberate the U.S. economy from being at the mercy of foreign manufacturing and spur an industrial renaissance in the U.S. When I point out that independent analysts estimate Trump’s first term tariffs on thousands of products, including steel and aluminum, solar panels, and washing machines, may have cost the U.S. $316 billion and more than 300,000 jobs, by one account, he dismisses these experts out of hand. His advisers argue that the average yearly inflation rate in his first term—under 2%—is evidence that his tariffs won’t raise prices.

Since leaving office, Trump has tried to engineer a caucus of the compliant, clearing primary fields in Senate and House races. His hope is that GOP majorities replete with MAGA diehards could rubber-stamp his legislative agenda and nominees. Representative Jim Banks of Indiana, a former RSC chairman and the GOP

nominee for the state's open Senate seat, recalls an August 2022 RSC planning meeting with Trump at his residence in Bedminster, N.J. As the group arrived, Banks recalls, news broke that Mar-a-Lago had been raided by the FBI. Banks was sure the meeting would be canceled. Moments later, Trump walked through the doors, defiant and pledging to run again. "I need allies there when I'm elected," Banks recalls Trump saying. The difference in a second Trump term, Banks says now, "is he's going to have the backup in Congress that he didn't have before."

Trump's intention to remake America's relations abroad may be just as consequential. Since its founding, the U.S. has sought to

build and sustain alliances based on the shared values of political and economic freedom. Trump takes a much more transactional approach to international relations than his predecessors, expressing disdain for what he views as free-riding friends and appreciation for authoritarian leaders like President Xi Jinping of China, Prime Minister Viktor Orban of Hungary, or former President Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil.

That's one reason America's traditional allies were horrified when Trump recently said at a campaign rally that Russia could "do whatever the hell they want" to a NATO country he believes doesn't spend enough on collective defense. That wasn't idle bluster, Trump tells me. "If you're not going to pay, then you're on your own," he says. Trump has long said the alliance is ripping the U.S. off. Former NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg credited Trump's first-term threat to pull out of the alliance with spurring other members to add more than $100 billion to their defense budgets.

But an insecure NATO is as likely to accrue to Russia's benefit as it is to America's. President Vladimir Putin's 2022 invasion of Ukraine looks to many in Europe and the U.S. like a test of his broader vision to reconstruct the Soviet empire. Under Biden and a bipartisan Congress, the U.S. has sent more than $100 billion to Ukraine to defend itself. It's unlikely Trump would extend the same support to Kyiv. After Orban visited Mar-a-Lago in March, he said Trump "wouldn't give a penny" to Ukraine. "I wouldn't give unless Europe starts equalizing," Trump hedges in our interview. "If Europe is not going to pay, why should we pay? They're much more greatly affected. We have an ocean in between us. They don't." (E.U. nations have given more than $100 billion in aid to Ukraine as well.)

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Trump has historically been reluctant to criticize or confront Putin. He sided with the Russian autocrat over his own intelligence community when it asserted that Russia interfered in the 2016 election. Even now, Trump uses Putin as a foil for his own political purposes. When I asked Trump why he has not called for the release of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Evan Gershkovich, who has been unjustly held on spurious charges in a Moscow prison for a year, Trump says, "I guess because I have so many other things I'm working on." Gershkovich should be freed, he adds, but he doubts it will happen before the election. "The reporter should be released and he will be released," Trump tells me. "I don't know if he's going to be released under Biden. I would get him released."

America's Asian allies, like its European ones, may be on their own under Trump. Taiwan's Foreign Minister recently said aid to Ukraine was critical in deterring Xi from invading the island. Communist China's leaders "have to understand that things like that can't come easy," Trump says, but he declines to say whether he would come to Taiwan's defense.

Trump is less cryptic on current U.S. troop deployments in Asia. If South Korea doesn't pay more to support U.S. troops there to deter Kim Jong Un's increasingly belligerent regime to the north, Trump suggests the U.S. could withdraw its forces. "We have 40,000 troops that are in a precarious position," he tells TIME. (The number is actually 28,500.) "Which doesn't make any sense. Why would we defend somebody? And we're talking about a very wealthy country."

Transactional isolationism may be the main strain of Trump's foreign policy, but there are limits. Trump says he would join Israel's side in a confrontation with Iran. "If they attack Israel, yes, we would be there," he tells me. He says he has come around to the now widespread belief in Israel that a Palestinian state existing side by side in peace is increasingly unlikely. "There was a time

when I thought two-state could work," he says. "Now I think two-state is going to be very, very tough."

Yet even his support for Israel is not absolute. He's criticized Israel's handling of its war against Hamas, which has killed more than 30,000 Palestinians in Gaza, and has called for the nation to "get it over with." When I ask whether he would consider withholding U.S. military aid to Israel to push it toward winding down the war, he doesn't say yes, but he doesn't rule it out, either. He is sharply critical of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, once a close ally. "I had a bad experience with Bibi," Trump says. In his telling, a January 2020 U.S. operation to assassinate a top Iranian general was supposed to be a joint attack until Netanyahu backed out at the last moment. "That was something I never forgot," he says. He blames Netanyahu for failing to prevent the Oct. 7 attack, when Hamas militants infiltrated southern Israel and killed nearly 1,200 people amid acts of brutality including burning entire families alive and raping women and girls. "It happened on his watch," Trump says.

On the second day of Trump's New York trial on April 17, I stand behind the packed counter of the Sanaa Convenience Store on 139th Street and Broadway, waiting for Trump to drop in for a postcourt campaign stop. He chose the bodega for its history. In 2022, one of the store's clerks fatally stabbed a customer who attacked him. Bragg, the Manhattan DA, charged the clerk with second-degree murder. (The charges were later dropped amid public outrage over video footage that appeared to show the clerk acting in self-defense.) A baseball bat behind the counter alludes to lingering security concerns. When Trump arrives, he asks the store's co-owner, Maad Ahmed, a Yemeni immigrant, about safety. "You should be allowed to have a gun," Trump tells Ahmed. "If you had a gun, you'd never get robbed."

On the campaign trail, Trump uses crime as a cudgel, painting urban America as a savage hell-scape even though violent crime has declined in recent years, with homicides sinking 6% in 2022 and 13% in 2023, according to the FBI. When I point this out, Trump tells me he thinks the data, which is collected by state and local police departments, is rigged. “It’s a lie,” he says. He has pledged to send the National Guard into cities struggling with crime in a second term—possibly without the request of governors—and plans to approve Justice Department grants only to cities that adopt his preferred policing methods like stop-and-frisk.

To critics, Trump’s preoccupation with crime is a racial dog whistle. In polls, large numbers of his supporters have expressed the view that antiwhite racism now represents a greater problem in the U.S. than the systemic racism that has long afflicted Black Americans. When I ask if he agrees, Trump does not dispute this position. “There is a definite antiwhite feeling in the country,” he tells TIME, “and that can’t be allowed either.” In a second term, advisers say, a Trump Administration would rescind Biden’s Executive Orders designed to boost diversity and racial equity.

Trump’s ability to campaign for the White House in the midst of an unprecedented criminal trial is the product of a more professional campaign operation that has avoided the infighting that plagued

past versions. “He has a very disciplined team around him,” says Representative Elise Stefanik of New York. “That is an indicator of how disciplined and focused a second term will be.” That control now extends to the party writ large. In 2016, the GOP establishment, having failed to derail Trump’s campaign, surrounded him with staff who sought to temper him. Today the party’s permanent class have either devoted themselves to the gospel of MAGA or given up. Trump has cleaned house at the Republican National Committee, installing handpicked leaders—including his daughter-in-law—who have reportedly imposed loyalty tests on prospective job applicants, asking whether they believe the false assertion that the 2020 election was stolen. (The RNC has denied there is a litmus test.) Trump tells me he would have trouble hiring anyone who admits Biden won: “I wouldn’t feel good about it.”

Policy groups are creating a government-in-waiting full of true believers. The Heritage Foundation’s Project 2025 has drawn up plans for legislation and Executive Orders as it trains prospective personnel for a second Trump term. The Center for Renewing America, led by Russell Vought, Trump’s former director of the Office of Management and Budget, is dedicated to disempowering the so-called administrative state, the collection of bureaucrats with the power to control everything from drug-safety determinations to the contents of school lunches. The America First Policy Institute is a research haven of pro-Trump right-wing populists. America First Legal, led by Trump’s immigration adviser Stephen Miller, is mounting court battles against the Biden Administration.

The goal of these groups is to put Trump’s vision into action on day one. “The President never had a policy process that was designed to give him what he actually wanted and campaigned on,” says Vought. “[We are] sorting through the legal authorities, the mechanics, and providing the momentum for a future Administration.” That includes a litany of boundary-pushing right-

wing policies, including slashing Department of Justice funding and cutting climate and environmental regulations.

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Trump's campaign says he would be the final decision-maker on which policies suggested by these organizations would get implemented. But at the least, these advisers could form the front lines of a planned march against what Trump dubs the Deep State, marrying bureaucratic savvy to their leader's anti-bureaucratic zeal. One weapon in Trump's second-term "War on Washington" is a wonky one: restoring the power of impoundment, which allowed Presidents to withhold congressionally appropriated funds. Impoundment was a favorite maneuver of Nixon, who used his authority to freeze funding for subsidized housing and the Environmental Protection Agency. Trump and his allies plan to challenge a 1974 law that prohibits use of the measure, according to campaign policy advisers.

Another inside move is the enforcement of Schedule F, which allows the President to fire nonpolitical government officials and which Trump says he would embrace. "You have some people that are protected that shouldn't be protected," he says. A senior U.S. judge offers an example of how consequential such a move could be. Suppose there's another pandemic, and President Trump wants to push the use of an untested drug, much as he did with hydroxychloroquine during COVID-19. Under Schedule F, if the drug's medical reviewer at the Food and Drug Administration refuses to sign off on its use, Trump could fire them, and anyone else who doesn't approve it. The Trump team says the President needs the power to hold bureaucrats accountable to voters. "The mere mention of Schedule F," says Vought, "ensures that the bureaucracy moves in your direction."

It can be hard at times to discern Trump's true intentions. In his interviews with TIME, he often sidestepped questions or answered them in contradictory ways. There's no telling how his ego and self-destructive behavior might hinder his objectives. And for all his norm-breaking, there are lines he says he won't cross. When asked if he would comply with all orders upheld by the Supreme Court, Trump says he would.

But his policy preoccupations are clear and consistent. If Trump is able to carry out a fraction of his goals, the impact could prove as transformative as any presidency in more than a century. "He's in full war mode," says his former adviser and occasional confidant Stephen Bannon. Trump's sense of the state of the country is "quite apocalyptic," Bannon says. "That's where Trump's heart is. That's where his obsession is."

These obsessions could once again push the nation to the brink of crisis. Trump does not dismiss the possibility of political violence around the election. "If we don't win, you know, it depends," he tells TIME. "It always depends on the fairness of the election." When I ask what he meant when he baselessly claimed on Truth Social that a stolen election "allows for the termination of all rules, regulations and articles, even those found in the Constitution," Trump responded by denying he had said it. He then complained

about the “Biden-inspired” court case he faces in New York and suggested that the “fascists” in America’s government were its greatest threat. “I think the enemy from within, in many cases, is much more dangerous for our country than the outside enemies of China, Russia, and various others,” he tells me.

Toward the end of our conversation at Mar-a-Lago, I ask Trump to explain another troubling comment he made: that he wants to be dictator for a day. It came during a Fox News town hall with Sean Hannity, who gave Trump an opportunity to allay concerns that he would abuse power in office or seek retribution against political opponents. Trump said he would not be a dictator—“except for day one,” he added. “I want to close the border, and I want to drill, drill, drill.”

Trump says that the remark “was said in fun, in jest, sarcastically.” He compares it to an infamous moment from the 2016 campaign, when he encouraged the Russians to hack and leak Hillary Clinton’s emails. In Trump’s mind, the media sensationalized those remarks too. But the Russians weren’t joking: among many other efforts to influence the core exercise of American democracy that year, they hacked the Democratic National Committee’s servers and disseminated its emails through WikiLeaks.

Whether or not he was kidding about bringing a tyrannical end to our 248-year experiment in democracy, I ask him, Don’t you see why many Americans see such talk of dictatorship as contrary to our most cherished principles? Trump says no. Quite the opposite, he insists. “I think a lot of people like it.” —*With reporting by Leslie Dickstein, Simmone Shah, and Julia Zorthian*

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How TIME Chose Its Spring 2024 Class of Next Generation Leaders

Sam Jacobs is Editor in Chief at TIME where he leads TIME's global newsroom and its journalism across all platforms. Since joining TIME in 2013, Jacobs has held a variety of senior editorial leadership positions. Previously, he was national political correspondent at Reuters, associate editor at Newsweek and staff reporter for The Daily Beast. His writing has appeared in the Boston Globe and New York Observer.

For the last decade, with the support of our partners at Rolex, TIME has made a study of emerging leadership in all its many forms—not just statesmanship and intellectual achievement, but also cultural prominence and athletic triumph. The latest class of Next Generation Leaders, spanning eight countries and six continents, is no exception to that tradition of variety.

And yet amid such rich diversity, this cohort finds commonality in the way their leadership is expressed. They embody resilience; Gazan poet Mosab Abu Toha tells us that "writing a poem is an act of resilience against forgetting." They are focused on building effective solutions to real problems, whether the impact of an aging population on Japan's economy or the lack of minority representation in competitive swimming. And they find joy at a time when that act can be its own kind of heroism.

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Ncuti Gatwa, the Scottish actor on our Next Generation Leaders cover, is an expert at that last skill. At a pivotal moment for the beloved 61-year-old *Doctor Who* franchise, Gatwa this month becomes the first queer Black person to step into the iconic Doctor's shoes.

Gatwa's story is one of determination. Only a handful of years ago, after a strong start to his acting career on stage, offers began to dry up. He lost his apartment. He was barely making ends meet. "The phone just stopped ringing," Gatwa told TIME. Then Netflix was on the line, offering him the role on *Sex Education* that would win him fans around the world. Gatwa found financial stability and more. Today he leads a famed British institution and one that is now a global export too, streaming in 150 markets and 25 languages. But that sense of precarity has stayed with him. "Because I've been homeless, I don't think I'll ever not wake up and check my bank balance or whether there's food in my fridge," he says. Gatwa hopes to be remembered as much for his take on the

role as for breaking barriers, and he knows inhabiting this character carries weight. “Now I understand that something you’ve done might have touched someone’s heart,” he tells us, “or made them feel safe or less lonely.”

In today’s world, the importance of leading with heart is clearer than ever. TIME is pleased to continue to introduce readers to young people who are putting that truth into action.

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What America's Student Photojournalists Saw at the Campus Protests

Sanya Mansoor is a reporter at TIME, where she has covered topics including state politics, criminal justice, voting access, religion, and South Asia.

American campuses have not looked like this in more than 50 years, and never for the reasons they do now. The foreign war that students protested in the 1960s and '70s was one that, even amid draft deferments, threatened their own lives. What has stirred students to risk their safety, enrollment, and future careers on hundreds of campuses this spring is the deaths of others–the 34,000 Palestinians killed in the Gaza Strip since Israel launched its retaliation for the Oct. 7 Hamas attack that killed 1,200 and took 240 hostage.

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The protesters' point of reference is the 1980s campaign for divestment from apartheid South Africa. In their campaign, aimed at what they see as financial complicity in Israel's actions, the

activists—many swathed in kaffiyehs and living in tents, if they haven't already been forced out by their universities—embody a generational divide previously visible only in polling: young Americans who have known Israel only during its occupation of the West Bank and blockade of Gaza are more disposed to the Palestinian cause than are those old enough to remember it first fighting, in the shadow of the Holocaust, to create a safe place for the world's Jews.

This is the conflict that has thrust America's colleges back into position as the crucible in which the nation works out its moral questions. Student journalists have been the ones to document the resulting conflagration—especially on campuses that barred the professional press from bearing witness. TIME reached out to student photojournalists from across the country to tell this story.

Read more: *The story behind TIME's campus protests cover*

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From the journalists of the *GW Hatchet*

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On the second night of the pro-Palestinian encampment at George Washington University, drums played as an organizer fired up the crowd. Speaking near the tents, he asked how George Washington University could be nicknamed the Revolutionaries if they weren't advocating strongly for peace in Gaza. James Devin Schaap, a 28-year-old graduate student at the university's photojournalism program, was covering the speech for the *GW Hatchet* when a masked protester with a fierce gaze caught his eye. The protester, who appeared resolute throughout the night, raised a hand in a peace sign. "I thought, well, I gotta get that," Schaap says. Her expression "definitely gives the impression that this person

absolutely and wholeheartedly believes in the cause that she's fighting for in Gaza," he adds.

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Read more: *Biden Condemns Campus Unrest Over Israel-Hamas War: 'None of This Is a Peaceful Protest'*

The green light shining in the distance reminded Schaap of the green light in *The Great Gatsby*, in addition to bringing out the color of the Palestinian flag. He adds that he is a literary-history nerd.

Schaap had a feeling after Columbia University's president authorized police on April 18 to remove students participating in an encampment on that campus that a similar demonstration might emerge at George Washington University. When it did, on April 25, "in my mind it was like, OK, this will be like maybe a day or two ordeal," he says. "And then it kept going." It lasted for nearly two weeks as police resisted calls from the university to clear it. On May 8, however, law enforcement moved in with pepper spray, removing tents and arresting protesters.

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What struck Tom Rath most about this moment was “the silence of it all.” The *GW Hatchet* photojournalist had gotten used to the loud chants. But here, a group of students prayed as their peers created a perimeter around them. “It really, to me, spoke to this being larger than just like a one-day protest or something that people show up to and then immediately go home,” he says. “People are being vulnerable here…People were using themselves—even their physical bodies—in ways to protect their fellow protesters and students.”

For Rath, a 20-year-old sophomore, the moment reflected real community-building among protesters at D.C.-area universities, even if they didn’t share the same religion. “You could tell that even the people that weren’t engaged in the prayer were feeling the emotions of the moment,” he says. The encampment, which started at University Yard and spread to H Street, consisted of student protesters from George Washington University, Georgetown University, American University, and others in the area.

Read more: *‘Why Are Police in Riot Gear?’: Inside Columbia and City College’s Darkest Night*

These less sensational moments are “lost on a lot of people who don’t live here and they’re just showing up when things are kind of tense and then they leave right away,” he says.

On April 29, protesters breached barriers around the yard. On May 1 a group of Republican lawmakers on the U.S. House Oversight Committee visited campus, urging D.C. to crack down on the protests. Rath notes that they said some “fairly inflammatory things” about protesters that are not “reflective of what the whole vibe has been here.”

“The mayor must step up and do something to clear this,” said Rep. Lauren Boebert (R-Colo.) during the visit. “This is not the summer

of love, and we are not bowing a knee to the terrorists who caused the riots and chaos in our cities anymore.”

Rath notes that being in D.C. means that students are in close proximity to Congress. “Sometimes you forget that until politicians show up on campus,” he says. “But also it does feel very politically driven—it feels like it was to get cameras on them and to get sound bites.”

On May 2**,** protesters replaced a university flag with a Palestinian one; law enforcement has since taken that down. Then early on May 8, just hours before D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser and Metropolitan Police Department Chief Pamela Smith were scheduled to testify before Congress over the city’s initial refusal to send in law enforcement, police cleared the encampment. More than 30 protesters were arrested, and the hearing was canceled.

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

From the journalists of the*Vanderbilt Hustler*

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

From the journalists of *Daily Trojan*

INDIANA UNIVERSITY

From the journalists of the Indiana *Daily Student*

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

From the journalists of the *Daily Princetonian*

Calvin Kenjiro Grover, a photojournalist for the *Daily Princetonian*, remembers how good the *maqluba* smelled. Someone had cooked and brought the traditional Palestinian rice dish to Princeton University's "Gaza Solidarity Encampment" on April 28. Protesters had offered journalists a bite, but Grover politely declined. "For journalistic purposes, we couldn't accept their offer," he says.

Instead, he took pictures. For Grover, a 19-year-old freshman, it was important to capture these moments of community. "It's easy to get swept up in the narrative of the most exciting images," Grover says. But often there are no big speeches or arrests. "In between is all this quiet space—like the middle of the night, early morning—when people are just hanging out," he says.

Read more: *Pro-Palestinian Campus Protests Highlight Divisions Among Democrats*

At Princeton University, the encampment is still running, with students doubling down on calls for divestment from Israel.

Thirteen pro-Palestinian protesters were arrested after occupying an academic building on April 30. On May 3, at least a dozen students started a hunger strike as a “response to the administration’s refusal to engage” on divestment negotiations.

For Grover, it feels impossible to separate the recent Gaza protests from Princeton’s long history of sit-ins and demonstrations. That makes it even more important for him to “photograph the sea change as it’s occurring,” he says. “These images are what is going to be remembered as we look back in the future.”

Grover keeps coming back to something one of the protest organizers said in a speech: Community is the greatest weapon against overwhelming grief. “This sense of community that’s formed is a very interesting manifestation of that that I think is worth acknowledging,” Grover says, “even among all this craziness with arrests and demonstrations that takes the spotlight.”

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

From the journalists of the *Daily Targum*

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

From the journalists of the *Daily Northwestern*

At Northwestern University, a few dozen Jewish students gathered on April 26—not far from the pro-Palestinian encampment—to sing Hebrew songs in the rain.

Michael Simon, executive director of Northwestern Hillel, told *The Daily Northwestern's* print managing editor Nicole Markus that "there were some people who were feeling uncomfortable or distressed about the events that were happening on campus," she says. "This was something he thought that they could do to bring Jewish students together and … celebrate Passover as a community."

Read more: *Pro-Palestinian Protests Spark on College Campuses Across the Globe*

In November, Northwestern president Michael Schill announced a committee on preventing antisemitism and hate. While he did mention a commitment to fighting Islamophobia, critics still worried it was not a priority and said that criticizing Israel had been

conflated with antisemitism. Schill is expected to testify before Congress about antisemitism on campus on May 23.

For Markus, a 21-year-old junior, student journalism provides essential nuanced local reporting. “Because we are students, we understand the complexities of what’s happening on our campus a lot more than the national media could,” she says. She notes, for instance, that there’s a Northwestern chapter of Jewish Voice for Peace, which was part of the coalition calling for divestment. “A lot of those students were present at the encampment,” she says. “We also heard on the other side of things, from Jewish students who maybe didn’t agree with the message of the encampment.”

Northwestern was one of the first universities to reach an agreement with protesters at its encampment. Protesters are allowed to keep one tent with aid supplies up until the end of the quarter in June. The university has agreed to provide more transparency about its investments, as well as additional support for Middle Eastern North African and Muslim students and faculty. Seven members on the antisemitism committee resigned on May 1 to protest the decision, saying the administration did not consult them.

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

From the journalists of the *Daily Texan*

When pro-Palestinian protesters formed an encampment on the South Mall of the University of Texas at Austin on April 29, law enforcement ordered them to leave. When they refused, police encircled the space and protesters locked arms. After clearing the encampment, officers used stun grenades and pepper spray as they tried to get protesters to disperse. More than 70 protesters were arrested that day.

Students were panicking, says photojournalist Charlotte Keene, 19, who was covering the protests for the *Daily Texan*. “Adrenaline is really high. We were in fight-or-flight mode basically,” she says, describing police as acting in an “overly aggressive” manner.

Keene was particularly disturbed upon seeing a video and a photograph from her peers of state police grabbing a protester’s neck with one hand. “It’s shocking because who would have prepared for that?” she says. The Texas Department of Public Safety did not respond to a request for comment about the image and allegations of excessive force.

Read more: *Protesters Are Calling on Universities to Divest from Israel. Here’s What That Means*

It was hard, Keene says, watching her peers scream as law enforcement pepper-sprayed them, and she worried about exploiting someone's pain by photographing them in a vulnerable situation. But she knew it was her responsibility to document the way the protesters were treated – not only by the police but also by their peers, those who rushed to help with liquid to soothe the burning. "People set aside their own fear to take care of people who had been pepper-sprayed," she says.

While Keene notes how scary the experience was for her and other journalists, she points out that those in the encampment faced an even higher risk. "I know that student journalists have been targeted, but I do feel like it's safer for us to be there than the protesters," she says.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES

From the journalists of the *Daily Bruin*

On April 25 pro-Palestinian protesters at UCLA set up an encampment. Late on April 30 and into the early morning hours of May 1, it became the site of violence after pro-Israeli counterprotesters tried to tear down the barricades and flung fireworks into the space. Four UCLA student reporters were attacked by counterprotesters, and several student protesters in the encampment were left bleeding. Police did not act for hours, sparking criticism from Governor Gavin Newsom, whose spokesperson said the response was “unacceptable” as well as “limited and delayed.”

Zoraiz Irshad, a 21-year-old senior and journalist for the *Daily Bruin*, was on the scene when a counterprotester and protester

faced off. “The danger of what could potentially happen is what sticks out most to me in this picture,” she says, describing the atmosphere that night as “extremely chaotic and very dangerous.”

“Members of the Gaza Solidarity Encampment were trying to protect their encampment and the barricade while counterprotesters were trying to rip away the wood boards and the metal barricade,” she says.

Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass has said that those “involved in launching fireworks at other people, spraying chemicals and physically assaulting others will be found, arrested, and prosecuted, as well as anyone involved in any form of violence or lawlessness.”

UCLA Hillel also condemned the counterprotesters’ actions, saying it did not represent the Jewish students on campus, and asked the off-campus Jewish community not to fund any actions on campus or protest there. “Your actions are harming Jewish students…The truth is that a largely peaceful, pro-Palestinian encampment was attacked by an angry, violent mob comprised of fringe members of the off-campus Jewish community last night,” they said in a statement.

Irshad watched as some of her peers were hit with wooden boards and sprayed with irritants. “As a journalist, we have to remain neutral. We want to share the facts,” she says. “But then as a student, this is something that’s deeply hurting our community, so it’s sometimes hard to maintain that line, but we’re trying.”

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

From the journalists of the Michigan *Daily*

Correction, May 9: *The original version of this story misstated the date Indiana professor Barbara Dennis was arrested. It was April 25, not 30. It also misstated the organization to which a CSC officer at UCLA would belong. It is Contemporary Services Corporation, not the Community Service Commission.*

Correction, May 10: *The original version of this story misstated the date of an altercation at UCLA. It was April 28, not 23.*

Correction, May 14: *The original version of this story misstated how many people were arrested at Indiana on April 25. It was 34, not 33.*

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There’s an AI Lobbying Frenzy in Washington. Big Tech Is Dominating

Will Henshall is an editorial fellow. He covers tech, with a focus on AI.

The number of groups lobbying the U.S. federal government on artificial intelligence nearly tripled from 2022 to 2023, rocketing from 158 to 451 organizations, according to data from OpenSecrets, a nonprofit that tracks and publishes data on campaign finance and lobbying**.** Data on the total amount spent on lobbying by each organization and interviews with two congressional staffers, two nonprofit advocates familiar with AI lobbying efforts, and two named experts suggest that large technology companies have so far dominated efforts to influence potential AI legislation. And while these companies have publicly been supportive of AI regulation, in closed-door conversations with officials they tend to push for light-touch and voluntary rules, say Congressional staffers and advocates.

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In November 2022, OpenAI released its wildly popular chatbot, ChatGPT. Six months later, leading AI researchers and industry executives signed a statement warning that "the risk of extinction from AI should be a global priority alongside other societal-scale risks such as pandemics and nuclear war." Lawmakers around the world sat up and took notice. U.S. President Joe Biden signed a sweeping AI Executive Order; the E.U. modified its landmark AI law to ensure the models that power chatbots like ChatGPT are regulated; and the U.K. government convened the world's first AI Safety Summit.

Read More: *The 3 Most Important AI Policy Milestones of 2023*

While Congress has yet to pass any AI-specific legislation, there has been a flurry of AI-related activity on the Hill, with Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer convening "Insight Forums" to educate Congress on the rapidly-evolving technology. As substantial federal AI legislation began to be seen as a possibility, lobbyists flooded into the Capitol to promote their organizations' interests.

"Obviously Congress has been writing bills on AI for a long, long time—this is not new. What's new is the scale at which Congress is writing bills and putting them out," says Divyansh Kaushik, a vice president at D.C.-based advisory firm Beacon Global Strategies. "That's what's driving a lot of this engagement."

New faces

Of the 451 organizations that lobbied on AI in 2023, 334—nearly three quarters of the total number—did so for the first time in 2023. Present in the crowd of new organizations pushing for time with staffers and lawmakers on the Hill were the relatively young companies building the most advanced AI models, such as OpenAI, Anthropic, and Cohere.

The OpenSecrets data is an imperfect measure; it tracks AI-specific lobbying by searching the lobbying disclosure forms that organizations are required to file quarterly for the words “artificial intelligence” or “AI.” Two Congressional staffers TIME spoke with suggested that the number of lobbyists they personally had met with remained roughly the same. However, they said AI has become a much more common topic of discussion. “Everybody who comes in and talks to us and wants to talk about AI,” said one Congressional staffer, who asked to remain anonymous as they weren’t authorized to speak about discussions with lobbyists and advocates.

For example, companies such as payment card company Visa, pharmaceutical conglomerate GSK, and accounting firm Ernst and Young began to mention AI in their lobbying disclosure forms. Company interests were also represented by industry trade associations, such as BSA The Software Alliance. Venture capital firm Andreessen Horowitz and startup accelerator Y Combinator also lobbied on AI for the first time in 2023, according to the OpenSecrets analysis.

Many civil society organizations lobbied on AI issues for the first time in 2023, too. The American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations—the largest U.S. federation of trade unions—joined the fray, as did top civil rights organization the NAACP. More tech-focused civil society organizations, such as the Omidyar Network and the Mozilla Foundation also joined the fray. Non-profit organizations focused on threats that future AI systems could pose to public safety such as the Center for AI Policy and the Center for AI Safety Action Fund also filed lobbying disclosures for the first time this year. Finally, a number of universities, such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Yale University reported lobbying on AI in 2023.

Big Tech’s deep pockets

All organizations that carry out lobbying, the legal definition of which only includes directly discussing specific laws or regulations, are required to report how much they spent on lobbying. However, this data is only reported as a general total figure, meaning it's impossible to know how much of this total amount each organization is spending on AI-related lobbying specifically, versus other policy issues. But by this crude metric, many of the newcomers are significantly outspent by the big technology companies, which have been ramping up their lobbying expenditures for a decade.

In 2023, Amazon, Meta, Google parent company Alphabet, and Microsoft each spent more than $10 million on lobbying, according to data provided by OpenSecrets. The Information Technology Industry Council, a trade association, spent $2.7 million on lobbying. In comparison, civil society group the Mozilla Foundation spent $120,000 and AI safety nonprofit the Center for AI Safety Action Fund spent $80,000.

Given that the definition of lobbying only includes speaking with staffers about specific laws, these figures likely underestimate the amounts of money that tech companies are spending to influence lawmakers, says Hamza Chaudhry, a U.S. Policy Specialist at the Future of Life Institute, a nonprofit that focuses on risks posed by advanced technologies.

Multiple advocates and Hill sources suggested that the consistently large amounts spent by the big technology companies has allowed them to build up a sophisticated lobbying apparatus that has so far outgunned the efforts of other organizations. "There's been a sprouting up of all these AI safety lobby groups and also lots of civil society groups that now are starting up their AI focuses, but by far the best at it are the tech groups," said another Congressional staffer, who also wished to remain anonymous because they weren't authorized to speak about discussions with lobbyists and advocates. Tech companies are able to spend more and thus pay for

more experienced lobbyists, who better understand the technical details of their brief better and have a more extensive network on the Hill, the staffer said.

“I would still say that civil society—and I’m including academia in this, all sorts of different people—would be outspent by big tech by five to one, ten to one,” says Chaudhry.

Public statements vs. private lobbying

What exactly is the tech industry lobbying for? Some in the industry are against regulating AI, arguing that regulation would impede technological progress. In December 2023, Ben Horowitz, co-founder of venture capital firm Andreessen Horowitz, wrote a blog post that said his firm would support any political candidate who opposed regulation that would stifle innovation.

But, many of the companies involved in the development of AI have, at least in public, struck a cooperative tone when discussing potential regulation. Executives from the newer companies that have developed the most advanced AI models, such as OpenAI CEO Sam Altman and Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei, have called for regulation when testifying at hearings and attending Insight Forums. Executives from the more established big technology companies have made similar statements. For example, Microsoft vice chair and president Brad Smith has called for a federal licensing regime and a new agency to regulate powerful AI platforms. Both the newer AI firms and the more established tech giants signed White House-organized voluntary commitments aimed at mitigating the risks posed by AI systems.

But in closed door meetings with Congressional offices, the same companies are often less supportive of certain regulatory approaches, according to multiple sources present in or familiar with such conversations. In particular, companies tend to advocate for very permissive or voluntary regulations. “Anytime you want to

make a tech company do something mandatory, they're gonna push back on it," said one Congressional staffer.

Others, however, say that while companies do sometimes try to promote their own interests at the expense of the public interest, most lobbying helps to produce sensible legislation. "Most of the companies, when they engage, they're trying to put their best foot forward in terms of making sure that we're bolstering U.S. national security or bolstering U.S. economic competitiveness," says Kaushik. "At the same time, obviously, the bottom line is important."

There is little time left for Congress to pass an AI-related bill before the presidential election. Whether an AI law is passed in the next few months, or not until the 119th Congress, lobbying efforts from all parties are only likely to increase as the legislation draws nearer.

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Putin Sworn in for New Six-Year Term as Russia's President, Amid Growing Conflict With the West

Armani Syed is a world affairs reporter at TIME. She covers global affairs, with a focus on the SWANA region, arts and culture, and royal institutions.

President Vladimir Putin has been sworn for a record-breaking fifth term as Russia's leader.

In a lavish Tuesday ceremony at Andreyevsky Hall in the Grand Kremlin Palace, Putin swore an oath of allegiance by placing his right hand on Russia's constitution. The ceremony—widely boycotted by Western diplomats following what election watchdogs called a sham vote in March—marked the start of a new six-year presidential term.

"We are a united and great people and together we will overcome all obstacles, we will bring to life everything we have planned. Together we will be victorious," Putin, 71, said in his inaugural speech.

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The ceremony comes a day after Russia ordered a tactical nuclear weapons drills, citing “provocative” statements by Western countries supporting Ukraine. Allied nations have provided extensive military support to Ukraine since Russia’s full scale invasion over two years ago.

“Ukraine sees no legal grounds for recognizing him as the democratically elected and legitimate president of the Russian Federation,” Ukraine’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement.

The three-day vote saw Putin claim 87% of the vote after facing no credible opposition candidates.

Putin’s most prominent opponent, Alexei Navalny, was found dead in an Arctic penal colony in February. His wife, exiled opposition leader Yulia Navalnaya, called Putin “a liar, a thief, and a murderer” in a video shared on the day of his swearing in.

Read More: *Yulia Navalnaya’s First Interview Since Her Husband’s Death in Prison*

“We believe that the isolation of Russia, and especially of its criminal leader, must be continued,” Lithuania’s Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis said, according to Reuters. The Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were among the nations boycotting the ceremony.

“Participation in Putin’s inauguration is not acceptable for Lithuania. Our priority remains support for Ukraine and its people fighting against Russian aggression,” Landsbergis added.

The event included some controversial characters, including American actor Steven Seagal, who became a Russian citizen in

2016 and has backed the Kremlin's war in Ukraine.

The ceremony took place on the same day a Russian court announced that it would hold U.S. Sergeant Gordon Black in custody for at least two months on charges of theft.

The 34-year-old soldier was due to travel home to Texas from his station in South Korea, but instead detoured to Russia. He was arrested on May 2 in Vladivostok, close to Russia's border with North Korea.

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Hong Kong Bans Pro-Democracy Protest Anthem, Saying It Has Been Used as a ‘Weapon’

Hong Kong’s government will be able to outlaw the famous protest anthem “Glory to Hong Kong” after a court of appeal overturned a ruling last year that permitted its use.

Judges on Wednesday said that the song had been used as a “weapon,” making it dangerous to authorities if played in public settings. The verdict raises growing concerns about the erosion of freedom in Hong Kong in recent years.

The judges ruled that the song can still be played for “academic” or “news” purposes.

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The song, which is sung in the city’s native Cantonese dialect, became an unofficial protest anthem of Hong Kong’s pro-democracy protests in 2019 and includes lyrics such as “Liberate Hong Kong.” It was been banned in schools since 2020.

Read More: *China Is Cracking Down on Cantonese Language Advocacy in Hong Kong*

Hong Kong is part of China but has had some autonomy since the British handover in 1997. A 2019 extradition law that would have allowed criminal suspects to be extradited to mainland China prompted mass demonstrations.

The bill was ultimately withdrawn but Hong Kong authorities have jailed hundreds of opposition party members and cracked down on media outlets since. In 2020, Hong Kong also passed a so-called "National Security Law" that criminalized any public speech calling for Hong Kong's succession from China.

Hong Kong's parliament unanimously passed a tough new national security law in March that critics say will lead to a further erosion of democracy.

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How Kate Cox Became a Reluctant Face of the Abortion-Rights Movement

Charlotte Alter is a senior correspondent at TIME. She covers politics, social movements, and generational change, and hosts TIME's Person of the Week podcast. She is also the author of *The Ones We've Been Waiting For: How a New Generation of Leaders Will Transform America*. Her work for TIME has won a Front Page Award from the Newswoman's Club of New York and has been nominated for a GLAAD Media award.

In the tidy backyard of Kate Cox’s Dallas-area bungalow, there are two child-sized lawn chairs alongside two toddler bicycles, parked beneath a brick wall scrawled with chalk. There are two red-and-white stuffed horses in the playroom, and two sippy cups sitting in the sink. This is the joyful, messy life that Kate and Justin Cox always wanted. Everywhere you look, there are two of everything. The only problem is: there should have been three.

Last year, the Coxes were thrilled to learn that Kate was pregnant again. They had always planned to have a large family—three, maybe even four kids. When Cox saw the positive pregnancy test

in August, she ran into the playroom to tell Justin, who was wrestling on the floor with their three-year-old and 18-month-old. Justin immediately started planning: Would they need a bigger car? What would it mean for their finances? Kate didn't share any of those worries. She was just excited.

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At first, the pregnancy progressed normally. The Cox family designed a little cartoon to announce the happy news to their tight-knit extended family. Kate went to her early prenatal appointments and scans, eager to find out whether the baby was a boy or a girl.

When Cox was around 18 weeks pregnant, she got a phone call from her doctor while she was in the car. "She asked me if I was driving," Kate recalls. "So I pulled the car over into an empty parking lot." The doctor told her that the results of early screening tests indicated a risk of Trisomy 18, a life-threatening genetic condition. "I cried for a while in the car," Cox says. "In the same phone call, she told us that we were having a girl."

It took weeks of additional testing, appointments with maternal fetal medicine specialists, terrifying ultrasounds, and excruciating waiting before doctors confirmed the diagnosis. "Each time we had an ultrasound, there was more bad news," Cox recalls, speaking slowly during an interview in her living room in early March. "The neural tube, the heart, the brain, the skull, the limbs. It was hard, because when you looked it was very visible, and you could see on the ultrasound that she wasn't like our other babies. By the end, sometimes I couldn't look at the screen."

Trisomy 18 is almost always a fatal condition. In rare cases, babies with milder forms of the disease can survive for years, even into adolescence. But Cox's doctor told her that there were so many malformations to her daughter's brain, spine, and neural tube that the baby would probably die in utero. If not, she would be placed

directly into hospice care after being born, where doctors did not expect her to survive more than a few days. “Every single case of Trisomy 18 I’ve seen has demised—if not in utero, then within hours to days after birth,” says Dr. Damla Karsan, Cox’s Ob-Gyn. “Even if they do survive, the standard of care is comfort care, do not resuscitate.”

Read More: *She Wasn’t Able to Get An Abortion. Now She’s a Mom. Soon She’ll Start 7th Grade*.

The diagnosis also put Cox’s own health and future fertility at risk. Her pregnancy was becoming increasingly complicated. She went to the emergency room several times for cramping, elevated vitals, and fluid in her birth canal. If the baby died in utero, Cox could get a significant infection. And because she had delivered her first two children via C-section, a third delivery carried increased risk of uterine rupture. If she was induced or had another C-section, her doctor told her, she might never be able to have children again. “The more C-sections you have, the more risk of hysterectomy, hemorrhage, uterine rupture,” says Dr. Karsan. “She was at heightened risk.”

Given the fatal diagnosis and her own medical history, Kate and Justin decided to terminate the pregnancy. “It was really painful, of course, because we wanted our baby so badly,” Cox says. “But we didn’t want her to suffer, and the risks to me were too high. I also have two other babies and they need their mommy. So I had to make a decision with all of my babies in mind.”

But abortion is illegal in Texas in all but the most urgent medical situations. Doctors who perform them face immense legal risks. And Cox's physician told her that because the fetus still had a heartbeat, Cox probably did not qualify for a medical exception. "I couldn't believe that I wouldn't qualify, given the risk I faced in my pregnancy. My baby was not going to live," she says, pausing to wipe away tears. "So I was really shocked that I couldn't get medical care here in Texas. I wanted to be in my home. I wanted to have my doctors that I trust close by. I wanted to be able to come home and hug my babies, and be close to my mom, and be able to cry on my own pillow."

But that was not possible. And so, instead of becoming a mother of three, Kate Cox has become an unlikely national figure—the first pregnant woman in the midst of a health crisis to sue for the right to an abortion since the Supreme Court's *Dobbs* decision overturned *Roe v. Wade* in 2022. Now, months after she was forced to leave her home state to terminate her nonviable pregnancy, Cox is speaking out in detail for the first time about her experience. She has become a reluctant advocate for reproductive rights, the most prominent example of how abortion bans can endanger even women who desperately wanted to be mothers.

Before this ordeal, Kate and Justin Cox had never thought much about abortion. “I wanted a big family,” Kate says, sitting at her kitchen table, underneath a big print of a Madonna and Child. The living room is scattered with unicorn books; there’s a stuffed Olaf, the snowman from Frozen. “I just didn’t think it was going to be something that would ever be in my life.”

The Coxes weren’t especially political in general. Neither Kate nor Justin are reliable voters, they say, and don’t necessarily identify with either political party. Between raising two toddlers and working full-time jobs (Justin’s in IT; Kate works at a nonprofit), they were just “trying to stay afloat,” as Kate puts it. They didn’t pay much attention to the news. When the Supreme Court issued the *Dobbs* decision, it floated across their radars, but didn’t seem to matter very much to their lives. When Texas’s strict abortion ban went into effect shortly after, neither paid much attention, because they both assumed that there would be medical exceptions. When Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton warned that doctors who provided abortions could be held criminally liable, the news barely registered.

Once Cox’s doctor told her that she couldn’t get an abortion in Texas, Cox started Googling to learn more about the state law. That’s how she came across the Center for Reproductive Rights (CRR), a legal advocacy organization that had filed a lawsuit, *Zurawski v. Texas*, on behalf of 2 Ob-Gyns and 20 women in Texas who were denied abortion care, asking the court to clarify the scope of the state’s “medical emergency” exception to its abortion ban.

Cox sent a cold email to CRR, and was connected to Molly Duane, a senior staff attorney who is the lead attorney on the Zurawski case. Cox explained that her fetus had a fatal diagnosis and that her doctor had told her that because of her medical history, continuing the pregnancy carried risks for her own health and future fertility. Duane agreed to help her try to obtain an abortion in Texas.

CRR is representing dozens of patients challenging abortion restrictions in multiple states, but Cox's case was different because she was currently pregnant and in medical crisis, says Nancy Northup, President of the Center for Reproductive Rights.

"Kate was the first time since *Roe* was overturned that a woman who was currently pregnant, needing an abortion under the health exemption, went to a court to get a court order for an abortion," Northup says. Her situation, Northup says, exposes how some medical exceptions to abortion bans are written in a way that makes them nearly impossible to apply. "What Kate Cox's case shows is that this argument of the states that they have exceptions to their blanket abortion bans for the health of the woman is false. They don't have exceptions, and they won't allow exceptions to be applied."

On Dec. 7, a Texas judge granted Cox a temporary restraining order, allowing her to terminate her pregnancy and shielding her doctors from prosecution under Texas law. But almost immediately, Attorney General Paxton petitioned the Texas Supreme Court to halt the lower court's order, and threatened local hospitals with legal action if they allowed the abortion to proceed.

At that point, Kate was roughly 20 weeks pregnant. After a few days of waiting for a ruling from the Texas Supreme Court,she and Justin decided they couldn't wait any longer. They left their two young children with relatives and went to New Mexico to terminate her pregnancy. On Dec. 12, she was finally able to get an abortion, but only after uprooting her life to travel out of state. "That experience added a lot of pain and suffering to what was already the hardest and most difficult time in our lives," she says.

Before the termination, they named the baby Chloe Jones. "It was kind of a name that was in our hearts for our next baby girl," Cox says with a small smile. "And she'll always be our baby." The

middle name was after Kate's grandfather, she adds, "so that way she would know who to look for in heaven."

Months later, Cox finally feels like she can talk about the ordeal in detail. She recalls how the weeks between getting the Trisomy 18 diagnosis and finally terminating her pregnancy were excruciating. She would take her children to the grocery store, and people would smile at her and ask when she was due. Acquaintances would ask if she was having a baby shower. Her three-year old daughter was so excited about another sibling; she didn't understand that there would not be a new baby coming home.

Although Kate did not want an abortion, she says she is "grateful" she was able to get one. "The alternative would have been worse," she says. "I didn't want to have to wait until my baby died in my belly, or died during birth, or have to hold her in my arms as she suffocates or has a heart attack."

The experience has opened Kate and Justin's eyes to the ways their family could be affected by laws that seemed to have little to do with them. "As a nation we have a lot to learn about abortion," says Cox. "Sometimes prayed for, wanted pregnancies end in abortion. It's medical care." Kate's trauma has made Justin think of abortion as much more than a women's issue. "It impacts the fathers, just like it does mothers," he says. "Don't just shut your mind to it and think: this doesn't involve me. If you wait until it impacts you, then it's too late."

A few weeks after her abortion, Kate was chasing her kids and her nephew around her house when she saw a missed call from "Joseph Biden." She thought it was a prank caller or a nasty heckler. But after a few text messages, she realized that the President and First Lady were, in fact, trying to reach her.

Read More: *Biden's 2024 Strategy On Abortion.*

“I actually had my son on my hip, and he had peed through his diaper all down my side,” she says, laughing for the first time since our conversation began. “I certainly never thought I would get an opportunity to speak to the President. If I did, I didn’t think it would be with pee down my side. That’s how it goes for moms sometimes.” The President and First Lady “shared really kind words about what we went through as a family,” she recalls, and invited her to sit in the First Lady’s box at the President’s State of the Union on March 7.

Cox says the family doesn’t have concrete plans to do more explicit advocacy around abortion, but she does plan to “continue sharing our story when we can.” She says she’s “grateful” for the Biden Administration’s work on reproductive rights, and supports the work Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris are doing around abortion access.

“I don’t particularly enjoy being involved in politics,” Cox says. Right now, she doesn’t have any plans to appear in any Biden ads ahead of the 2024 election. But, she adds: “Never say never.”

And whether or not they choose to be in the public eye, both Coxes say they now plan to become regular voters, a political evolution that reflects the way in which abortion access has transformed from a question of feminist choice into a question of medical necessity. “What I’ve learned from this experience is that if you are pregnant, if you love someone that is pregnant, if you may become pregnant, you have to vote like your life depends on it,” Cox says. Justin adds that abortion access is now his “number one issue.”

Kate and Justin get up from the kitchen table and slip back into the familiar routine of busy parents with things to do. There’s trash that needs to be taken out, a dog that needs to be walked, two sippy cups that need to be washed. Their kids will be home soon.

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6 Compliments That Land Every Time

Angela Haupt is a health and wellness editor at TIME. She covers happiness and actionable ways to live well.

On a recent weekday afternoon, Xuan Zhao popped into the post office shortly before it closed. The man helping her was incredibly patient and went out of his way to assist her with a pile of packages. So before she left, she handed him a compliment card she had designed. “Your willingness to go the extra mile never goes unnoticed,” it said on the front. The flip-side read: “You’re receiving this compliment because your awesomeness deserves a big shoutout,” along with a reminder that kind words have the power to brighten other people’s day more than we might expect, and a suggestion to pay it forward. “He had such a big smile on his face,” she recalls.

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Zhao, a behavioral scientist at Stanford University who’s the CEO and co-founder of the well-being start-up Flourish Science, has spearheaded research that suggests we tend to underestimate the

positive impact compliments have on both ourselves and the receiver. As a result, we don't give as many as we should. "The compliment is one of these really powerful, small actions that brighten your day and brighten someone else's day," she says. "And it costs nothing."

Why is a compliment so impactful? One of the most important things to humans is to feel valued and respected by others, and like we belong, says Vanessa Bohns, a social psychologist and professor of organizational behavior at Cornell University, who has researched compliments. "We're always attuned to any scraps of information we get about how we're viewed by other people," she says, but rarely do we receive any. "When we get a compliment, it gives us that feedback we want to know so badly about what other people think of us." An expression of admiration provides a "sliver of hope" that we're viewed positively in some attribute, she adds, like work or fashion—which activates the reward center of the brain and bolsters our spirits. According to Bohns' research, people feel "significantly better" after both giving and receiving a compliment, compared to how they felt beforehand.

With that in mind, we asked experts to share some of their favorite compliments—and why they resonate.

"You handled that situation so well."

Bohns recently used her favorite compliment when she saw a server navigate a difficult situation with a customer at the bar. "I like it so much because you use it in fraught moments where the other person is often unsure of whether they handled a situation OK," she says. "It reassures the person that they did and shows them that their efforts to defuse a situation or help someone out have not gone unnoticed."

In situations that call for a compliment, don't second-guess yourself. Dole them out generously. People sometimes worry that

they're going overboard with compliments and will start to sound insincere. That concern is unfounded, Bohns says. "Our threshold for how many compliments we think we should be giving is lower than what people find acceptable," she points out. "You don't need to go crazy, but you could probably be giving compliments more frequently than you think." As long as you genuinely mean what you're saying—versus making something up in hopes of personal gain—consider compliment permission granted.

"You make even ordinary moments feel extraordinary."

This compliment—one of Zhao's favorites—works well among romantic partners and close family members. "It's a beautiful and profound way to highlight how their presence turns life into something meaningful and worthwhile, despite mundane routines and the ordinariness of our everyday lives," she says.

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If you're afraid that giving a compliment like this will feel weird, you're not alone. People tend to be overly concerned about how to give a compliment competently. We feel pressure to perform well—like if we don't word our kind words perfectly, we'll be laughed at. One way to overcome this fear is to do a practice run, says Erica Boothby, a social psychologist at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, and co-author of Bohns' compliment research. "If it makes you personally feel like the bar is lowered for you to give a compliment if you write it down, or if you practice saying it out loud or giving your pet cat the compliment first, do that," she says. Making yourself feel comfortable—by reciting compliments into the mirror, if that's what it takes—is worth the effort.

“I’m really impressed with your ability to work under pressure.”

Respect is essential when delivering compliments. Most women can recall so-called “compliments” that didn’t land—think catcalling and other unwanted remarks about physical appearance. “These aren’t really compliments because they aren’t showing respect,” Bohns says. Before you say something nice to someone, make sure you’re doing so in a thoughtful, appropriate way. If a colleague has just finished an impressive work presentation, for example, don’t compliment her looks. To do so “wouldn’t be saying, ‘We value you in this work context, where work is the important attribute,’” Bohns explains. “It’s like, ‘Nice try, but you looked pretty doing it.’” It’s also important to avoid backhanded compliments, which may appear innocuous but actually contain hidden criticism or insults—and to ensure your language isn’t sneakily comparing two people.

“I love the way you bring out the best in people.”

Be specific. Details can elevate a so-so compliment to a great one, so make it a point to highlight specific qualities or actions. Zhao likes this one because “it acknowledges an individual’s willingness, effort, and growth mindset in recognizing and cultivating the potential in others—often before these individuals see it in themselves,” she says. “This is high praise for anyone seeking to make a positive impact, such as a leader or a teacher.”

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If you just watched someone deliver a compelling talk at a conference, for example, tell them which part resonated with you the most. Instead of a generic “good job,” say, “Your talk was really inspiring,” Zhao suggests. “If you can say a bit more about

how it inspired you to think about something in a new way, that's even better." You can also tailor a compliment by, for example, acknowledging someone's progress in an area they've been working hard on—like slowing their pace or cutting filler language out of their sentences—-which shows you value their progress and effort.

"Hey, great earrings!"

Feel free to compliment strangers. In Bohns' research, students on a college campus were told to approach a stranger of the same gender and compliment them—about, for example, their nice shirt. Before heading out, the study participants were asked to guess how good the compliment would make the other person feel, and it turned out they underestimated the positive effect—while overestimating how annoying it would be to be stopped by a random stranger. "Across all contexts, it makes people feel better than we expect," Bohns says. Strangers are more likely to be flattered than befuddled. Plus, who knows? You might make a new friend in addition to making someone's day.

"Your performance was brilliant."

People rarely tire of receiving kudos, so if you're with a friend who's considering paying a compliment, encourage them to do so. "If you're not the one who has to figure out the right wording and go talk to a stranger, you can see more clearly that it's going to make someone feel good," Bohns says. Say something like, "You really enjoyed that person's talk—go tell them how great it was." And if they demur, saying the speaker has probably heard it a million times? Remind them that once more might be the icing on the cake.

And when you receive one: say "thanks."

Many of us feel awkward accepting compliments—we might blush, avert eye contact, start mumbling in embarrassment, or even disparage ourselves. If that's you, remember how good the person complimenting you stands to feel—and smile while responding, "Thank you, that means a lot," Boothby suggests. Though it might be hard to think outside of yourself in the moment, consider it an "opportunity for building or enhancing your connection with the other person," she adds. Both of you will leave the interaction happier—and it will fuel the rest of your day.

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How the U.S. Can Win the New Cold War

Dmitri Alperovitch, is a national security expert and an author of a new book, *World on the Brink: How America Can Beat China in the Race for the Twenty-First Century*.

Both President Joe Biden and Xi Jinping strongly reject the current U.S.-China competition as a new Cold War. As recently as September, Biden said that he doesn't "want to contain China" and that "we're all better off if China does well." Xi, in turn, proclaimed that "China doesn't want a cold war or a hot war with anyone," following a meeting between the two in San Francisco in November. Yet these pronouncements aren't all that sincere.

Today there are striking and troubling similarities between our current moment and the original Cold War between the U.S. and Soviet Union that defined the second half of the 20th century. Once again, the world is witnessing two major powers engaged in a global competition for supremacy, trying to lock in an economic, technological, diplomatic, and military advantage anywhere and everywhere an opportunity presents itself. Virtually every region of the planet is a battlefield for this confrontation: from the scramble

to secure mining rights for critical minerals and advantageous trade deals in Africa and Latin America, to the establishment of economic and military partnerships across Asia, to backing opposite warring sides in Europe and the Middle East.

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And just as in the 20th century, the last two decades have witnessed a dangerous conventional and nuclear arms race, with China engaging in rapid build up and modernization of their nuclear, naval, air, ground, and rocket forces. In an unmistakable nod to the Space Race of the 1960s, this contest is also playing out beyond Earth, with both countries racing to once again place a human on the moon and later Mars in the coming decade. Finally, the coldness of the Cold War was defined most of all on a daily basis by the secret espionage war. And, indeed, today once again America is confronted with an espionage threat against its government and industry on a scale hereto not seen.

The current era is not identical to the prior Cold War. That is most clear in the deep economic interdependence between China and the U.S. But, when looking at the facts, it's impossible to call it anything but Cold War II.

In Cold War II, both China and the U.S. believe that the two countries are here to stay. There are some in America who believe that the CCP may eventually collapse, but few are counting on that outcome or can do anything to make it happen. Their current goals are not destruction of each other's systems but a competition for influence around the world, especially the Indo-Pacific. Neither believes that this struggle is existential like it was in Cold War I. Rather, it is a fight over who controls the economic levers and has more influence in global institutions of the 21st century.

Like the prior Cold War, there are considerable risks of a hot conflict breaking out. That is especially the case over Taiwan.

China is already closing in on attaining the capability to conquer Taiwan by force—the U.S. intelligence community has determined that Xi had issued a deadline to his military to be ready for this war by 2027. Biden, on the other hand, has publicly stated on at least four separate occasions that he would order American troops to defend Taiwan against an invasion. The world faces an abyss if this were to happen.

Every passing month makes clear that confronting the reality of China's threat to the U.S.-led global order requires a deep, hard strategic look. That's something, unfortunately, that the U.S. hasn't done well since the end of Cold War I, when the county properly aligned its politics and military and economic strengths decade after decade to counter the Soviet threat. Just as it was in Cold War I, time is on America's side in Cold War II. But it must be used wisely.

In practical terms, that means strengthening America's critical advantages and the Western alliance while deterring a calamitous war with China. This requires staying ahead in the military domain as well as semiconductors and other key technologies. On top of that, the U.S. must invest in talent-based immigration that will help offset China's numerical advantages. Left to their own devices, China's systemic challenges—from a slumping economy to a shrinking population—will make its bid to become the world's most powerful nation much less realizable.

The U.S. must also pursue a strategy of unidirectional entanglement. That means bringing China tighter into its orbit by increasing its dependence on U.S. supply chains while doing the opposite with theirs. Meanwhile, beating China requires Washington to reframe its engagement with other lesser adversaries like Russia, North Korea, and Iran and to view our work with allies, and partners like India and Vietnam, through that same lens.

There would be a substantial reduction in tension and a much smaller risk of outright war if China was ultimately convinced that it is better off working within the current U.S.-led international order. But Washington mustn't count on that happening.

Over 2,000 years ago, amid the Third Punic War, Cato the Elder used to finish his speeches before the Roman Senate with his rallying cry, "Carthage must be destroyed." Today, the U.S. rallying cry—the central organizing principle of American foreign, trade, defense, and industrial policy this century—must be *Sinae deterrendae sunt*. China must be deterred.

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How Marine Le Pen Could Become France's Far Right Prime Minister

Ian Bremmer is a foreign affairs columnist and editor-at-large at TIME. He is the president of Eurasia Group, a political-risk consultancy, and GZERO Media, a company dedicated to providing intelligent and engaging coverage of international affairs. He teaches applied geopolitics at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs, and his most recent book is The Power of Crisis.

As the E.U. moves toward parliamentary elections in June, Europe's populist right is having a moment. Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has defied predictions of a short tenure. In Spain, political attacks on Socialist Party Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez and his wife have created turmoil. The right has also made gains in the Netherlands and Portugal.

But the biggest fear for those dreading a possible far-right surge across Europe has long been the arrival on France's center stage of anti-immigrant icon Marine Le Pen and her National Rally (RN) party. The RN's double-digit lead over President Emmanuel

Macron's Renew alliance in the June contest signals that inflation, years of unpopular reform plans, and general voter fatigue are upstaging Macron's aggressive efforts to tie Le Pen's party to Russia's Vladimir Putin. (Years ago, the RN accepted a loan from a Russian bank.)

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In the past, French voters have balked at lifting Le Pen or her father Jean-Marie Le Pen, who founded the RN's precursor, to national prominence. European Parliament elections have little direct impact on France's government, but they offer voters a chance to protest Macron, and a large enough RN landslide in June could force parliamentary elections in France—perhaps even ushering in Le Pen as Prime Minister.

How would that happen? It would likely begin with a successful censure motion against the government of Prime Minister Gabriel Attal, a Macron ally, in France's National Assembly this summer. A motion led by the center-right Republicans would draw support from across the political spectrum and could provide the 289 "yes" votes needed to force new elections.

If "yes" carried the day, Macron would almost certainly try to regain political momentum by delaying parliamentary elections until the fall—picking a new Prime Minister, who wouldn't be required by France's constitution to seek a confidence vote. But the pressure for a vote would only grow and new censure motions would likely follow, leaving Macron little choice but to dissolve the National Assembly and give the opposition the elections it wants. Current surveys show that given the chance, Le Pen's RN might well cut deeply enough into the seat share of Macron's alliance to force the President to choose an RN Prime Minister, maybe even Le Pen herself.

For Le Pen, France's perennial protest candidate, it won't be easy. A French election campaign will be different than a race for seats in the European Parliament. Moderate voters might rally to block Le Pen if she's seen as a possible Prime Minister. And, unlike in the European vote, France holds two-round legislative elections, minimizing the influence of parties seen as extreme, like RN.

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But if Le Pen overcomes these steep obstacles to win a majority or even just the largest number of seats in France's Parliament, she would transform the country's politics.

Under the French constitution, the President has special responsibilities for Europe, foreign affairs, and defense, but a Prime Minister with a parliamentary majority can lead on domestic policy. Le Pen has said she favors withholding part of France's financial contribution to the E.U. and would adopt policies that conflict with bloc rules on the single market and migration. She might also try to block or minimize French aid to Ukraine. In any of these cases, France's turmoil would produce aftershocks across Europe and leave policymakers scrambling for answers.

A Le Pen premiership, if deftly handled, could boost her chance of becoming President later on. (She already saw her vote share jump from 34% in the 2017 presidential contest to 41% in the 2022 one.) The next vote for the top job isn't until 2027, giving her critics, in France and beyond, plenty of time to worry.

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What Powell’s Interest Rate Comments Mean for Green Investment

Justin Worland is a senior correspondent at TIME in the Washington, D.C. bureau. He received Covering Climate Now's inaugural Climate Journalist of the Year award in 2022, among other awards. He is the Outrider Foundation fellow at TIME.

On May 1, Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell offered a two-part message to eager interest rate watchers. The Fed is unlikely to increase interest rates this year, but policymakers there are also not rushing to cut them from 5.25%-5.5%. “I don’t know how long it’ll take,” Powell said of when the Fed might cut rates.

Interests rate shape markets, and that’s especially true with renewable energy. Clean energy projects typically have high upfront costs, but are cheaper to run than their fossil fuel counterparts because they don’t require operators to continually purchase fuel. As a result, the price of clean energy is to a significant extent determined by the cost of the debt that developers take on when they first build the project.

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Energy experts sometimes refer to what they call the levelized cost of electricity, or LCOE, to compare the cost of generating electricity over the lifetime of different facilities or energy sources. That figure incorporates all of the different costs associated with building and operating a plant from development to decommissioning. An April analysis from research and consulting firm Wood Mackenzie found that a 2-percentage point interest rate increase would lead to as much as a 20% spike in the LCOE for renewables. Power plants running on natural gas face only a 11% increase in the LCOE under the same interest-rate conditions.

At the same time, large oil and gas companies have enjoyed record profits over the last several years, giving firms deep pockets and leaving them less reliant on debt to finance projects.

The challenge that interest rates pose to renewable energy isn't new. Indeed, it's been a key point of discussion in energy and climate circles since inflation began to rise rapidly post-COVID. But what is new is the prospect of a longer period of sustained high interest rates. Billions in renewable energy projects have been announced in the time since the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act, but many projects still require final investment decisions. And higher interest rates risk causing the math not to add up.

The interest rate environment is a definite headwind, but there are still reasons to stay the course with renewable energy. Of course, the economics of wind and solar is highly location dependent. In many places, they remain a good bet even with higher interest rates. In some places, including in Europe, governments have set decarbonization or renewable energy standards regardless of additional cost. Lastly, it's worth considering that energy markets are dynamic, a trend which is bound to continue. A spike in fossil fuel prices driven by geopolitical stability or other unexpected developments could shift the math.

And then there’s the climate imperative. The energy infrastructure we build today will be around for decades and determine how far away we land from meeting climate targets. If interest rates remain high, policymakers keen to address climate change may need to look for new ways to continue to nudge the world toward cleaner energy sources, whether that’s the further development of carbon markets or implementing new mechanisms under discussion designed to reduce the cost of capital for clean energy.

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Why the Westminster Dog Show Made Me Appreciate Mutts

Tomlinson is the author of the book *DOGLAND*, due out April 23, about the Westminster Dog Show and the bond between dogs and their people. He is a longtime journalist who lives in Charlotte with his wife, her mother and a cat named Jack Reacher

I spent three years among dogs with bloodlines like British royalty. In our world, they would be earls and duchesses. Their names are in stud books that go back countless generations. They are the product of centuries of careful breeding to make them the most perfect versions of themselves.

Eh. I like mutts better.

It's not that I *didn't* like the dogs I met at dog shows around the U.S.–including the most prestigious of them all, the Westminster Dog Show. They were beautiful specimens: athletic, combed to a high sheen, well-behaved. The only dog that growled at me the whole time was a Petit Basset Griffon Vendéen (shortened in the dog world to "PBGV") at a show in Tennessee. It belongs to our

beloved former vet, who shows dogs on the weekends. Maybe her dog thought I was a little too friendly.

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The dogs on the dog-show circuit—a never-ending tour of big cities and small towns all over America, a rolling caravan that I came to think of as "Dogland"—have to meet brutal guidelines just to step into the ring. Each of the American Kennel Club's 200 recognized breeds has a written standard that outlines what a prime example of the breed can and cannot be. Some breed standards run thousands of words. A brief rundown of flaws that can disqualify a dog from competition:

Doberman pinscher: Overbite of more than three-sixteenths of an inch, or underbite of more than one-eighth inch.

Papillion: All white *or* not having any white.

Shetland sheepdog: Height of less than 13 inches or more than 16 inches.

Dogs that meet all the rules and make it to the top of the show world are just about physically perfect. I spent a lot of time with a Samoyed named Striker who won more than 100 dog shows all over North America. One time I asked his handler, Laura King, to tell me where Striker fails to meet the Samoyed breed standard, which runs to 1,600 words. The only thing she could think of was a slight discoloration on the inside of his lip.

None of this is by accident. Breeders choose the puppies they believe to be "show quality" when they are just a few weeks old. (The other dogs in the litter are deemed "pet quality." Dogland is the only place where that phrase serves as a dig.)

The ones who grow up to be champion show dogs are then bred with other champion show dogs to produce, naturally, even more champion show dogs. But that process, repeated over generations within a breed, leads to what people in Dogland refer to as “line breeding.” What it means, in practice, is that show dogs are inbred.

Inbreeding is fairly common among all types of animals. Intensive inbreeding, in situations like the show-dog world, can have long-term medical effects. That’s because recessive genes that could get muted by crossbreeding get amplified instead. This means that nearly every breed of purebred dog has chronic health problems that never get fixed. In 2015, a group of researchers analyzed the records of nearly 89 thousand dogs that came through a California veterinary hospital over a 15-year span. They found that purebreds were more likely than mutts to have any of 10 different genetic conditions—everything from cataracts to dermatitis to bloat (a distended stomach condition that can be fatal).

Perfection always comes with a price.

Thinking about that price led me to think about the parade of dogs I’ve been lucky enough to know throughout my life. Nearly all of them have been mutts, and you could tell just by looking at them. The dogs I’ve loved have had crooked teeth and scrawny butts. They walked a little sideways or drooled from one side of the mouth. They were all, in their own way, perfectly imperfect.

My wife and I had the great luck to live with a yellow Lab mutt, Fred, who arrived in our lives as a stray puppy in the ditch in our old front yard. We never figured out exactly what else he was. Our vet thought he had some German shorthaired pointer in him, which made sense, because occasionally he’d stop in the middle of the yard and go on point. As far as we could tell, he was never pointing at anything in particular. Something in his DNA must have told him he should point now and then, just to keep up the family tradition.

Fred wouldn’t have lasted five minutes in a show ring. His back end sometimes strayed when he walked, like a fishtailing car. But he was the most loving and lovable dog I’ve ever been around. Never once, in his entire life, did he harm another living thing. As far as I know, he never even ate a bug.

It broke our hearts when old age, and a tumor on his liver, finally got him. But he made it to 14 and a half years—more than two years longer than the average life of a purebred yellow Lab. I think of that now as extra innings, free baseball, a second helping of dessert. He blessed our lives and part of the blessing was how long he stayed.

There were many purebreds in Dogland that I would have taken home in a second if I’d had the chance. It was breathtaking to watch them sometimes, like being in the front row at an NBA game. But if you gave me all the dogs in the world to choose from, I’d start with the ones that are a little lopsided, asymmetrical, funky. Our quirks are features, not flaws. Give me a mutt.

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It’s Time to Treat Sugar Like Cigarettes

Hyman, MD, is a practicing family physician, an internationally recognized speaker, a best selling author, an educator, and an advocate in the fields of Functional Medicine, real food, nutrition, and wellness. Gutman is an inventor, a serial healthcare and technology pioneer and entrepreneur, a best selling author, a philanthropist, and a Stanford University adjunct professor

The food we eat impacts every aspect of our lives and our bodies: our hormones, brain chemistry, immune system, microbiome; the list goes on. As consumers, we deserve the right to easily understand our foods’ nutritional value in order to make informed decisions about what we consume and how that will impact our health and well being. This is especially important when it comes to ingredients that are detrimental when eaten in excess, such as sugar. As researchers in functional medicine, longevity, AI, and nutrition, as well as inventors of health-enhancing and life-saving solutions, we have dedicated our professional lives to improving the health and well-being of millions everywhere. And while we applaud the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) taking important strides to pass mandatory front-of-package labeling for packaged

foods in the U.S., this is a change that cannot come soon enough. Everyone's health depends on it.

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The FDA recommends adults consume no more than 50 grams of added sugar per day (based on a 2,000 calorie diet), but the average American consumes closer to one-third of a pound of sugar daily, more than three times the recommended amount. To put that into perspective, the average American consumes over 100 pounds of sugar per person per year. With that much sugar consumption, it is no wonder that 49% of American adults are diabetic or pre-diabetic. What's worse is that much of the sugar we consume occurs without our even realizing it. There are over 60 different ways sugar is identified on nutrition labels, making a consumer's attempt to regulate their sugar intake unfairly complicated.

Extensive academic research published in medical peer-reviewed journals backs common knowledge that excess sugar consumption can lead to serious chronic conditions, as well as fatigue, anxiety, memory loss, ADHD, and even to a shorter life.

Seventy four percent of packaged foods in the U.S. contain added sugar, including seemingly healthy foods, such as salad dressing, coleslaw, and even baked beans, marinades, and yogurt; some sweetened yogurts contain more sugar than a can of soda. The fact that sugar is so biologically addictive — studies indicate it is eight times more addictive than cocaine — makes the reality that it's hidden in so many foods even more harmful. Most of us are addicted to sugar and we don't even know it.

This cycle of addiction is relentless and hard to break: we eat food with sugar, which then triggers a blood sugar spike, which lights up the pleasure center in our brain. When the inevitable sugar crash comes, we seek that spike again in the form of craving more sugar. Without easily discernible food labeling, shoppers unknowingly

create this cycle inside their own bodies, even while they erroneously think the food they're buying is healthy.

Read More: *How the World Got Hooked on Sugar*

In many countries, labels on packaged foods serve a similar function to labels on cigarette cartons: to warn consumers of risk. In Chile, a policy of "high in" labels on the front of sugary drinks dramatically reduced the consumption of those beverages. In Israel, a front-of-package labelling system, wherein a red label indicates an item high in sugar, has led to significant positive changes in 76% of the population's food buying habits. We're excited to see what a similar program in the U.S. would yield.

Those in the U.S. lobbying against this front-of-package change, unsurprisingly, have an interest in the continued popularity of their products. In a February 2023 joint filing, the nation's largest cereal producers threatened a lawsuit after proposed changes would not allow them to label products as "healthy" if they didn't meet nutritional standards.

This dynamic is similar to changes made in cigarette advertising in the 20th century. In the 1940s, a famous Camel cigarettes campaign featured the slogan, "More doctors smoke Camels." By 1969, a mandatory warning label was added to cigarettes, giving consumers clearer access to information about risks, allowing them to make more informed choices about their health. Today the percentage of Americans who smoke is 11% compared to nearly 50% back in the day when "more doctors smoked Camels". Life expectancy rose nearly 11 years in that span of time too, and the decrease in smoking certainly contributed.

While front-of-package labeling on packaged foods is a crucial first step towards a healthier society, education and awareness alone will only get us so far. To drive even more significant change in the way most Americans eat, a change that will lead to a healthier

population, we must also incentivize the production and widespread distribution of healthier alternatives. These alternatives—a packaged cookie with healthier ingredients, for instance—must be just as delicious, and readily available as those loaded with sugar. The recently announced new standards by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that will limit added sugars in school meals can greatly help with the availability of healthier alternatives, especially when children form their eating habits. For the rest of us, though, front-of-package labeling is an important step one in this journey towards national wellness and it will also encourage producers to create healthier options for consumers; readily available healthier alternatives is step two.

FDA leadership ensuring labeling of high contents of sugar in packaged foods could increase awareness and reduce the negative impacts of sugar and help millions live healthier longer lives. This change would help us make more informed choices about our food and our health. We believe it is our right, and every American's right, to have clear and visible information about the sugar content of the foods we are eating in order to make those decisions.

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The Promise of Nuclear Energy Brings the West to Mongolia

Charlie Campbell is a correspondent at TIME, based in the Singapore bureau. He covers business, tech, and geopolitics across Asia. He was previously China Bureau Chief.

The Gobi Desert, once revered by Mongolian poet Dulduityn Danzanravjaa as hiding a cosmic portal to the heavenly kingdom of Shambala, was transformed in the 20th century from spiritual energy center to fossil-fuel hub. Wild rabbits and donkeys share the windswept dunes with rusting oil pumps, while an endless caravan of soot-stained trucks haul coal south to the border with China. Now, the Gobi is on the cusp of another reincarnation, one that its supporters believe could help future-proof the global energy landscape.

In October, the French state-owned nuclear firm Orano signed a $1.7 billion deal to extract and process uranium from the Zuuvch-Ovoo mine, not two hours by car from the landmarked site of Danzanravjaa's cosmic portal. Mongolia's first uranium mine is

expected to produce about 2,750 tons annually for three decades, some 4% of global production; it's currently one of the top 10 unexploited deposits worldwide.

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"This deposit is far from the only one," says Olivier Thoumyre, a senior vice president for Orano. "There is huge potential in Mongolia … to enter the uranium market at the right time, because we know needs are going to increase." Mongolia boasts the world's second largest uranium reserves, which promise to catapult this landlocked nation of 3.5 million into position as a key player in the global renewable-energy transition.

Catalyzed by the war in Ukraine and Europe's desire to wean itself off cheap Russian gas, support is booming for clean nuclear energy, which generates electricity by splitting atoms of uranium or plutonium. The enthusiasm must overcome deep anxiety over reactor meltdowns such as those at Chernobyl in 1986 and Fukushima in 2011, questions about the disposal of nuclear waste, and the potential for plants to be targets of war or terrorism. But historic fatalities across seven decades of the civil nuclear industry are measured in the low thousands. Meanwhile, air pollution from

burning fossil fuels is estimated to cause 5 million deaths every year.

Today, nations from Romania and Saudi Arabia to Bangladesh and Indonesia are exploring nuclear plants. The E.U. has included nuclear power plants in its list of “green” investments that can be funded by its own green bonds, given the energy produced boasts just a quarter of the carbon footprint of even solar. At COP28, more than 20 countries across four continents asked to triple the world’s nuclear energy capacity by 2050. Even Germany, which shuttered most of its 17 reactors after Fukushima, is now openly considering developing small modular reactors. “Today, we probably have more of a problem of capacity than public acceptance,” says Thoumyre.

Diversifying uranium supplies also makes sense for the U.S. Despite strict sanctions on oil and gas over Vladimir Putin’s war of choice, the first six months of 2023 saw Russian shipments of enriched uranium to America’s 92 commercial nuclear reactors more than double, to $695.5 million. On May 13, U.S. President Joe Biden signed legislation to curb this supply, though experts predict that it will take at least five years of heavy investment for the U.S. to break its Russian uranium dependency.

Mongolia can help in that regard, if it steps lightly. It may be an adolescent, rambunctious democracy, but a nation squeezed between Russia and China—and whose capital, Ulan Bator, literally translates as “red hero”—cannot shrug off historical and geopolitical baggage so easily. Since democratization in 1990, Mongolia has cultivated ties with the West via its “third-neighbor policy,” of which the Orano deal is a prime example. But a nation reliant on Beijing for 90% of trade and Moscow for 90% of imported gas and petroleum must tread carefully in this fraught new era of great-power competition. “Russia feels Mongolia’s mines are really their assets because Soviet money was invested into them,” says Ken de Graaf, a former vice chairman of the North America–Mongolia Business Council.

Mongolia is an acute illustration of the geopolitical, environmental, and economic challenges facing mineral-rich nations seeking to benefit from emerging technologies, whether supplying indium for flat-screen TVs, rhenium for jet engines, or gallium for smartphones. With mining already accounting for a quarter of GDP and 90% of exports, the hope in Mongolia is that this generation of energy extraction works out better than the last. The nation remains blighted by endemic poverty and, because of a reliance on coal for heat and power, some of the planet’s most rancid air. Over the past decade, respiratory diseases in Ulan Bator—the world’s most polluted capital—have increased nearly three-fold, with pneumonia the second leading cause of death among young children today. Miscarriages are 3.5 times as common in Ulan Bator’s polluted winter as in the comparatively clear summer.

But resource exploitation is a charged issue in Mongolia, a third of whose people are nomadic and fiercely protective of ancestral lands, worshipping the Eternal Blue Sky and considering even a shallow trench a shameful defiling of Mother Earth. The challenge for Mongolia’s government is to safely harness the benefits of the

resource boom while mitigating pushback within its borders and beyond.

“I’m confident that we will have a successful cooperation with Orano,” Mongolian Prime Minister Oyun-Erdene Luvsannamsrai tells TIME. “But it is important for us to have public acceptance so that the project can be legitimate among the people of Mongolia.”

Securing that legitimacy has been a key focus for Orano, which formed a local joint venture, Badrakh Energy, to run Zuuvch-Ovoo alongside Mongolian state mining company Erdenes Mongol LLC. Orano began exploring the Gobi back in 1997, discovering its first uranium deposits in 2006 and obtaining licenses in 2016. It then built a pilot project to demonstrate feasibility, producing 11 tons of uranium over 18 months during 2021 and 2022. The pilot project remains staffed by a skeleton crew, though the site will likely be used for training the 800 permanent staff for the full mine, construction of which is slated to take three or four years.

Practically all Zuuvch-Ovoo’s neighbors are nomads who live in *gers*, otherwise known as yurts—felt-covered domed tents of latticed wood with central dung-burning stoves. Mongolians

assemble their *gers* to face south to catch the light; they can be easily transported on camels to follow grazing herds and reassembled in under an hour. It's a harsh existence with temperatures in the Gobi plunging to –40°F in the winter and soaring to 113°F during summer. *Gers* are still constructed as they have been for millennia, albeit now with solar-powered televisions, refrigerators, and wi-fi connections.

When Orano first set up camp nearby, the herders were suspicious, unnerved by alarmist social media posts that incorrectly suggested radiation from uranium could cause mutations in livestock. (Toxic waste is a concern nuclear power plants must deal with, but mining raw uranium exposes workers to far less radiation than a job as a hospital radiologist would.) Staff would be chased away by furious locals, who hurled dead animals and once even a Molotov cocktail into the mine's compound. It didn't help that Mongolia's first COVID-19 case was an Orano employee visiting from France, a fact that energized demonstrations. But a slow and steady outreach program has quelled concerns. Orano committed to putting $1 million annually into community projects near Zuuvch-Ovoo, whose pilot site welcomed 670 visitors in 2023—herders, students, and NGOs, to whom the company strove to explain the mining process. "There were a lot of rumors at the start about animals dying," says a herder's wife, Tsevelmaa Narantogtool, as she plays

by her *ger* with her 3-year-old son, Irmuunbileg, proudly showing off his SpiderMan pajamas. “But it’s been years now, and nothing has happened.”

To be sure, history is rife with examples of supposed progress whose real harms have not become clear until decades later. (To wit: climate change.) No fewer are the examples of damage done by those who seek that progress, to peoples who live more in sync with the earth.

But it helps that Zuuvch-Ovoo is far from a conventional mine. The uranium deposit lies some two to five miles below the surface and is sandwiched between two thick layers of clay. This distinct geography allows in situ recovery, or ISR, a leaching process during which acidified water is pumped deep to the deposit via narrow, vertical tubes. The acid dissolves the uranium before being retrieved at the surface via a network of outlet pipes. The uranium is then removed and processed into yellowcake, a low-grade form with the claggy texture of spent coffee grounds. Eventually, this can be enriched into fuel rods.

It’s in theory a “closed loop” process where vital groundwater is completely sealed from possible contaminants. What’s more,

there’s no gaping quarry, pit tunnels, diggers, noise, dust, or choking diesel emissions. The only evidence of this “mine without a mine,” as Orano likes to put it, is a network of stumpy pipes poking out of the surface of the desert, through which camels and horses can wander just as before. While mining operations occur across a concession of some 35 acres, only a tiny section used for production facilities and crew housing is fenced off.

Still, the project has been dogged by controversy. In 2018, French prosecutors began investigating Orano for alleged bribery of a public official in Mongolia involving a third-party consulting firm. (Orano says it is cooperating with the ongoing investigation.) The French anti-nuclear network Sortir du Nucléaire has criticized the leaching process for the quantities of acid used, and in 2018 a group of Mongolian citizens filed a complaint against Badrakh Energy, alleging a spike in livestock malformations as well as cancers and miscarriages nearby. In response, Orano points to independent monitoring by Mongolia’s Academy of Sciences that found no discernible impact to local water, soil, air, or vegetation.

That hasn’t stopped traders and rival herders from leveraging the mine to barter down the price for local animals. “People say our meat is toxic because of the uranium,” says Munkhsuuri Dambadarjaa, 41, a herder who grazes his 1,500 cows, horses, sheep, goats, and camels next to Zuuvch-Ovoo. “But if so, how come we are still alive?”

Nuclear power and the mining projects necessary to fuel it will always have detractors. However, the Gobi's increasingly problematic winters have inadvertently served as a propaganda tool. During the harsh season, herders now bring their animals to the plant's gates to ask if they can shelter inside. "We have to say no, it's an industrial facility," says Enkhtulga Gantulga, a sustainability and community-affairs manager for Orano. "But it shows acceptance has completely changed."

The herders have always contended with *dzuds*, severe winters that arrive after summer droughts and trigger widespread animal death. But global warming has exacerbated this phenomenon. Average temperatures in Mongolia are already 2°C warmer than at the start of the 20th century—more severe than the global average—meaning drier weather, more frequent dust storms, and sparser grasslands for grazing animals to acquire the fat necessary to survive longer winters. This year was a particularly bad *dzud*, which affected over 90% of the country and killed over 4.7 million animals as pastures were buried in snow and ice. At least 2,250 herder families lost over 70% of their livestock. When TIME visited Zuuvch-Ovoo in February, the adjacent land was strewn with frozen gazelles and cows, tongues protruding in grim rictus. The frequency of *dzuds* has brought home to Mongolia's rural

population what has become irrefutable to its urban dwellers: that the climate crisis is deadly, and clean energy vital to mitigate its ravages.

Mongolia's coal addiction is especially perverse considering the bounty of clean power at its disposal. Whereas coal last year accounted for over half of Mongolia's total $15.2 billion export revenue, the hope is that future mining projects can enhance, rather than impair, quality of life. Orano says running Zuuvch-Ovoo will require only 12 megawatts (MW) of electricity, of which 5 MW will be generated by harnessing the heat produced by the on-site sulfuric acid plant. The remaining 7 MW will, it says, likely come from a nearby wind farm. "Orano's business is to produce decarbonized energy, so we need to be consistent," says Marc Meleard, CEO of Badrakh Energy.

Along with subterranean uranium deposits, the Gobi also offers tremendous solar and wind potential. Back in 2011, Softbank CEO Masayoshi Son even proposed an Asian Super Grid linking China, Japan, South Korea, and as far south as Singapore to solar and wind farms blanketing the Gobi. Although such grandiose plans have stalled, Mongolia remains committed to becoming a net-zero

economy by 2050 and hopes to set international standards for responsible resource exploitation. “The journey is just starting because of the global decarbonization shift,” says Orchlon Enkhtsetseg, a former mining executive who founded renewable-energy startup URECA. “So how do we put in policies now so that Mongolia is positioned as the most economically competitive place to buy renewable energy from?”

Yet competition also brings challenges. Orano is 90% owned by the French government, and Thoumyre insists Zuuvch-Ovoo “will certainly contribute to the energy security of Europe.” But Mongolia’s uranium requires processing at one of the dozen or so enrichment facilities around the world—and the closest are in Russia and China. Even if Orano wanted to ship elsewhere, Mongolia’s geography necessitates using Chinese ports. Oyun-Erdene insists “our two immediate neighbors do not interfere in our domestic affairs.” But few believe Mongolia would be immune to pressure if the West’s relations with Moscow and Beijing continue to deteriorate. “When it comes to resources and energy, when is geopolitics not involved?” asks Enkhtsetseg pointedly.

Recent experience also makes mining a contentious topic in domestic Mongolian politics, especially as parliamentary elections approach in June. “Resource development is probably the biggest dilemma that we’re facing as a country,” says Amarjin Nemekhbayar, an adviser to the chairman of the opposition Democratic Party of Mongolia. As commodity prices soared in the early 2000s, Mongolia briefly became the world’s fastest-growing economy, earning the sobriquet “Mine-golia.” Prospectors from across North America and Europe quaffed single-malt in upscale Ulan Bator nightspots. But the mineral boom was short-lived, and in 2017 Mongolia went cap in hand to the International Monetary Fund for a $5.5 billion bailout.

Mongolia boasts significant deposits of gold, copper, phosphorus, zinc, and lithium, as well as coal and uranium. The impetus is to “not repeat the mistakes of the past,” says Oyun-Erdene. “It is very important to go step-by-step.” Whereas Mongolia spent profligately during its previous mining boom, Oyun-Erdene says future revenues will be “put into a sovereign wealth fund and used to expand other sectors like agriculture and tourism so that we can diversify our economy.”

Past missteps also mean Orano’s joint venture has been closely scrutinized. Orano boasts a 90% stake in Badrakh Energy with 10% owned by Mongolia, reducing state liabilities, though that smaller slice will be “preferred shares,” receiving prioritized dividends and “guaranteeing over 50% of the global benefits of the mine go to the people of Mongolia,” says Thoumyre. Meleard estimates Mongolia’s share at over $2 billion over the project’s lifetime. October’s accord between Orano and Erdenes Mongol LLC was signed inside the Elysée Palace in Paris in the presence of French President Emmanuel Macron and Mongolian President Ukhnaagiin Khurelsukh. Yet despite this backing, the investment agreement remains stalled after two separate heads of the relevant working group were transferred to other posts. “We had to restart nearly

from scratch," Meleard sighs wearily. "Maybe we'll have more chance after the election. It's quite difficult to read."

Orano has so far plowed $250 million into its Mongolia operation without earning a cent. Since 2006, it has launched over 300 projects including new community centers for herders and planting 20,000 native saxaul bushes to combat desertification. In the nearest town of Ulaanbadrakh, last year alone Orano helped renovate the hospital, meeting hall, museum, and school, which has 226 students 8 to 14 years old. Orano purchased 14 computers for the school in 2016 and is about to replace them for the third time. Touring the dozen immaculate classrooms, flanked by trophies and crayon drawings of Bart Simpson, the head teacher asks the tidily dressed children if they've heard of Orano. "Yes, it bought the minibus!" shouts one student. "The whiteboard!" chimes in another. "And the books!" says a third. The teacher uses our visit to make a spirited argument for why her charges also need tablets.

In the Gobi, Orano operates as almost a state within a state; when the local governor needs something, he doesn't approach the cash-strapped central government, he goes directly to the mine. TIME saw a petition from the Mongolian military asking Orano for funds to repair the border fence. The seemingly endless flow of cash has

engendered a sense of dependence and, perhaps inevitably, resentment.

“The French are penny pinchers; the Chinese mine gives a lot more,” complains herder’s wife Sarangerel Tsetsegee, seated by a cauldron of boiled beef bones in her brightly painted *ger*, as she picks gristle off a cow femur with a knife. Her gripe is that Orano contributed to the government’s emergency fund to provide hay during the *dzud* instead of doling out cash. “You should give the money directly to the herders!”

While you might expect the boss of a multibillion-dollar mining venture to travel by private jet or helicopter, Meleard chats with TIME on the rattling Soviet-era train he takes every few weeks for the 10-hour trudge between the Gobi city of Sainshand and Ulan Bator. He doesn’t begrudge due diligence, but his frustration is palpable. By comparison, Orano also entered Kazakhstan the same year as Mongolia and by 2005 was selling that uranium on the international market. Today, Orano extracts as much uranium in a single day from its Kazakh mine as the Mongolia pilot project produced across its entire 18 months of operation. And even that uranium still sits within 120 black drums inside shipping containers at Zuuvch-Ovoo, since Orano hasn’t been granted an export license.

Meleard admits that were Orano a private rather than state-owned firm, it probably would have abandoned Mongolia long ago.

“It’s already 27 years with only expenses,” he says with a Gallic shrug. “It’s really too long.” Such delays are “very specific to Mongolia,” he laments, as our train rolls out of Sainshand station.

Behind us, Danzanravjaa’s cosmic portal and its ethereal promise of Shambala fades into the gloom. But the prospect of a better tomorrow springing from the Gobi feels very real and very close—if only today can first be secured.

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Scientists Are Finding Out Just How Toxic Your Stuff Is

Jamie Ducharme is a health correspondent at TIME. She covers the COVID-19 pandemic, Long COVID, mental health, vaping, psychedelics, and more. Her work for TIME has won awards from the Deadline Club, the New York Press Club, and the Newswomen's Club of New York. Additionally, she is the author of *Big Vape: The Incendiary Rise of Juul*, which was adapted for a forthcoming Netflix docuseries.

If you are newly suspicious about the safety of the products in your medicine cabinet, there's a good chance you have Valisure, a tiny laboratory in New Haven, Conn., to thank. Or blame.

Tucked away in an unassuming office park, Valisure's team of about a dozen scientists has over the past five years detected potentially cancer-causing chemicals in widely used medications, hand sanitizers, sunscreens, antiperspirant body sprays, dry shampoos, and—most recently—acne treatments. When Valisure sounds the alarm about a new scary-sounding finding, a flood of headlines, lawsuits, and product recalls often follows. The

company is helping to shatter an illusion that some 80% of Americans believe: that the products they buy have been through enough safety testing to be proved not harmful.

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"Most consumers assume that because it's for sale, it must be safe," says Teresa Murray, who directs the consumer watchdog office at the nonprofit U.S. Public Interest Research Group (PIRG). "Oftentimes, that's very much not true."

Despite its nearly $7 billion annual operating budget, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) isn't analyzing every shampoo or supplement on sale at your local drugstore. In fact, the FDA does not approve most cosmetics before they hit shelves—let alone assess how they'll affect human health after years of regular use. This information vacuum has given rise to a network of nonprofits, consumer-protection groups, and independent scientists dedicated to informing the public about potential hazards lurking in their products.

Within this group, Valisure has been uniquely effective at grabbing attention. Its testing has led to product recalls from household-name brands, congressional testimony, and partnerships with big-name organizations like the U.S. Department of Defense and the Kaiser Permanente health system. But Valisure—the underdog that built its reputation as a crusader for public health—has made enemies too. Critics and regulators have denounced its testing methods and the legitimacy of its scientific findings, raising doubts about the very doubts the company has raised. So every time Valisure's results make the news, Americans are left to figure out how worried they should be.

The idea for Valisure came not from a grand plan to overhaul decades-old regulatory structures, but from one friend venting to another.

In 2015, David Light, a molecular biologist, heard from his friend and former Yale University classmate Adam Clark-Joseph about a problem with his medication. Every so often, Clark-Joseph said, he got a batch that triggered side effects and sent his chronic condition into relapse. He said his doctors mostly shrugged off these incidents as unfortunate quirks of a health care system where supply chains are so complex that quality assurance is difficult. Light remembers being far more shaken than his friend's physicians.

"It was shocking to both of us to realize the FDA's not testing everything, and retail stores and pharmacies aren't doing the testing," he says. "So who's actually testing the product, as opposed to looking at the paperwork?"

Light and Clark-Joseph—now Valisure's president and head of analytics, respectively—co-founded Valisure in 2015 to fulfill that mission, setting up shop down the road from their alma mater. At first, Valisure quality-tested medications, then sold them through its own online pharmacy. But four years after its founding, Valisure made a name for itself in a splashier way.

Read More: *A Test Told Me I'm Basically Made of Plastic. You Probably Are Too*

In September 2019, Valisure's scientists used a "citizen petition," which everyday people can use to request action from the FDA, to announce they'd found the probable carcinogen NDMA in every batch of the heartburn medication ranitidine that they tested. Then lawyers brought a slew of lawsuits against GSK and Sanofi, pharmaceutical companies that have sold the popular ranitidine drug Zantac, linking it to clients' cancers. (Many of these cases have been settled or dismissed.) In April 2020, the FDA asked all makers to pull ranitidine from the market.

The FDA has said that the recall was based on its own testing, not Valisure's. Though FDA tests did find elevated NDMA levels—high enough to trigger a recall—they were much lower than Valisure's. That's because Valisure used extreme testing practices, like exposing the drugs to heat, that may have actually produced NDMA, the FDA said in a response to Valisure's petition.

But to the public, a recall is a recall, and Valisure had been the first one to sound the alarm. The scandal boosted Valisure's reputation; Light still keeps Zantac-branded memorabilia in his office as evidence of his lab's impact.

In 2021, Valisure sold off the pharmacy business to focus on product testing. Mostly—thankfully—this business is a boring one. Valisure's clients are mainly organizations, like health care systems, that buy lots of medications and want to know what's in them. About 90% of the time, Light says, this testing is uneventful. But now and then, often operating on their own hunches, his staff finds something concerning. Over the past few years, Valisure has found the carcinogen benzene in a variety of consumer products, including sunscreen, dry shampoo, and acne treatments, leading to major news cycles and, in some cases, product recalls.

A range of other groups work in this space. Experts from the Cosmetic Ingredient Review assess the safety of ingredients used in beauty products, with funding from the Personal Care Products Council, an industry trade group. The University of Kentucky's health care system also performs independent analysis of medications.

But unlike Valisure, many of the other groups informing the public about products with questionable safety data—including the Ralph Nader–aligned PIRG, the Silent Spring Institute, Toxic-Free Future, and the Environmental Working Group (EWG)—are nonprofits. Sunscreen is a regular topic of concern for these groups—not necessarily because of benzene contamination, but because of chemical ingredients linked to hormone disruption and cancer—as are things like hair products (some of which have also been linked to cancer) and fragrances. These groups have had made splashes too; PIRG was behind the 2018 discovery of asbestos in makeup sold at Claire's, leading to recalls.

"The more we look [at consumer products], the worse it looks," says Dr. Megan Schwarzman, associate director of the Center for Green Chemistry at the University of California, Berkeley. But, Schwarzman says, it's not always easy for scientists, let alone the average consumer, to understand what to make of the potential risks raised by these groups. "There's lead in pigments in lipstick," Schwarzman says. "If you wear lipstick once a month, it's probably not a big exposure"—but is wearing lipstick a few times a week enough to cause health problems over years or decades? Is the risk high enough to swear off lipstick altogether? What about other cosmetics? These questions are difficult even for scientists to answer.

It's also near impossible to isolate which chemical exposures, if any, are responsible for health problems, because "we are exposed to [toxic chemicals] at generally very low concentrations all the time," adds Debra Kaden, a toxicologist and principal consultant at

the environmental-consulting firm Ramboll. An astounding number of the products in the average American home, for example, contain PFAS “forever” chemicals.

Given those realities, consumer-protection groups have their work cut out for them—which is an indictment of the U.S. regulatory system, says Homer Swei, who oversees consumer-safety science at EWG. “It would be great if there was no need for organizations like this,” Swei says. “Why does a third party have to do the heavy lifting for industry and government?”

The FDA regulates most things that Americans put on and in their bodies, from vaccines to tobacco products, but the scope of its oversight varies depending on the product. Pharmaceutical companies have to conduct complex clinical trials and secure FDA approval before bringing new drugs to market. Meanwhile, the agency's regulatory structure for cosmetics stems from a law enacted in 1938—long before the average American was using up to a dozen personal-care products, potentially containing more than 100 chemicals in total, every single day.

A 2022 law expanded the FDA's purview over cosmetics—it can now issue a mandatory recall and suspend manufacturing facilities if a serious issue arises—and some states have passed additional laws related to consumer protection. But experts say there are still huge holes in the ways many products are regulated in the U.S. Under the current structure, cosmetics companies can decide what sorts of safety and quality testing they want to do, which often isn't adequate, Swei says. Brands don't even have to submit the results of their testing in most cases. And, contrary to popular belief, the FDA rarely orders a recall; more commonly, it requests a voluntary one.

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The FDA is also lenient toward potentially concerning ingredients, compared with regulators in other countries. Since 2009, Europe has required cosmetics makers to submit safety data before selling a new product. In 2023 alone, regulators in the European Union moved to ban 30 chemicals from use in beauty products—more than the FDA has banned from cosmetics in its more than 100 years in existence. Many known or suspected health hazards, like formaldehyde and parabens, are still used in a variety of products sold in the U.S., such as hair treatments and lotions.

The FDA has implicitly acknowledged gaps in its approach—like in 2019, when it asked sunscreen manufacturers for more safety data. A spokesperson wrote in a statement that “the agency remains committed to using all available tools to oversee the safety and quality of FDA-regulated products.”

The question, for some, is whether Valisure should be one of those tools. Unlike nonprofit groups, Valisure is a business backed by private investors, which means its work has “got to make financial sense,” Light says. Valisure has lobbied for policies that would push companies to pursue the kind of independent testing that’s the bread and butter of its bottom line. “Any increase in the use of independent testing will benefit Valisure as a business,” Light acknowledges. But he maintains it would also be a win for public health. Personal-injury lawyers make a similar argument, saying their fees (routinely 30% to 40% of any damages awarded) serve as a market incentive to hold companies accountable.

In court filings, Unilever has also alleged that Valisure is motivated by money. Before filing a citizen petition related to benzene in dry shampoos, Unilever said, Valisure offered to test its products and keep the results confidential if Unilever paid more than $1 million, an offer the company said it declined. And GSK and other companies have questioned Valisure’s relationship with plaintiffs’ attorneys, suggesting the lab works with lawyers to produce test results that will lead to juicy lawsuits. One of the first suits related to Zantac was filed by Light’s brother-in-law, an attorney in Florida. (Light says Valisure’s proposal to Unilever was taken out of context and the lab does not have inappropriate relationships with attorneys, including his brother-in-law, although its scientists sometimes serve as experts in cases.)

The FDA has criticisms as well. In a 2022 letter, the agency alleged that Valisure was using inappropriate methods and machinery for its tests. “Third-party testing using unreliable methods produces unreliable data, and decisions based on unreliable data are not

sound," an FDA spokesperson wrote in a statement provided to TIME.

Consider Valisure's recent finding of benzene in benzoyl peroxide acne treatments. For that testing, Valisure scientists analyzed what happened when benzoyl peroxide products were exposed to 122° temperatures for 18 days, conditions that the Personal Care Products Council argued have little real-world relevance. (Light, however, contends the test isn't so far-fetched: "What if it sits in a warehouse in Florida for two weeks, or sits on a shelf in a store where their air conditioner broke?")

Dr. Philip Landrigan, director of Boston College's Program for Global Public Health and the Common Good, argues that the public has a right to know about any level of benzene contamination. "We know that it's a carcinogen, even down to the lowest levels," he says.

Read More: *What's the Best Kind of Sunscreen?*

But Kaden, the Ramboll toxicologist, says much of the discussion about benzene doesn't give consumers enough context. In 2022, after Valisure tests revealed benzene in sunscreens, Kaden and a colleague did their own analysis, concluding that people could be exposed to more benzene in the vehicle exhaust they'd inhale walking down a city street than by using a sunscreen contaminated with benzene at the levels Valisure found. Other researchers have also found that people who use sunscreen actually tend to have lower blood concentrations of benzene than nonusers, which suggests these products are not major threats to the general public.

Toxic exposure is never a good thing, Kaden says, but "the dose makes the poison." Groups like Valisure, she says, don't always make that clear enough in their messaging to the public.

Light, however, stands by his lab and its findings. In fact, he seems to enjoy the notoriety that comes with being the guy brave enough to take on the FDA and major brands. Framed articles about Valisure's bombshell test results line the walls of his office and the lab's lobby, and he proudly displays the mug he got from a 2023 visit to the White House, where he was invited to talk about product safety.

Light dabbled in acting as a kid, playing a few parts on Mad TV when he was young. He still has some of that flair for the dramatic, speaking in a booming voice that prompts his publicist to shut his door when he gets going to avoid disrupting the whole office. "Some people like very straightforward spreadsheets and business plans," Light says. He prefers the spotlight. "I'm an adventurous kind of guy, I guess."

Sometimes, perhaps, too adventurous. During the summer of 2007, while a student at Yale, Light was arrested for firing a pistol into the ceiling of his fraternity house. Authorities reportedly found that Light—who was a gun enthusiast at the time—had numerous weapons, thousands of rounds of ammunition, and chemicals consistent with bomb-making in his room. (Light says the chemicals were not intended for illegal activity and notes that charges related to them were dropped.) He served about six months

of a one-year prison sentence and eventually went on to finish his degree at Yale in 2011.

“I sincerely regret the events that occurred during my college years,” Light wrote in a statement to TIME. “I take full responsibility for my actions … and since then have made a concerted effort to rebuild my life and contribute positively to society.”

How positively Valisure contributes to society is up for debate. The FDA, court system, and trade groups sometimes treat it as a nuisance, arguing its findings scare people without the science to back up the headlines. But the scientists who do similar work maintain that information is power—that even if consumers can’t pinpoint the exact moment at which exposure to benzene or NDMA or parabens becomes dangerous, they have a right to know it’s happening. “It’s up to everybody to decide for themselves the risk-benefit ratio,” Schwarzman says. “When you have the information, you get to do that.”

Under the existing regulatory structure, Americans probably wouldn’t get that information without independent labs and consumer-interest groups digging it up. Even finding details about product ingredients and news about product recalls currently requires a little effort on the part of consumers.

That may be changing. In addition to state-level efforts, U.S. lawmakers have in recent years introduced legislation that seeks to ban risky chemicals, improve transparency around supply chains and ingredient disclosures, and strengthen oversight of over-the-counter drugs. But for now, consumers are left to operate with imperfect products and limited information, says Kristin Knox, a data scientist at the Silent Spring Institute. In her own life, she’s tried to strike a balance between caution and panic, continuing to use mass-market products while also making tweaks like swapping

plastic household goods for glass, choosing unscented products, and using fewer cosmetics. “That there are things you can do that actually reduce your chemical burdens is good news,” she says. “But it’d be even better if the products didn’t have bad chemicals in the first place.”

Ultimately, any independent actor, from Valisure to Silent Spring to PIRG, has only so much authority. They can break into the news cycle, which sometimes results in recalls and changes from manufacturers, but they’re not the ones making, selling, and regulating products. Systemic change is required, Knox says, for jobs like hers to become obsolete.

“Like most people, I [used to assume], ‘Oh, it’s in the grocery store, it’s been reviewed by the government, it’s safe,’” Knox says. “It would be nice to live in a place where that’s true.”

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The Problem With TV's New Holocaust Obsession

Judy Berman is the TV critic at TIME. Along with reviewing current television, she writes about the ways in which entertainment and pop culture intersect with our larger social and political realities. Her TIME essay on *Ted Lasso* and modern masculinity won a New York Press Club award in 2022.

When you think about the Holocaust, as we all do in a 21st century shaped by the cataclysms of the 20th, what images appear in your mind's eye? I see Nazis marching into city squares. Jews crushed into airless cattle cars. An iron gate with the inscription "arbeit macht frei," and beyond it, rows of spartan dormitories housing skeletal inmates in filthy striped uniforms, subjected to all manner of dehumanization. There are smokestacks, barbed wire, mass graves.

These awful tableaux are the products of a lifelong immersion in Holocaust narratives, from factual accounts in textbooks to visits to museums to documentaries screened at Hebrew school. But because I grew up in the era of *Schindler's List* and *Life Is Beautiful*, my most indelible impressions of the genocide come

from pop culture. When I envision a concentration camp, I am seeing a collage of movie stills.

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The very same imagery suffuses *The Tattooist of Auschwitz*, Peacock's new, six-part adaptation of Heather Morris' internationally best-selling 2018 novel. Inspired by the author's conversations with Lali Sokolov, a Slovakian Jew who spent the final years of World War II tattooing ID numbers on new arrivals at the notorious death camp, it is ultimately, as Harvey Keitel's elderly Lali explains to Heather (Melanie Lynskey), "a love story." But that romance, between young Lali (Jonah Hauer-King) and another prisoner, Gita (Anna Próchniak), unfolds against what I can only describe as a familiar Holocaust backdrop. Viewers witness suffering that fits our broadest conceptions of the camps: sadistic Nazis; lines of naked bodies slouching towards death; Jews praying and singing to reassert their humanity.

The Tattooist is solidly made historical fiction, built on benign intentions and open-hearted performances. It's also the latest—and, in that quotidian concentration-camp hell dominates the plot, the most generic—example of a dubious TV trend: the Holocaust drama. While the genre dates back decades, and isn't limited to the small screen, the past year has seen an explosion of such shows about Nazis and their prey, from *We Were the Lucky Ones* to *The*

New Look to *Transatlantic*; *A Small Light* to *All the Light We Cannot See*.

Each of these series has its own angle. What unites most of them, however, is unwittingly exploitative imagery that long ago lost its power to shock and an adherence to tropes of individual suffering and perseverance, heroism and villainy, that abstract the Holocaust from any but the most anodyne political context: Nazis evil, Jews brave. This is a tumultuous moment for Jewish identity. Antisemitism and fascist ideology are surging—and that trend is driving Hollywood's demand for Holocaust scripts—as Jews weigh the morality of Israel's ongoing assault on Gaza. Yet the stories TV keeps telling about the most painful years in modern Jewish history too often cling to sentiment and cliché. What we need from these narratives—political insight, introspection—remains elusive.

In high school, I took two classes that happened to screen French New Wave filmmaker Alain Resnais' documentary *Night and Fog* just weeks apart. Released in 1956, the half-hour film exposed an international audience to photographic evidence of the multifarious horrors of the camps. The first viewing was as enlightening as it was harrowing. But the second felt obscene. I was staring at those same distressing images—slow pans across gas chambers disguised as showers, mounds of emaciated corpses—without learning anything new. I had to excuse myself after a few minutes.

Susan Sontag recounted a similar experience in her 1977 book *On Photography*. The cultural critic wrote that when she first encountered photos from the camps, at 12, “something broke. Some limit had been reached, and not only that of horror; I felt irrevocably grieved, wounded, but a part of my feeling started to tighten; something went dead; something is still crying.” But as the photos proliferated, she grew inured—evidence of a familiarity with atrocity that was alarming in itself: “At the time of the first photographs of the Nazi camps, there was nothing banal about these images. After 30 years, a saturation point may have been reached. In these last decades, ‘concerned’ photography has done at least as much to deaden conscience as to arouse it.”

A half-century later, *The New Look* on Apple TV+, *Lucky Ones* on Hulu, and *The Tattooist*—all based on true stories, cast with recognizable stars, and released in the past three months—cement a new era of Holocaust-fiction supersaturation. *The New Look* is an origin story for Christian Dior (Ben Mendelsohn), whose struggle to free a sister (Maisie Williams) condemned to the camps for her role in the French Resistance is contrasted with the brazen Nazi collaboration of his rival Coco Chanel (Juliette Binoche). In *Lucky Ones*, a family of Polish Jews fleeing the Nazis endures years of separation and hardship. *The Tattooist* is the most conventional concentration-camp narrative of the three, framed by Lali’s conversations, in the early aughts, with the woman who would transform his reminiscences into a biographical novel.

Although their plots diverge, the shows have strikingly similar emotional arcs and moral agendas. Each one drags the viewer through endless human suffering, whether behind the gates of Auschwitz or in a Soviet work camp or even in a Paris atelier where Dior is all but forced to design gowns for the wives of the Nazi officers whose minions are holding his sister, Catherine, captive. At long last, the finales bring catharsis. Families and lovers reunite. Inspired by Catherine, Dior reinvents French fashion for an exuberant postwar era. Careful to temper happy endings with somber tributes to the millions who died while these heroes lived, albeit scarred by their experiences, the creators of these series nonetheless leave us to exult in the triumph of the human spirit over the swastika-draped forces of evil.

The morality that underlies these dramas tends to be simplistic. No one seriously disputes that the Nazis are the bad guys. (When Netflix's *All the Light We Cannot See*, which focuses on French resisters rather than Jewish captives, attempts to inject nuance into the depiction of Nazis, through the thought-experiment character of a brilliant orphan conscripted to fight for a cause he finds repugnant, the result is unintentionally funny.) But that doesn't mean the Reich must always be represented by one or two conniving, mid-level psychopath characters, plus dozens of faceless foot soldiers. The implication of such depictions is that Germany

during the Second World War was populated by millions of extraordinarily deranged individuals, rather than overtaken by a regime that normalized, euphemized, and incentivized genocidal hatred to such an extent that only Europeans of remarkable courage resisted.

The impression that the Holocaust was an anomaly, perpetrated by avatars of rootless evil, isn't just a comforting misapprehension. With fascist ideology gaining traction in the U.S. and abroad, it's a dangerous one, blind to the systemic workings of authoritarian populism. As the historian Dan Stone argues in *The Holocaust: An Unfinished History*: "The Holocaust is not a lesson about the dangers of bullying, nor even a tale of the dangers of hatred. It is a warning that states, when elites become desperate to hold on to power, can do terrible, traumatic things, and that the deep psychology of modernity produces monsters the likes of which even the sleep of reason would struggle to generate."

The best recent representation of this phenomenon is *The Zone of Interest*, Jonathan Glazer's Oscar-winning film about the family of Auschwitz commandant Rudolf Höss (Christian Friedel). Instead of reproducing the now-commonplace sights of the Holocaust, Glazer confines himself to this upwardly mobile home that shares a wall with Auschwitz, gazing with disdain upon the perfect flowers

Rudolf's wife Hedwig (Sandra Hüller) cultivates in her garden. That the Hösses are not remarkably evil—that they celebrate birthdays and reminisce about vacations—is the point. Like so many of their peers, they are beneficiaries of a system whose hateful leaders mobilized the manpower to implement their Final Solution, in part, by fulfilling the frustrated ambitions of an entitled, Christian working class.

Television has not been entirely bereft of politically aware histories of the Holocaust. Viewed by 120 million people in the U.S. and exported around the world, NBC's 1978 NBC miniseries *Holocaust* is like *Lucky Ones* if the family at its center wasn't so lucky. When it isn't mawkish, it's stiff. Yet the presence of the gentile Erik Dorf (Michael Moriarty), a desperate, out-of-work lawyer with leftist sympathies, who nonetheless rises through the ranks of the SS to become a legal architect of the genocide, speaks to an understanding of the Holocaust as the product of a broken society seduced into fascism.

Last year, two TV series, Netflix's *Transatlantic* and Nat Geo's *A Small Light*, illuminated the other side of the epochal struggle between Nazism and humanism, dramatizing the stories of real people who fought to save the lives of Jews and other targets of the Reich. Set amid the brave souls who led the Emergency Rescue Committee, in Marseille, helping artists and intellectuals escape German-occupied Europe, *Transatlantic* was disappointingly

shallow. Much more perceptive, *A Small Light* follows Miep Gies (Bel Powley), the heroic young woman who hid Anne Frank's family from the Nazis in Amsterdam. Through her bond with the Franks, she discovers an ethical obligation to join the Dutch resistance. While she risks her own life on a daily basis, the acquiescence of her friends to the Nazis' assault on their Jewish and queer neighbors horrifies Miep. It's the one TV Holocaust drama from the past several years whose profound insight justifies reimmersing viewers in one of humanity's lowest moments.

This really happened continues to be the take-home message of most Holocaust series in 2024, as though *Holocaust* and *Schindler's List* (not to mention crucial works of nonfiction like *Night and Fog*, Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Primo Levi's memoir *If This Is a Man*, and Claude Lanzmann's nine-hour documentary *Shoah*) haven't been part of Western pop culture for decades. The only subtext that sneaks through is: *We can never let it happen again*.

It's an obvious conclusion, though it can be depressingly divisive once you start breaking it down—which is probably why most Holocaust TV declines to do so. Who, for one thing, is *we*? Is it individuals or governments? Citizens of the afflicted nation or the world at large? And what is *it*—the mass slaughter of Jews in

particular or the attempted annihilation of any group of people based on their shared identity?

For contemporary art about the Holocaust to matter, it must engage with these questions, which are more central to Jewish identity in the present than ever before. On college campuses and in the streets, Jews in the U.S. and beyond are finding themselves on opposite sides of a conflict rooted in divergent interpretations of the Nazi genocide. Is the lesson of the Holocaust that Israel, a sanctuary state for the world's vulnerable Jewish minority, must be protected at all costs? Or is it that the global community must stop the violence of powerful states against disempowered communities like the one in Gaza?

Levi meditated on the universal political implications of the Holocaust in *If This Is a Man*, observing that "it is in the normal order of things that the privileged oppress the unprivileged: the social structure of the camp is based on this human law." But despite its obsession with Nazis and death camps, television has yet to forge a thoughtful connection between this history and the matter that consumes the consciences of Jews in the present. With the exception of an empathetic season of *Transparent* that sent the central Jewish family to Israel and the West Bank, and a smattering of American and Israeli thrillers that too often stereotype Arabs as

terrorists, the medium has, likely in its reticence to offend, barely touched the politics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Maybe there are bold TV creators who are, right now, synthesizing the devastations of Oct. 7 and Israel's assault on Gaza into art that will help us think through this polarizing conflict. If so, then the Holocaust will surely play a part in that story—just as it is already informing a handful of stories that speak to our increasingly authoritarian moment. Whether for political or moral reasons, or simply in order to tell cathartic tales of resilience, we can't keep cordoning off history from a present to which it's so urgently relevant.

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George Miller Can’t Quit Mad Max

Eliana Dockterman is a correspondent at TIME. She covers culture, society, and gender, including topics from blockbuster movies to the #MeToo movement to how the pandemic pushed moms out of the workplace.

George Miller has spent more than 40 years swerving in and out of the post-apocalyptic world of *Mad Max*. It’s an unpleasant place:

dry, barren, and violent, but Miller can't seem to stay away. And he had a compelling reason to return after 2015's hugely successful *Mad Max: Fury Road*. In preparing to bring that story to the big screen, Miller wrote not just one movie, but three.

The first film was, of course, *Fury Road*. The film introduced a new protagonist, Furiosa, a one-armed road warrior played by Charlize Theron. She betrays the dictator she serves, a man obsessed with big muscles and bigger car engines, by smuggling his wives out of their prison. Furiosa ended up eclipsing the franchise's titular hero, with Tom Hardy in the role made famous by Mel Gibson.

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But in the nearly two-decade-long development process for *Fury Road*, Miller also sketched out two more films: an origin story for Furiosa and what happened to Max a year before *Fury Road*. Miller shared concept art for the Furiosa movie with Theron so she could better understand her character. "She said, 'Oh, gosh, can we do the Furiosa story first?'" Miller remembers. But that train had left the station—or in the parlance of *Mad Max*, that war rig had left the Citadel.

Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga will finally debut on May 24, but with Anya Taylor-Joy replacing Theron as the solo lead—there's no Max in this movie. The prequel chronicles 16 years of its hero's life, from the moment she's kidnapped as a child from her idyllic home by the henchmen of a crazed biker named Dementus, played by Chris Hemsworth sporting a consciously comic prosthetic nose. (Miller's character names, which include Rictus Erectus and Doof Warrior, are rarely subtle.) Furiosa spends the rest of the movie trying to return to her native land, though she's occasionally distracted by fantasies of revenge.

Expectations for *Furiosa* are sky-high after *Fury Road* won six Oscars and became a cultural phenomenon: its high-octane action scenes, shot largely without CGI, were so original and unrelenting that the movie left audiences dazed. *Fury Road*'s shoot was legendarily long and troubled—there's an entire book chronicling the on-set feuds and chaos at the studio. Despite all that, Miller is upping the ante with *Furiosa*. He employed 200 stunt performers, topping *Fury Road*'s 150. And the new movie boasts a 15-minute sequence that took nearly nine months to shoot. "You can't anticipate how that effort will be apprehended," Miller says over Zoom from his native Australia. "It's in the hands of the audience now."

Fury Road is essentially a 120-minute extended chase sequence with almost no dialogue. *Furiosa* is structured more like a traditional hero's journey. The cars sometimes stop and park. The characters occasionally have conversations. Early reactions to the trailer critiqued the film's use of CGI. Some fans suggested Miller should have left his classic alone. But he couldn't. The script was there. With red-tinted glasses that wouldn't look out of place in the retrofuturistic world of *Mad Max* perched on his nose, Miller explains that he was determined to complete the story.

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And that third film? The one that covers a year in Max's life before the events of *Fury Road*? It's tentatively titled *The Wasteland*, and Miller says it's ready to go. "Depending on whether *Furiosa* gets traction or not, that movie is on the horizon," he says. Will Hardy return to play Max? Miller smiles conspiratorially. "If the planets align."

Furiosa has become an iconic action hero, up there with John McClane and Ellen Ripley. It's hard to imagine anyone besides Theron embodying her. "With Charlize, the Venn diagram of actor and character overlapped a lot," says Miller. He briefly considered using technology to make Theron appear younger. "But the de-aging just wasn't working, even in the hands of really masterful filmmakers like Martin Scorsese on *The Irishman* and Ang Lee with *Gemini Man*," he says.

Miller would have made the film sooner, but he spent years tied up in litigation with Warner Bros. over *Fury Road*. The director claimed the studio hadn't paid his production company a promised bonus; the studio countersued because Miller delivered a 120-minute R-rated film instead of the 100-minute PG-13 movie he was contracted to make. (The suit went into arbitration, and Miller and WB are partnering again on *Furiosa*.) "By the time it came to it, we had to go with a younger actor," Miller says.

Taylor-Joy is a slighter if equally mighty Furiosa. Miller asked the actor to send him an audition tape and let her choose from three monologues, including Peter Finch's famous speech from *Network* in which he unravels on air. Taylor-Joy recorded the anchor's ravings directly to camera. Though she would speak very few lines in *Furiosa*, she conjured the intensity needed to convey the mentality of a survivor living in a depraved world.

It may seem bold that this franchise, defined by monster trucks and machismo, now has a female hero at its center. Fans spent years arguing about the message behind *Fury Road*. "There was a cohort of males who said, 'Oh, you can't have a female action hero,'" says Miller. "There was a cohort of feminists who said, 'Why does she need Max at all?'"

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But for Miller, choosing to make Furiosa the hero of a *Mad Max* movie was a practical decision, not an ideological one. "When you tell a story, you don't say the story is going to be about this particular theme," he says. He conceived *Fury Road* during a dream on a transpacific flight. But he needed characters to put inside the cars.

“In the case of *Fury Road*, I thought, ‘What if the MacGuffin, the thing everyone is chasing, were human?’ And that led to the wives being stolen from the warlord. And it couldn’t be a man taking the wives because that would be a different story. It would have to be a woman.” And so Furiosa was born.

Miller has always been a visual filmmaker. If Furiosa was conceived because Miller needed a hero to drive the war rig of his dreams, Max was born from grisly images Miller saw in real life. Before he became a filmmaker, Miller was an ER doctor who treated the victims of car accidents in rural Queensland where, in the 1970s, driving laws were lax and the consequences horrific. That gore inspired 1979’s *Mad Max*. Made on a shoestring budget, the production couldn’t afford a photocopy machine for the storyboard pictures. “I wrote out descriptions of every scene and every camera move for everyone working on the movie,” says Miller. “The screenplay was 274 pages long for a 90-minute movie.”

The film became a sensation. The original *Mad Max* held the Guinness World Record for most profitable movie of all time. Miller completed a trilogy with *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome* in 1985. He took a detour into children’s films, including scripting the classic *Babe* and directing its sequel, *Babe: Pig in the City.*

When he was ready to turn to *Fury Road*, a series of calamities delayed shooting, from 9/11—and Miller’s decision in its aftermath

to pivot to the Oscar-winning animated film *Happy Feet*—to a rainstorm that turned the barren desert where Miller had planned to shoot into a flowering oasis. The cast and crew filmed for 138 grueling days in the desert. Theron and Hardy have both said it was a frustrating and stressful experience: Theron has said they had no script, just pictures, and Miller responded to any direct questions about the plot with thesis-length answers. (During our interview he apologized multiple times for his lengthy, discursive responses.)

Miller describes *Fury Road* as an "anthropological documentary." The audience catches glimpses of specific behavior, like soldiers called War Boys spraying chrome paint into their mouths. "We get the sense that the spray paint has a meaning to the boys," says Miller. "But you have to pick up on the run because we never stop to explain."

Furiosa fills in the blanks of *Fury Road*. And *Fury Road*, a movie with famously few lines of dialogue, left a lot of blanks. How did Furiosa lose her arm? You'll find out. How was her war rig built? Get ready for a montage.

Part of what distinguished *Fury Road* from the other franchise films of its era was Miller's refusal to weigh down the movie with lore. But Miller chafes at the notion that *Furiosa* could be accused of fan service. "In terms of choosing what to tell of her story, it wasn't sitting down and making a shopping list," he says. "It was character-driven."

For all the dirt that Miller's tricked-out motorbikes kick up, his films are ultimately character studies—and Furiosa is an indelible one.

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Back to Black Is Too Safe to Do Amy Winehouse Justice

Stephanie Zacharek is the film critic at TIME. She is the recipient of a Newswomen's Club of New York award, and was a 2015 Pulitzer Prize finalist.

Amy Winehouse wrote songs that cut to the core of heartbreak, and sang them in a voice as supple and sturdy as raw silk. In her short lifetime she earned millions of fans, a number that has only increased since her death from alcohol poisoning in 2011, at age 27. She'd long struggled with substance abuse and mental-health problems, and there's evidence that those in her inner circle—people who stood to profit off her gifts—had failed her. No wonder those who love her feel protective of her even after death.

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When the trailer for Sam Taylor-Johnson's biopic *Back to Black* dropped, Winehouse fans sprang into mother-bear mode. They claimed that the film looked cheesy, and that its star, Marisa Abela (from HBO's *Industry*), who did her own singing, looked and

sounded nothing like Winehouse. Worst of all, the film had been made with the cooperation of Winehouse's father Mitch, the "daddy" who, in real life and in Winehouse's megahit "Rehab," had at one time deemed his daughter's use of alcohol—the addiction that would eventually kill her—nothing to worry about. Why make a film about Amy Winehouse at all? the fans demanded. She'd suffered enough. Why not just let her rest?

There's no clear answer to whether a troubled artist's life should ever become fodder for a movie. Taylor-Johnson had said she sought to celebrate Winehouse's music rather than fixate on the more sordid details of her life, and she's arguably pulled that off. But in its middling safeness, *Back to Black* is also a far less robust picture than Winehouse deserves. Its failures, and fans' anger about it even before they'd seen it, raise entwined questions: What does a music biopic owe its audience? More important, what does it owe its subject?

We have plenty of biopics about artists whose lives and careers were damaged by substance abuse: Kasi Lemmons' *Whitney Houston: I Wanna Dance With Somebody* (2022), starring Naomi Ackie, addressed the more controversial aspects of Houston's career with discretion and sensitivity, specifically her drug use and her longtime semi-secret relationship with Robyn Crawford. As a reasonably accurate chronicle of Houston's life, the movie is

effective and affecting. Other biopics, like Taylor Hackford's terrific Ray Charles biopic *Ray* (2004), starring Jamie Foxx, address the ways family members, producers, or managers can indirectly or otherwise enable an artist's substance abuse. One scene shows Charles jittery and high as a kite as he lays down "Night & Day" in the studio. The performance is incandescent, explosive—yet you don't want to think about the self-destructive habit that's fueling it.

Houston died at 48, less than seven months after Winehouse did. But her résumé, long and largely triumphant, more closely resembled that of Charles. Winehouse's brief career and wrenching death still feel like recent history. Just watching footage of her clowning it up on a talk show, or giving one of many live performances of "Back to Black," her signature number—each time reinventing the song as a devastating act of death and rebirth—can make you feel a little raw. The sudden death of a performer can spark a peculiar mournful helplessness, only reinforcing the perception that we live in a world gone wrong.

The frustration of Taylor-Johnson's film is that it represents a missed opportunity, that of making an essentially celebratory movie about Winehouse while also acknowledging thornier truths about her life. Abela's performance captures some of Winehouse's spitfire charm, and in her singing, it's easy to see she worked hard to recreate Winehouse's marvelous snakes-and-ladder phrasing, her mode of tossing a line off as casually as if she were flicking a cigarette butt into the night. There's something innocent and wrenching about the way she tells her on-again, off-again boyfriend and onetime husband Blake Fielder-Civil (Jack O'Connell), "I wanna be a wife, I wanna be a mum." Winehouse had often indicated a yearning for that kind of security, maybe as a way of recreating the life at home she never had as a kid: Mitch left the family when Winehouse was 9, making a meaningful reappearance in her life only when she was poised for success.

Back to Black starts by introducing us to a North London girl infatuated with performers like Billie Holiday, Tony Bennett, and Thelonious Monk. But it also assumes the viewer already knows something about Winehouse's life: her bulimia, for example, a feature of her life since she was a teenager, is only subtly hinted at. (There's a carefully shot vomiting scene, but it could be read as the aftereffects of too much partying.) The movie captures the volatility of Winehouse's ping-ponging relationship with Fielder-Civil, but it presents him as a curiously neutral figure, not much worse than your average bad-boy charmer, when in fact he has admitted that it was he who introduced Winehouse, always a heavy drinker, to crack and heroin.

But the most questionable angle of *Back to Black* may come down to its depiction of Mitch. Asif Kapadia's superb 2015 documentary *Amy* makes the case that Mitch Winehouse acted against his daughter's best interests more than once. In addition to keeping her from going to rehab at an early, crucial stage, he initially resisted getting her into treatment after a serious overdose of cocaine, crack, and alcohol in 2007, not wanting her to back out of her upcoming American tour.

Mitch Winehouse blasted Kapadia for *Amy*, asserting that he was working on a rival movie that would set the record straight. (He appeared in another documentary about his daughter, *Reclaiming Amy*, in 2021.) *Back to Black* somewhat redeems his reputation: Mitch is played by a wonderful and hugely sympathetic actor, Eddie Marsan, and he spends much of the movie looking pained as his daughter suffers—though, tellingly, he takes action only when she finally asks him to.

You don’t have to know every intricacy of Winehouse’s story to sense something amiss here. Parent-child relationships are always complicated, and it’s true that Mitch opened his daughter’s life to music. A cabdriver and amateur singer, he was the guy with the records, introducing her to sounds she instinctively loved. But he’s depicted in *Back to Black* as an agreeable, benign presence; the truth is almost certainly more complicated. Winehouse’s fans feared that Taylor-Johnson’s movie would sensationalize her anguish for dramatic effect. As it turns out, *Back to Black* is respectful to a fault. The best art allows its characters—fictional ones or those based on real life—the dignity of owning their choices, even decisions they made because they couldn’t help themselves. As joyful as Winehouse could be, the somber facts of her life are interwoven with her legacy; they’re part of her complexity, her sadness. To truly respect her, we have to be tough enough to accept them, to carry some of that burden for her. *Back to Black* lightens that burden for us—and that’s precisely what’s wrong with it.

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Hannah Einbinder Breaks Down Ava's Power Play in the Hacks Season 3 Finale

***Spoiler alert: This post discusses the Season 3 finale of* Hacks.**

Hacks, Max's award-laden dramedy starring Jean Smart and Hannah Einbinder, returned for its long-awaited third season earlier this month. The series follows stand-up stalwart Deborah Vance (Smart) as she vies for renewed cultural relevance alongside her plucky young writer, Ava Daniels (Einbinder). Though the power in the pair's tumultuous relationship has historically belonged to Deborah—a woman who is no stranger to forcing hands for her career's sake—a seismic shift occurred this season.

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Hosting a late-night show has always been Deborah's white whale, especially after an earlier opportunity for her to do so fell through decades ago, but by the end of the penultimate episode she's finally captured it. With Ava's help, she's reeled in a hosting gig. So in Thursday's finale, after being unceremoniously denied the head writer position by Deborah, Ava forces herself into the role by

threatening to blackmail the new Queen of Late Night—because it would be “really, really bad” if people found out that Deborah had slept with the chairman of the company right before landing her own show, wouldn’t it?

TIME spoke to Einbinder about Ava’s shocking power play, the importance of queerness on screen, and the Emmy-nominated actor and comedian’s upcoming stand-up special, *Everything Must Go*, premiering June 13 on Max.

TIME: Let’s get right into the final episode. Are we watching Ava turn into Deborah?

Einbinder: I think she’s backed into a corner and has no choice but to do as instructed. I think Deborah lays out exactly how she expects her world to go and Ava has no choice but to take her cue. Ava very clearly, through tears, expresses that she doesn’t want to be a shark. She wants to collaborate. And Deborah says, “That’s not how it works.” So she kind of had to go Ava-bad-girl-mode. She’s Ava Scarface, she’s Ava Montana. She’s a scary, scary girl in the end. But I don’t think it’s becoming who she is.

When it comes to confronting Deborah, Ava’s tail is usually between her legs. What was different for her this time?

I think it’s the last straw. Ava has sacrificed more than ever to be there with Deborah. She left her relationship and the head writer position at her incredible, prestigious, cool job in LA. It’s such a grave betrayal. It’s so different from all the other times, it’s so much worse. So I think she has no choice because Deborah’s leaving her completely high and dry. I mean, yes, she’s saying she can be the number two [writer], but it’s so disrespectful.

Do you think Ava’s decision to blackmail her way into the role of head writer will come back to bite her—or Deborah’s late night show—in the future?

I think these girls are best when they're getting along, so it's definitely possible that that becomes a sticking point for the two of them.

You initially thought you were being written off the show after learning that Deborah fires Ava in the Season 2 finale. How did you react when you learned how this new season would end?

I was surprised. I didn't know she had it in her. And I was certainly saddened to see what pushed her to that place, but on some level I'm kind of proud of her for sticking up for herself and really advocating for what she needed to do here.

What kind of energy were you channeling when you shot that final scene?

I was trying to give like, mafia. I was trying to give mafioso. When they told me about this, I knew exactly what Ava was going to be like and I was happy to see that that instinct made the final cut. Because there is a flicker of fear when Deborah steps forward towards Ava and says, "You wouldn't," but then she just stands in it. And I was frightened watching it [back]! I was like, "Oh my god, she's being so scary right now."

There's a mid-season episode where Ava and Deborah get lost in the woods. Tell me about your experience filming those scenes with Jean.

They were so vulnerable. So many of the topics explored on the show are very personal to all of us. When I'm talking about my experience as a queer person, and when Jean is talking about her experiences as a woman of a certain age, we're tapping into something real for us. It feels very, very visceral and it feels very important to talk about for us as individuals and for the writers who also make up so many of these incredible groups that we feature on the show.

In that same episode, Ava stops to identify some mushrooms she sees along the trail—chanterelles. These are known to sometimes be mistaken for other poisonous species.

Yes, every choice edible mushroom has an identical poisonous sister. Which is why you need to be very thorough, my friends, when you forage, and have a three-factor authentication for the ‘shrooms that you come across.

Why do you think that moment was included in the episode? Was it a hint at what was to come between Ava and Deborah?

That’s such an interesting perspective. I genuinely think [the writers] were just like, “Here’s this funny thing about Hannah, we’ll just dump it in the show.” But I love the fungus as a metaphor for Ava’s journey. I think that’s brilliant. I had yet to consider it, and now that I am, it’s so true.

***Hacks* paused production last year due to the WGA strike and you were often on the SAG-AFTRA picket line during negotiations. How did it feel when you were finally able to return to set?**

It felt good in one regard because I was glad that we were all together, but there’s a lot of work still to be done. IATSE still has such an unfair contract. Our crews are an instrumental part of this industry and they still are not getting what they deserve. So there’s a huge part of me that had mixed emotions about it because while the writers got a good deal and the actors got a good deal, our crews, the Teamsters, are the people who make it happen, they are paid the least and treated the worst and that’s just f-cked. So it’s bittersweet.

What was it like working with all of the new guest stars this season?

Helen Hunt is obviously so legendary. The character she's playing is so terrifying and then she's just the chillest person in real life, like such a calm and awesome energy. And J. Smith Cameron is so sweet and wonderful. Seeing her as Kathy makes so much sense. I only got to see Christopher Lloyd in the makeup trailer but he's obviously such a king, legend, icon, star. And Christina [Hendricks], she's one of the best actresses. So it's always a fun day at work.

How were you able to maintain your composure while filming the intimate-but-insane final scene you shared with Hendricks?

When we're in the rehearsal, we're laughing and we're f-cking around, but then when it's time to go, you're locked in and it feels real for you. So when you get into the reality of hooking up with someone and then finding out that they're a Republican who fracks, it becomes so real and less absurd. Like, in the moment, it's horrifying.

***Hacks* is a very gay show. What do you think the series offers its queer viewers that we haven't historically seen a lot of in the media?**

It's by the queers for the queers. We're in charge of the stories and we write them and we also perform them, so they feel authentic and true to life because they just are. No one's guessing here at *Hacks*. We're speaking from experience.

You have some things in common with Ava, namely your bisexuality and your career in comedy. Do you ever worry that people conflate the two of you?

We do have some pretty on-paper similarities. But I know her intimately and I feel like the character was so fully formed by the time I auditioned that I just see her as so separate. I definitely feel

OK if people feel like she's real. That makes me feel like I'm doing my job.

Do those similarities make it easier for you to lock into the character?

For sure. I think [the same] for a lot of the actors on our show. We have queer actors playing queer characters in every instance. So it's nice for all of us to be telling our own stories. And as a comedian, it's so nice to lock into that frequency that we share.

What more would you like to see when it comes to queer storytelling onscreen?

I hope that there is more faith in trans representation and the ability for trans people to play themselves. *Monica*, starring Trace Lysette, is a great example of a film that was so incredible. Trace got to lead that film and she killed it and did such gut-wrenching, dramatic work. It's just such a gorgeous, gorgeous piece of cinema that was indie and didn't have a lot of money behind it. So I would love to see more money behind these incredible queer stories and, of course, more queer people put in a position to author those stories.

Deborah's age plays a pretty big role in the show. Has working on *Hacks* changed the way you think about aging?

I feel lucky to be a comedy girl and to be doing something that you can do at any age, in any way. I understand that we are in a very vain business. It was not something that I considered as much as I do now, but I feel good that as a stand-up comedian you don't have to really look a certain way for the job.

Have any of your own experiences as a stand-up informed any of Deborah's storylines?

So many of our writers on *Hacks* are stand-ups. And so much of the show touches on various reference points in Paula Poundstone and Joan Rivers and Phyllis Diller and all of these women who are iconic and have [lived] public lives. For myself far less so than the women who came before me, but whenever I see the scripts, I'm like, "Yup." It's always pretty true to life.

Deborah is the face of a QVC empire. If you had to sell one thing on the network, what would it be?

It would be a bamboo matcha whisk because bamboo is really sustainable. QVC is the pipeline to the landfill with all of these horrifying textiles that are purely waste. Plastic, polyester, etc. So I would choose a textile that was sustainable. A little tiny thing that you could put in your tea and then it would be a useful tool. Sorry, [that's an] Ava answer.

Your first comedy special, *Everything Must Go*, is coming out next month. What do you hope people will take away from the hour?

I hope they feel touched and like they learned something. Like I took them on a little adventure. My stand-up is theatrical and it is mixed media. I explore a variety of performance styles within my hour so I just hope that it feels different for people and that it feels like an escape, just for a little while.

Has Deborah taught you anything about comedy?

Never miss an opportunity for self promotion. Folks, my special is on Max this June. *M-A-X*, like that guy from high school who played lacrosse. That's where you can see it. That's where it'll be. I'm there. Well, you know I'm there. I'm kind of the princess of that place. So yeah, June. We ride.

This interview has been edited for clarity.

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