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# TIME

# ISSA RAE

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## 17 MORE LEADERS WORKING TO CLOSE THE RACIAL WEALTH GAP

# TIME Magazine

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# How We Chose the Closers

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A recent Federal Reserve report found that the median wealth of white households was about six times that of Black families in the U.S. in 2022. While the specific numbers have varied over the years, there is no denying that the racial wealth gap is vast and persistent.

“Oftentimes the frame is, ‘Oh, we’re not where we want to be, but we’re getting there,’” Dedrick Asante-Muhammad, vice president of racial economic equity, research, and workforce development at the National Community Reinvestment Coalition, told TIME. “And for 20 years I have been trying to highlight, ‘No, we aren’t.’” That doesn’t mean, however, this disparity is a foregone conclusion or

that people aren't trying to draw attention to the issue and improve the situation.

Asante-Muhammad is one of 18 people TIME has selected for its new list of Closers, people who are spearheading efforts to close the racial wealth gap, particularly the substantial gulf between Black and white households. TIME editors spent months researching and fielding recommendations, from both editorial staff and the Black Innovation Alliance, our knowledge partner in this project, and the resulting list, published on Feb. 1 to kick off Black History Month, highlights Black leaders who are working toward this goal through business, policymaking, health care, entertainment, and more.

For the cover story, Issa Rae—who appeared in two movies just nominated for Best Picture, *Barbie* and *American Fiction*—spoke about working to improve living conditions in South L.A. while juggling her many creative and entrepreneurial ventures, all with a greater goal in mind. "I recognize that I have to do well economically to be able to make change," she said. She also was candid about the challenges she has faced as the industry has cut costs and, in her view, pulled back from its promises to increase diversity and representation.

Joining her on the list is fashion designer Aurora James, founder of the label Brother Vellies; in 2020, she launched the Fifteen Percent Pledge to encourage retailers to devote at least 15% of their shelf space to Black-owned businesses. She has since secured commitment from 29 companies around the world to collectively stock more than 600 Black-owned brands on their shelves, redirecting $14 billion in revenue to Black-owned businesses in the process.

In the sports world, thanks in large part to the efforts of National College Players Association executive director Ramogi Huma, athletes can now earn money by capitalizing on their Name, Image,

and Likeness rights rather than just generating revenue for their schools. “He’s the conscience of the movement,” says Sen. Cory Booker, who is also featured on the list for his work to bring investment to undercapitalized Black and brown neighborhoods. Booker has long advocated for ideas and initiatives aimed at closing the racial wealth gap, including championing the baby bond, the brainchild of fellow Closers Darrick Hamilton and William Darity.

While history, economics, and demographics mean the racial wealth gap is not the same around the world, it is also by no means an issue exclusively in the U.S. Through her PretaHub platform, Adriana Barbosa is building a more equitable market for Afro Diaspora entrepreneurs in Brazil and beyond. In the U.K., Rebecca Ajulu-Bushell leads the 10,000 Interns Foundation, which has created 5,000 internships for Black or disabled students and graduates at over 700 companies in just three years.

The work is ongoing, but as Huma said reflecting on his decades-long fight, “If you feel like you’re on the right side of history, just don’t give up.”

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# Nikki Haley Did New Hampshire Right. New Hampshire Didn't Care

Philip Elliott is a senior correspondent at TIME, based in the Washington, D.C. bureau, where he covers national campaigns, elections, and government. He also writes TIME's politics newsletter, The D.C. Brief.

*This article is part of The D.C. Brief, TIME's politics newsletter. Sign up here to get stories like this sent to your inbox.*

Every four years, there's at least one candidate who summons every ounce of earnestness and goes all-in to plant a flag in a specific state. You can't help but admire their gusto and bravada, essentially telling the world that this is their sole focus. And, like clockwork, many of those committed Quixotic campaigns simply cannot get it together just quite right. Pluck alone is often insufficient.

The latest case study: former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley and her incredible effort in New Hampshire. For months, she did the quiet and unglamorous work of attending sparsely attended town

halls far from the population centers in the state's Southern Tier. She met with local activists and student groups alike. She took the questions from voters seriously, even when she flubbed them. Put plainly, she respected what veterans of that state admiringly call The New Hampshire Way.

Slingshotting into the state after a disappointing third-place finish in Iowa just a week ago, the lone Republican woman to run for the White House remained on a mission to work every room, literally becoming the last person to leave some of them so she could greet everyone who wanted to meet her. New Hampshire's popular but soon-to-be-departing Gov. Chris Sununu was often at her side. And if ever there were a state that historically likes to gum up the results coming out of Iowa and give a hustling panderer a chance, New Hampshire is it.

Yet Haley just couldn't get the upper hand in a state where Donald Trump prevailed in a jumbled primary eight years ago and never really shirked its Trumpist tendencies. The state's motto—Live Free Or Die—is a battle cry as much as it is a slogan. And, through icy winds and hip-high snowbanks, the New Hampshire voters shouted it loudly Tuesday night, giving Trump new bragging rights: he is the first presidential candidate to prevail in competitive Republican contests in both Iowa and New Hampshire during the modern era.

"You've all heard the chatter among the political class. They're falling all over themselves saying this race is over," Haley told supporters in Concord, N.H. "Well, I have news for all of them: New Hampshire is the first in the nation. It's not the last in the nation. This race is far from over. There are dozens of states left to go."

Haley seemed defiant in defeat, using her turn at her Election Night headquarters into a renewed call for Republicans to rethink their affinity for the ex-President, and making clear she would continue

to push the age issue at every turn. “The first party to retire its 80-year-old candidate is going to be the party that wins this election,” Haley said, introducing a new ding against both Trump and Biden.

It’s clear Haley is spoiling for more contests, reupping her challenge for Trump to actually participate in debates and continuing to critique his chaos-laden orbit. Yet being feisty on its own isn’t enough in a head-to-head contest against a blowhard who has no problem smashing through niceties let alone norms.

Haley’s best bet is hoping that more Republicans are starting to rethink how much of an appetite they have for another year—or four should he win the White House—of Trump as their avatar. Four criminal trials will continue to move forward between now and Election Day. His business and civil woes are going nowhere, either. And Trump has proven over and over and over again that he is an unpredictable force that, while amusing to some to watch, creates a political petri dish that turns toxic for those sharing his laboratory. Haley isn’t wrong when she says the Republican Party lost the House, the Senate, and the White House with Trump at the helm of the party.

Even before polls closed in New Hampshire, Republican insiders were already debating themselves about Haley’s next steps. Technically, the next state to dole out delegates is Nevada; Trump alone is on the ballot for the caucuses there that will award delegates, while Haley is on the ballot for the largely symbolic primary that has no prizes to claim beyond news coverage.

Experienced South Carolina hands—even those who consider themselves Haley fans—are plenty dubious that a welcoming environment awaits Haley when the race moves to her home turf next month. Haley’s defenders argue that, even if they cannot win South Carolina, where Haley has never lost at the ballot, they can hold Trump to a ceiling and still summon a coalition based on her term as Governor. Yet most of the state’s biggest donors and

activists had previously committed to Sen. Tim Scott, a figure appointed to the Senate by Haley, and his machine is now available to the man he endorsed after ending his own White House run: Trump.

Nor is it clear that Haley's open challenge of Trump, the GOP's most popular figure by a long shot, won't prove entirely disqualifying in South Carolina. Whereas New Hampshire allows non-affiliated voters—and a record 47% of them Tuesday met this definition—South Carolina is a closed primary. Only declared Republicans can pick a ballot in South Carolina, and Trump carried that state by 12 points over Biden four years ago. Trump isn't going to make Haley's return a stroll down King Street by any measure.

Looking down the calendar, though, there are reasons for Haley to stick around. Her campaign and associated super PAC have been careful to squirrel away cash to keep her running through at least March 5's Super Tuesday, when 11 of the 16 states have open or quasi-open primaries where independents can weigh in. And the states on the calendar before then look a whole lot more like New Hampshire than Iowa. Not just South Carolina, but Michigan and D.C. also have their primaries, and Haley has shown signs of strength in college-educated and moderate circles. All the while, she has a West Coast swing teed-up to meet with donors and collect checks that could fuel her coming out of Super Tuesday if she gets lucky.

Still, despite a stiffened spine that says she is taking her defeat standing up and eyes already looking downstream, she remains the clear underdog. While she will pick up her share of New Hampshire's 22 delegates, this contest soon turns to winner-take-all or -most events where second prize does not matter. Haley's in the mix for now, but she made a big play to upend the pecking order in New Hampshire and wound up shown to her seat.

Perhaps anticipating pressure for her to reconsider her next moves before polls closed, Haley told reporters in Hampton that she was going nowhere, a pitch that might serve her well with well-heeled donors desperate for a choice other than Trump or Biden. “I got here because I outworked and outsmarted all the rest of those fellas,” she said.

Haley will have the resources to keep in Trump’s face, at least for now. The next stage of her fight starts Wednesday evening with a rally in North Charleston, S.C. But enthusiasm and hope are no substitutions for momentum. It happens every four years; that doesn’t make it any easier to watch a serious contender do almost everything right and rational and still not win a prize.

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# India Is Unveiling Its Controversial Temple of Ram. Here's What to Know

Yasmeen Serhan is a staff writer at TIME, based in the London Bureau. She covers foreign affairs with an emphasis on the future of democracies and rising authoritarianism around the world.

A decades-long flashpoint in India's sectarian politics reached a climax on Monday with the inauguration of a vast Hindu temple on a contested holy site that was once home to a mosque.

"After centuries of waiting, our Ram has arrived," Indian Prime Minister Narenda Modi told thousands of attendees who flocked to the city of Ayodhya, in India's northern Uttar Pradesh state, to bear witness to the consecration of the new Ram Mandir temple. "It is the beginning of a new era."

For Hindus, the site marks the birthplace of Lord Ram, one of the most revered deities in the Hindu faith. But the site is also revered by India's Muslims for having once housed the 16th century Babri Mosque, a monument of faith for Indian Muslims that stood on the

site for centuries before it was razed by a Hindu nationalist mob in 1992. Sectarian riots ensued, killing some 2,000 people.

**Read More:** *India's Ayodhya Temple Is a Huge Monument to Hindu Supremacy*

This fraught history barely featured in the jubilant celebrations surrounding the ceremony, which was viewed by millions of people. Several parts of the country declared the day a public holiday, with some even going so far as to restrict the sale of alcohol and non-vegetarian food. Saffron-colored flags and pennants, a symbol of Hindu nationalism, were raised across the country.

For Modi, whose Hindu-natioanlist government has overseen a steady rise in violence against Muslims and other religious minorities, the consecration represents the fulfillment of a decade-long pledge to rebuild the temple (the construction of which isn't due to be completed until December). But it also signifies the unofficial start of his campaign to win a third consecutive term when Indians go to the polls in the spring for national elections. It's for this reason that leaders of the opposition Congress Party opted to skip the ceremony, which they describe as nothing more than "a political project … obviously brought forward for electoral gain."

While the Indian government, and indeed many Hindus, regard the Jan. 22 consecration as a celebratory occasion of immense national and religious importance, observers fear that the event could signify yet another nail in the coffin of India's secular ethos. "The Ram Mandir revolves around some of the most divisive issues for religion and society in contemporary India," Michael Kugelman, the director of the South Asia Institute at the Wilson Center in Washington, tells TIME in an email. "The temple consecration is papering over incredibly traumatic and heavily contested events in India's history."

Here's what to know about the temple and its significance.

## What is the significance of the Ayodhya site for Modi?

For Modi, the construction of the Ram Temple represents more than just the honoring of a decades-long Hindu nationalist pledge (rebuilding the temple, which was greenlit by India's Supreme Court in 2019, has been a core project of Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party). It also cements his legacy as one of the country's most consequential leaders—in particular, one who is helping to transform India from a secular democracy into an avowedly Hindu nation.

The Ram Mandir movement has been a throughline of Modi's career, says Rana Ayyub, one of India's most famous journalists and a renowned thorn in the side of Modi's BJP. In 1990, as a local BJP leader in his native Gujarat, Modi helped organize a religious rally that aimed to gin up support for the construction of a temple to Lord Ram on the site of the Babri Mosque. In January 1992, less than a year before the mosque was destroyed, Modi pledged not to return to Ayodhya until a temple dedicated to Lord Ram was completed. Nearly three decades later, Modi oversaw the groundbreaking of the temple, likening it to "the day India gained independence."

"His entire career has been based on Ayodhya because he realized early on that the only way to become a favorite of the masses is to endear them through the Ram Temple movement," Ayyub says. "This is the ultimate moment of Modi as a Hindu nationalist leader, and this is the ultimate moment of creating the Indian Muslim as a second-class citizen."

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The temple consecration follows a number of other major political moves implemented by Modi in his efforts to advance his government's Hindu nationalist agenda. This includes the passage of the contentious Citizenship Amendment Act in 2019 (a law extending Indian citizenship to religious minorities from neighboring countries that excludes Muslims, undermining India's constitutionally mandated secularism) and the repeal of the special autonomous status of India-administered Kashmir, the country's sole Muslim-majority state. "What unites these three things is that they work against Indian Muslims and Muslims more broadly," says Kugelman, "and, by extension, strengthen the status and interests of Indian Hindus."

## How are India's Muslims reacting?

For many Indian Muslims, who make up 15% of the population, the destruction of the Babri Mosque remains an open wound, says Ayyub. "To be constantly reminded of the scar," she says, "and now to be told that the entire nation is celebrating this temple being built on a mosque—it's like rubbing salt into an already existing wound."

Beyond pain, however, Ayyub says many Indian Muslims also feel fear. For her part, she has instructed her family to be careful about how they react to WhatsApp messages within their housing society. "At this point in time, anything can be used as a grind against us," she says. "This is like that moment that we all feared and it is at our doorstep right now, and we don't know what to make of it."

While authorities are expected to be on high-alert on the day of the consecration, some observers fear that the moment could spark unrest. "The government will be prepared and will pull out all the stops to have as much security as possible," says Kugelman. "But it will be a tense moment for many, and especially Indian Muslims, despite New Delhi's projection of the event as an opportunity for the nation to come together to celebrate."

**Read More**: *The Message the Ram Temple Sends Muslims Like Me*

Smriti Irani, India's minister of minority affairs, dismissed such concerns in the days leading up to the ceremony. "There is rule of law in India, there is a vibrant political and judicial presence in India, and there's also a very strong media in India, so any citizen who knows that the four pillars of democracy are functional and independent of each other has no reason for concern," she told TIME during an interview last week on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, noting that the Jan. 22 ceremony "is a reflection of India's not only diversity, but also patience."

## What impact is this expected to have on India's upcoming election?

2024 stands to be a consequential election year for countries around the world, and India is no exception. Polls project that Modi, who remains widely popular, could win a third consecutive term. Experts such as Kugelman see the temple inauguration as a key element of his campaign.

"The temple consecration is a powerful reflection of Modi's campaign strategy," he says, noting that Modi has linked the temple with a series of neighboring infrastructure and welfare projects. "In that sense, he's combining Hindu nationalism with social welfare—his two signature themes not only in this election, but in his broader politics. It's a combination that's worked well for him."

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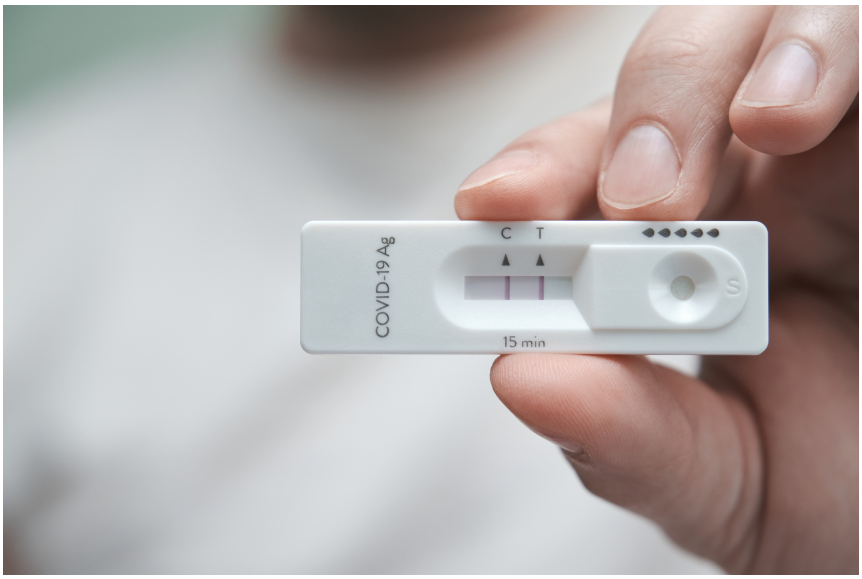
# Is It Dangerous to Keep Getting COVID-19?

Alice Park is a senior health correspondent at TIME. She covers the COVID-19 pandemic, new drug developments in cancer and Alzheimer's disease, mental health, HIV, CRISPR, and advances in gene therapy, among other issues in health and science. She also covers the Olympics, and co-chaired TIME's inaugural TIME 100 Health Summit in 2019. Her work has won awards from the New York Press Club, and recognition from the Deadline Club. In addition, she is the author of *The Stem Cell Hope: How Stem Cell Medicine Can Change Our Lives*.




Getting COVID-19 today is much less scary and more common than it was three years ago. By now, many people have had it not just once, but two, three, or even more times. Most of the time, repeat infections aren’t as severe as they were the first time, leading to a sense of complacency about getting COVID-19 over and over.

But reinfections aren’t harmless. As cases continue to rise and more variants arrive on the scene, infectious-disease experts are warning that repeat infections could have cumulative, lasting effects.

“There is some early evidence starting to show that if you had COVID-19, there can be all sorts of problems after getting infected” and reinfected, says Dr. Robert Murphy, professor of medicine and executive director of the Havey Institute for Global Health at Northwestern’s Feinberg School of Medicine. “We are just at the beginning of learning about them.”

## A higher risk of Long COVID

Dr. Ziyad Al-Aly, clinical epidemiologist at Washington University in St. Louis, studies Long COVID: a condition marked by health effects that linger after infection. “Reinfection remains consequential,” he says.

In a paper published in Nature Medicine in 2022, he found that people who had gotten COVID-19 at least twice experienced higher rates of short- and long-term health effects, including heart, lung, and brain issues, compared to those who were only infected once.

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But why? Dr. Davey Smith, a virologist and head of infectious diseases at University of California San Diego, says that certain characteristics—such as older age—may make people more vulnerable to complications after repeat bouts. “The older you get, the worse you do with viruses in general, but specifically with SARS-CoV-2,” he says. “Every time you get COVID-19 again and again, you increase the likelihood of having a worse infection just based on age.”

Underlying health conditions that people may not necessarily be aware of—like prediabetes or increased inflammation—could also

put them at higher risk after each infection. “For somebody who is already on the edge of developing diabetes and then gets COVID-19, that could damage the pancreas and the endocrine system enough to change things,” Smith says. Similarly, having high rates of inflammation before COVID-19 could raise the risk of heart events such as stroke or a heart attack after an infection.

Regardless of a person’s health status, each COVID-19 infection can raise the risk of developing blood clots, which can travel to the brain or lungs. That’s why Smith believes anyone who is eligible for antiviral drugs such as Paxlovid should take them, since controlling the virus as quickly as possible can reduce any potential long-term or lingering effects an infection can have on the body.

## COVID-19 may alter the immune response

At this point, many people view COVID-19 as relatively benign. But even if you’ve already recovered from a mild case, there’s no guarantee that next time will go as smoothly. “Just because you did okay with it last year doesn’t mean you’ll do okay with it this year,” Smith says.

“There is a mischaracterization in the public understanding that you can get an acute infection with fever, cough, malaise, and fatigue, get over it after a few days or a week or so, then bounce back, and it’s gone,” says Al-Aly. “The data are showing that [some] people still display increased risk of problems even two years after an infection.”

That’s what he found in his study. People who had multiple infections were three times more likely to be hospitalized for their infection up to six months later than those who only got COVID-19 once, and were also more likely to have problems with clotting, gastrointestinal disorders, kidney, and mental-health symptoms. The risks appeared to increase the more infections people experienced.

Understanding why SARS-CoV-2 has a uniquely lasting effect on the body remains a challenge. Historically, when the immune system meets a new pathogen like a virus, it generates novel defenses and remembers the intruder, so it has a head start if the virus returns. That's certainly the case with SARS-CoV-2—which is why vaccines work, and why getting reinfected generally leads to milder symptoms.

But there is also growing evidence that in some people, getting COVID-19 the first time may compromise the immune response in a way that makes the body less likely to respond effectively the next time it sees the virus. That could leave certain organs and body systems, such as the brain, weaker for months after infection—and subsequent ones. "It's the balance of these two opposing forces—the immune system learning from the past and knowing how to deal with a virus and do a better job the second and third time around, and the idea that a first encounter with a virus might alter the immune system in some way that it becomes less efficient—that could explain why some people get Long COVID," says Al-Aly.

Data also continue to show that even vaccinated people can get Long COVID—although the risk may be lower—since the protection provided by vaccines wanes over time, just as it does from infections. Vaccines are therefore a strong but not absolute barrier to the virus.

## Preventing reinfections

"Each time you get hit, it does impact your body, so let's try not to get it too many times," says Smith. That's easier said than done, since after three years, people are tired of taking precautions such as wearing masks and avoiding crowded public spaces. "We've lost the public-health battle; there is no appetite for public masking or stringent public health measures," says Al-Aly.

That means other strategies need to become available, including universal vaccines that can protect against multiple variants and nasal spray vaccines that stand guard at the nose, which is where SARS-CoV-2 generally enters. Researchers are currently testing these next generation shots, so while “the good news is that these technologies do exist, they need to be accelerated and brought to market as soon as possible to protect the public,” says Al-Aly.

In the meantime, Smith says it’s important for people to understand that they still need to do everything they can to avoid getting COVID-19. That means staying up to date with vaccinations and taking some basic precautions, such as wearing high-quality masks indoors when cases are high, especially in crowded places and on public transportation.

“I wish we lived in a world where getting repeat infections doesn’t matter,” says Al-Aly, “but the reality is that‘s not the case.”

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# An Inside Look at the Embryo Transplant That May Help Save the Northern White Rhino

Jeffrey Kluger is an editor at large at TIME. He covers space, climate, and science. He is the author of 12 books, including *Apollo 13*, which served as the basis for the 1995 film, and was nominated for an Emmy Award for TIME's series A Year in Space.

The two loneliest rhinos in the world are the female known as Najin and her daughter, known as Fatu. They live in the Ol Pejeta conservancy, a 360 sq km (140 sq mi.) sanctuary in central Kenya. A lot of different animals representing a lot of different species call Ol Pejeta home, but Najin and Fatu are special: they are the world's last remaining northern white rhinos, a species that once numbered 25,000 and ranged across what is now South Sudan, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Central African Republic. The near-death of the species is mostly due to poaching—with humans hunting down the rhinos in order to remove and sell their horns.

But Najin and Fatu may soon have company—if not in Ol Pejeta then in the Leibniz Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Research in

Berlin, Germany. As the institute just announced, a group of researchers led by BioRescue, an international consortium of scientists and conservationists, has, for the first time, succeeded in transplanting a rhinoceros embryo fertilized in the lab into the womb of an adult female. This breakthrough implantation, say the researchers, will not be the last; if the methods they used to achieve the reproductive feat bear themselves out, the northern white rhino, now barely clinging to existence, could rebound across sanctuaries and perhaps even parts of the wild.

“The embryo transfer technique is well established for humans and domesticated animals such as horses and cows,” said Thomas Hildebrandt, head of both BioRescue and the department of reproductive management at the Leibniz Institute, in a statement. “But for rhinos it has been completely uncharted territory. It took many years to get it right and we are overwhelmed that this technique works perfectly.”

The in vitro northern white rhino fertilization in fact did not involve a northern white rhino at all. Since 2019, BioRescue has produced 29 northern white rhino embryos, made of Fatu’s harvested eggs and the preserved sperm of four deceased males. The embryos are cryopreserved at -196°C (-314°F) in labs in Berlin and Cremona, Italy. Such a small store of embryos is a precious

genetic treasure, and the BioRerscue team dared not risk squandering even one on an experiment that might not succeed. Instead, they worked with three southern white rhinos—close cousins to the northern species.

**Read more:** *The Endangered Species Act Has Been a Success for 50 Years. Its Work Is Just Beginning*

First, the researchers harvested eggs from Elinore, a female southern white rhino living at the Pairi Daiza Zoo in Belgium. They then collected sperm from a male known as Athos, at the Salzburg Zoo in Hellbrunn, Austria. Next, the eggs were fertilized using a technique known as intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI), which, as the name suggests, involves injecting the sperm into the egg using a microscopic needle. Finally, they transferred two of the embryos into a surrogate mother—a southern white female named Curra, living at Ol Pejeta.

But that step wasn’t so easy. Before Curra could be implanted with the embryo, a so-called teaser bull—a male southern white rhino named Ouwan, always at the ready to breed—had to be introduced to her enclosure to detect if she was in heat. Scientists can’t determine if a female rhino’s system is primed for mating, but males, sensitive to reproductive pheromones, can. Ouwan had to be

prepped for this job through a sterilization procedure in which his epididymis, or sperm-carrying tubules, were sealed by microwave ablation. Had Ouwan been left fertile it would have been impossible to know if he was responsible for any embryo in the surrogate's womb or if the implantation was.

The next step was to perform that implantation—a procedure that also presented challenges. "The cervix of the female rhino is convoluted and impossible to pass," says Hildebrandt. "If you try to pass it you will produce a lot of the [hormone-like lipid] prostaglandin, leading to a contraction of the uterus." That, in turn, would cause the female to expel the embryo. Instead, researchers had to enter the female through the rectum and use a needle to penetrate the wall to the womb.

**Read more:** *Biodiversity Is Nearing an 'Extinction Crisis,' Animal Researchers Say*

On Sept. 24, 2023, they successfully executed the implantation on an anesthetized Curra. The next step was—or ought to have been—waiting the 16-month gestation period before Curra would give birth. But that was not to be. On Nov. 22, 2023, Ouwan died, and on Nov. 25 Curra followed. Both were claimed by sudden rainfall and flooding, which unearthed preserved Clostridia bacteria spores, infecting and killing the animals. The rhinos, tragically, were lost, but the experiment wasn't. An autopsy of Curra found that she had been carrying a viable 70-day old, 6.4 cm (2.5 in) male embryo in her womb.

“It’s a miracle, this little baby,” says Hildebrandt. “Unfortunately humans were responsible for losing it, because climate change produced so much rain that we had mudslides; those released the 100-year-old bacteria.”

Human depredations and the loss of the embryo notwithstanding, Hildebrandt and the rest of the BioRescue team are looking forward to other miracles. Before the end of the year, they plan to implant northern white rhino embryos into two southern white rhino surrogates named Armited and Daly. If viable babies are produced, more such implantations will be conducted—likely not restoring the northern white rhino species to full, wild viability, but at least giving it a toehold on survival.

“Advanced science,” says Hildebrandt, “can help create a population that can be introduced and start reproducing itself. It’s a blueprint for restoring ecosystems.”

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# One Year After Shooting, Monterey Park Celebrates Lunar New Year With Resilience

Simmone Shah is a reporter at TIME. She covers international and tech news.

One year after a mass shooting left 11 dead and nine injured at Star Ballroom Dance Studio during a Lunar New Year dance party, Monterey Park, Calif. is preparing for its annual festival. But the festivities will carry a different weight this year.

The city—typically the first in the region to kick off Lunar New Year celebrations— has pushed back its annual festival by a week, and plans to hold a vigil to honor the victims lost on Jan. 21, 2023.

“We’re trying to be very mindful of the fact that there are going to be residents in this community, who were impacted by the shooting last year, who might not have a friend or family member to celebrate with them, and that it also might bring back thoughts of grief,” says Jose Sanchez, mayor of Monterey Park. “That’s okay, that’s part of the healing process.”

The city plans to bring back its typical two-day Lunar New Year festival—shutting down a busy street for entertainment and activities that draw thousands of visitors— while also holding additional events, including a training on ‘red flag’ laws and a city-wide vigil on the shooting’s anniversary to honor the victims and create space for those that are still healing.

Other cities are looking to Monterey Park to show what it means to move forward from a tragedy without forgetting. Monterey Park is known as a suburban Chinatown, and it has become a destination for many Asian Americans in the Los Angeles region looking for Chinese food, groceries, and a sense of community. “[Monterey Park] has a very central role in the Asian American community, which is why the January 21st shooting impacted so many people,” says Henry Lo, a council member and former mayor of Monterey Park. “A lot of communities look to us as a leader, and I think it’s important to show that we will not forget the victims, but also acknowledge important events in the community.”

While the anniversary throws a spotlight on Monterey Park, healing has been an ongoing effort for residents over the past year. In the months following the shooting, cultural events have served as a way to bring the community together— Lo and Sanchez both said that the city has seen higher turnouts for city-organized events.

One of the challenges the city faced was figuring out how to provide services for survivors that might not seek them out on their own, especially considering that discussions of mental health are often taboo among Asian Americans— a population 50% less likely than other racial groups to seek mental health services, according to UCLA Health.

A resiliency center was established by the Chinatown Service Center (CSC), an LA-based non-profit working to address the needs of Chinese immigrants in the region. The Resiliency Center has offered workshops tailored to the mostly elderly participants, such as mindfulness activities and chair yoga. And, in November, they began organizing ballroom dance workshops for the survivors. “It’s a healing experience, because they’re recreating a narrative and moving forward,” says Nina Yuen Loc, Director of Behavioral Health at CSC.

Attendance jumped from 80 participants at the first Resiliency Center dance workshop to over 240 at the most recent, according to Loc. She says members of the community might be surprised by the impact the anniversary has on them. “One year is a trauma cue,” she says. “Everyone reacts to the incident very differently.”

For Kevin Leung, a Monterey Park resident who ran his martial arts school out of Star Ballroom before the shooting and knew two of the victims, last year’s events are hanging over Lunar New Year, even as he plans to attend the festival with his kids. “Every day when I’m driving to work, I pass the building and I’m reminded that there’s still nothing there. The sign has been torn down, but the building still stands,” he says. “I think that I’ll still always have it in the back of my mind.”

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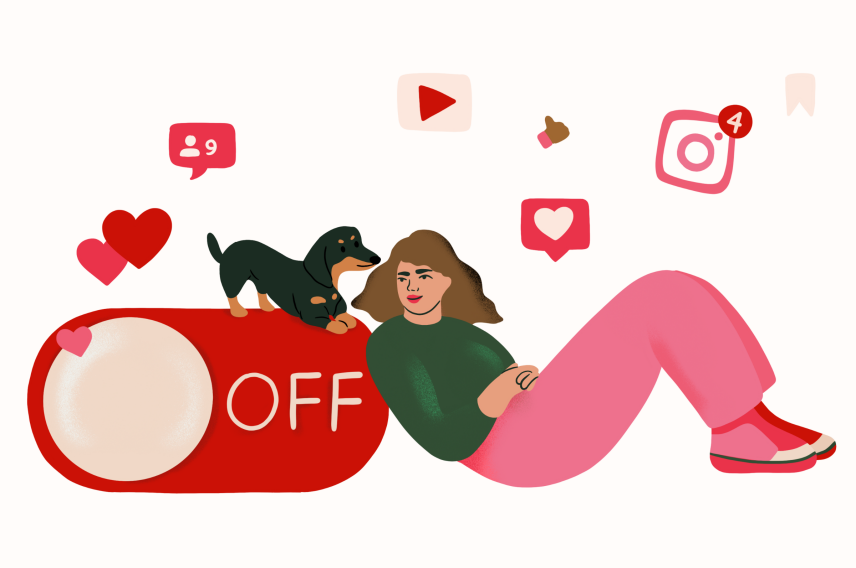
# 9 Ways to Reset Your Relationship With Social Media

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




Emma Lembke joined Instagram when she was 12. The last of her friend group to sign up, she had sensed the appeal of the app in the gazes of friends; people who used to look at her now looked at their phones. “I thought to myself, ‘There has to be something incredibly magnetic and magical and connective that pulls people into these apps,’” recalls Lembke, who’s now 21 and founder of the Log Off Movement, a non-profit that aims to help kids use social media in a healthier way.

She soon began spending five or six hours a day mindlessly scrolling—and says her mental health and well-being deteriorated. Lembke recalls quantifying her worth by tracking likes, comments, and followers, and taking down posts that didn’t perform well enough. “It felt as though I was honestly addicted,” she says. “When I heard the buzz of a notification, I had that instant

Pavlovian response to grab my phone. I finally asked, ‘What am I doing?’”

Many of us get lost in social media. Some data indicate that, worldwide, the average adult spends more than 2.5 hours per day immersed in social apps. All that scrolling can take a toll: Excessive social-media use is linked with loneliness, depressive symptoms, poor self-esteem, and decreased life satisfaction. “A lot of times we’re not even aware of how we’re using it, so taking the time to be a little more mindful and to think about what’s working, and what’s not, is really important,” says Jacqueline Nesi, a psychologist who studies the role of social media in adolescents’ mental health and writes the newsletter Techno Sapiens.

We asked experts how to reset your relationship with social media. These are their go-to strategies.

## Craft a mission statement

When Lembke starts to feel overwhelmed by social media, she returns to her “tech intentions” document: a record of the ways she will and will not use apps like Instagram and Snapchat. “I use social media to connect with others, to learn new things daily, to scrapbook my life, and to express myself creatively,” it reads. “I do not use social media as a replacement for IRL.” Write your own mission statement, Lembke recommends, and stick it to your desk or wherever you might be tempted to pick up your phone and scroll.

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## Start a digital consumption journal

Are all those TikTok lip-synching videos energizing you—or having the opposite effect? Challenge yourself to document your social-media use, noting how much time you spend on each platform and how you feel afterwards, suggests Etoulia Salas-Burnett, who leads the Center for Digital Business at Howard University School of Business. For example, you might note that at 8 a.m., you spent 5 minutes scrolling LinkedIn. “Did I feel good and happy for all my friends that are doing all these things, or did it make me feel a little less about myself?” she asks. Another idea is to rate your feelings on a scale of 1 to 5, Salas-Burnett notes. After just a week, you’ll have enough data to assess how much time you’re spending on which platforms and how it’s affecting your mood—and you can make changes accordingly.

## Set specific goals

Pledging to “use social media less” is too vague of a resolution to be effective, Nesi says. Instead, set specific goals or boundaries for yourself. Maybe you get one hour a day to scroll, or three 20-minute social-media sessions. Then, set up systems to make that possible: “Put your phone in another room, or put it on ‘do not disturb,’” Nesi advises.

You can also get creative with the ways you limit your usage. Salas-Burnett’s friend—who loves to send her TikTok videos—recently decided to reset his relationship with the app by only allowing himself to watch five videos suggested on his “For You” page, and then five more from people he follows. “I thought that was a really cool idea,” she says. “You’re not time-constrained, but you only get to watch 10 pieces of content.”

## Curate your feed

Social media isn’t all detrimental, points out Dr. Nina Vasan, founder and executive director of Stanford Brainstorm, an

academic lab seeking to improve mental health. It can be particularly helpful for people who are shy or socially anxious, or who are experimenting with their identities, she says. Plus, it facilitates communication and connection. The key is figuring out what makes you feel sad or inadequate, and what inspires you to be your best, and then curating a feed that reflects the latter type of content. “Unlike, let’s say, the space in your closet, social media doesn’t restrict the number of accounts you can follow or number of things you say you like,” she points out. “Without such barriers in place, it’s easy to collect things that you don’t like anymore or that don’t fit you well.”

## Go on an unfollowing spree

Is it serving you to keep getting updates about an ex, or from the reality star with an unattainable body? “Maybe you’re no longer obsessed with baby pandas and are now onto quokkas. You finished prom and don’t need to keep seeing fancy dresses,” Vasan says. “You no longer support that one political candidate, or they’ve dropped out of the race.” Unfollow the accounts that are no longer fulfilling a role, and instead, seek out those that are inspiring, educational, or related to hobbies you’d like to nurture.

## Make a list of scrolling substitutes

If you weren’t swiping through social-media posts, what would you be doing? Make a list of activities you enjoy—and “make sure they’re intellectually, emotionally, or physically feeding you,” says Joseph Galasso, a clinical psychologist and chief executive officer at Baker Street Behavioral Health in N.J.. You might go for a walk, read a book, take up the guitar, or try out some crafting projects. There’s no way to check Facebook if your fingers are busy stitching embroidery.

## Establish social media-free zones

Consider outlawing social media in specific areas of your home, like your bedroom, bathroom, or the kitchen table. Make it a collaborative effort involving your whole family. “That way, you can keep each other accountable,” Salas-Burnett says. For kids, a social-media “swear jar”—where they have to put a dollar in every time they get caught using it where they shouldn’t—can help.

## Make it harder to access your apps

Friction is key to deterring yourself from mindlessly checking social media every few minutes. Keep your phone on airplane mode or disable Face ID so it takes you longer to log in, Nesi advises. Or, you could delete your most time-sucking apps from your phone and only visit them while you’re on your laptop.

When Lembke recalibrated her relationship with social media, she relied on a number of tools. The app Forest, for example, gamifies staying offline by planting virtual trees that grow larger the longer you remain focused. Another, called “clearspace,” requires users to complete a centering activity (like taking a deep breath) before opening an app. Stanford University’s HabitLab is a Chrome extension that helps internet surfers waste less time on sites like Facebook and YouTube through a variety of interventions, including blocking videos and displaying a clock measuring total usage time. “One of [the interventions] is so evil, and it works,” Lembke says. “You try to go on [X] and it buffers—you have to wait 30 seconds before you can get on. Small things like that make you never want to go on.”

## Take a tech sabbatical

Fourteen years ago, Tiffany Schlain—an artist, filmmaker, and founder of the Webby Awards—started putting her phone away from Friday evening until the same time Saturday. “Each week, I get to have this reset,” says Shlain, author of *24/6: Giving up*

*Screens One Day a Week to Get More Time, Creativity, and Connection*. “It’s the best thing I’ve ever done in my life. It really keeps me grounded.”

Many of us could similarly benefit from fine-tuning what Shlain describes as an essential skill: “the courage to turn off the outside world and turn on the inside world.” If you’re intrigued, experiment with different amounts of time offline: one day a week, a weekend, a month. Shlain recommends letting the people who would expect to hear from you know what you’re doing, and as much as possible, making plans to see them in person. She kicks off her phone-free Friday evenings, for example, by enjoying a meal with family and friends. She’s noticed that time feels luxurious when her phone isn’t attached to her body; she often has her best creative ideas when she’s offline. “Instead of looking at it as ‘taking away,’” she says, “look at what you’re getting back.”

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# History Tells Us How the Israel-Hamas War Will End

The Hamas terrorist attack on Oct. 7 killed some 1,200 people in Israel. Since then, a fierce Israeli military campaign has destroyed much of Gaza, with more than 22,000 dead and untold numbers injured, buried under rubble, or wasting away from disease and malnutrition, as Israeli troops continue to blockade much-needed humanitarian assistance.

Israel has declared an ever-expanding list of war aims that includes the obliteration of Hamas, the return of all hostages, assurances that Gaza will never again threaten Israel, the banning of the Palestinian Authority from any role in governance of the territory, prevention of any “element” that “educates its children for terrorism, supports terrorism, finances terrorism and calls for the destruction of Israel,” and creation of a wide buffer zone within Gaza separating Israel from the Strip’s population.

Yet, no Israeli leader has explained how “Operation Swords of Iron,” as their military campaign has been dubbed, could possibly achieve these objectives. That’s because it can’t—and they know it.

This very situation has existed in almost every Israeli war since 1948 because the country's problems are political in nature, not something military force alone can solve. This reality means that instead of "Operation Swords of Iron" ending upon completion of Israeli objectives, it will end —as other Israeli wars have—when leading nations (often the U.S.) determine that its military has gone too far.

This dynamic is rooted in the history of Israel and the revolutionary, if partial, success of Zionism. Inspired by other nationalist movements and a tide of antisemitism in Europe, Zionists in the 19th and 20th centuries sought to construct a Jewish country in the largely Arab-Muslim Middle East, which fiercely opposed its creation and expansion. They understood that a Jewish state, or homeland, would eventually require peace with the Arab and Muslim Middle East. Yet, as Revisionist Zionist leader Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky famously admitted in 1923, anyone with their eyes open could recognize "the complete impossibility" of transforming "Palestine from an Arab country to a country with a Jewish majority" by voluntary agreement.

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Jabotinsky is key to this history because he made clear what Zionists across the political spectrum understood: their movement's success would require the use of force to ensure survival and convince their neighbors of the Jewish polity's permanence. But there was a paradox: while force was necessary to survive, it would be insufficient to gain peace and mutual recognition.

His solution was the "Iron Wall strategy," to which mainstream Zionists—and later, Israeli political parties—more or less subscribed. This strategy involved using crushing levels of violence to force Arabs to accept that a Jewish state was here to stay. That would create the conditions for successful negotiations, which did not exist as long as Arabs had a "gleam of hope" of ending the

Zionist project altogether. After that hope was extinguished, Jabotinsky stressed, Israelis would be ready to imagine a future for "two peoples in Palestine." As he wrote, "I am prepared to swear, for us and our descendants, that we will never violate this equality and we will never attempt to expel or oppress the Arabs."

In the 1930s, after Britain had declared its support for the idea of a Jewish homeland in Palestine and the League of Nations endorsed the declaration, Zionists began implementing this vision of creating negotiating opportunities by inflicting crushing defeats. They hoped to split Israel's opponents into diehard extremists and moderates willing to negotiate. In Nov. 1947, in the wake of the Holocaust, the United Nations passed a resolution recommending the end of British Mandate Palestine and the creation of two independent states: one Arab and one Jewish. A civil war between Jewish and Palestinian forces and a chaotic abandonment of Palestine by British forces soon ensued.

When Israel declared independence in May 1948, its Arab neighbors attacked. Israeli forces were victorious on almost all fronts, displacing roughly 750,000 Palestinians—and the war only ended when Israel's leaders became fearful of British military intervention and agreed to withdraw their forces from Sinai and cancel operations to conquer the West Bank.

In 1956, after Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal and struck an arms deal with the Soviet Union, Israel, along with Britain and France, invaded Egypt and occupied the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip. Israel left the territories it occupied only when President Dwight Eisenhower threatened direct and painful retribution if it failed to do so.

The pattern of crushing military defeats of Arab forces that began in 1948, and was repeated in reprisal raids in the 1950s and in the 1956 war, continued in June 1967: Egypt, Syria, and Jordan threatened to attack. Israel responded with a devastating

preemptive strike. The U.N. Security Council ordered a ceasefire, but Israel did not stop fighting until the U.S. and the U.N. pressured Prime Minister Levi Eshkol and Defense Minister Moshe Dayan into an abrupt ceasefire.

In October 1973, after Egypt and Syria waged a surprise assault on Israeli positions in the Sinai and Golan Heights, Israeli forces slowly gained the upper hand and began a drive to isolate and destroy the Egyptian Third Army. It only halted this campaign because the U.S.—in a tense standoff with the Soviet Union—categorically refused to allow it to continue. President Richard Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger insisted that Israel abide by the terms of Security Council Resolution 338, requiring Israel to go back to positions it had held on the day the resolution was passed.

Yet, despite deploying Jabotinsky's strategy of overwhelming force for 75 years now, Israel has never gotten to the part of his theory in which Israel gains acceptance from its neighbors and the Palestinian people. That's in part because he failed to foresee that as Israel's victories over Arab resistance to Zionism accumulated, the political center of gravity within Zionism, and then within Israel, would shift toward territorial expansion and ethnonational exclusivism.

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This expansion in its ambitions scuttled the potential for peace. Right when the Iron Wall strategy might've been reaching its pivot point in the 1970s—when Israel's use of overwhelming force had finally convinced a moderate faction of the Arab world to accept its existence in exchange for peace, and Israel could've shifted from using force to negotiating a political settlement—its goals were changing in ways that made such a deal impossible. In the 1970s, Prime Minister Golda Meir rejected several peace offers from

Jordan and Egypt, because they would've required territorial concessions.

Beginning in 1977, Israel's politics have shifted rightward. Elections swung back and forth in the 1980s and 1990s between Labor and the right-wing Likud Party—which trumpeted expansionist policies.

That had major implications in the 1990s when the peace process was finally gaining a foothold with the signing of the Oslo Peace Accords. A far-right Israeli assassinated Labor Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. That enabled Likud's Netanyahu to win election, and he did everything in his power to destroy the Oslo peace process. After its collapse, the Arab world, led by Saudi Arabia, proposed a comprehensive peace with Israel based on the creation of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, but no Israeli government has ever officially responded to this initiative.

And since 2010, Likud has dominated Israeli politics, making peace all but impossible. Though battered by its attempted overhaul of Israel's court system and its colossal failures with respect to the Gaza Strip, Likud and other parties that insist on Israeli rule of the greater "Land of Israel" will continue to control Israeli governments for the foreseeable future.

Without peace, wars have regularly broken out. Each time, the Israeli government promises that finally, unlike in the past, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) will be allowed to fight until victory. In reality, however, as Jabotinsky anticipated in the 1920s, the IDF can never deliver real victory because military means alone cannot transform Middle Eastern realities or create the basis for stable political arrangements based on the principle of the equality of nations.

That explains why Israel has never ended a war without being ordered to do so. The pattern has held steadily into the 21st century,

including in 2006, when the Israeli-Lebanon war only ended when the U.S. and France intervened, brokering a UN resolution. Even if an Israeli government wants to stop fighting, it cannot, because that would mean admitting that it never had a chance of keeping its promise to solve Israel's problems by simply "letting the IDF win." In effect Jabotinsky's insight, that crushing military victories were necessary, but only to set the stage for a political compromise—which could bring peace—has been forgotten.

This history exposes that Israel's current laundry list of war aims isn't designed to be achievable. Rather, these goals are political statements put in place so that after the U.S. inevitably forces an end to the fighting, Netanyahu and his government can claim they would've achieved lofty goals, if only the U.S. had not interceded.

An American order to stop is not what Israeli leaders fear, it is what they expect, and it is what the country always needs. And history shows it will come—eventually. Like previous presidents, President Biden is learning that there are excruciating trade-offs between the dangers, risks, and human costs of allowing an Israeli military campaign to continue and the domestic political consequences of stopping it. When he decides the former concerns outweigh the latter, he will give the order. Then and only then will this war end.

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# The Risk of a Zelensky Wild Card

*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.

In early January, Ukrainian drones blew up a gas terminal near St. Petersburg. In December, Ukrainian operatives even managed to set off explosives on Russian railway lines deep in Siberia, hundreds of miles from the war. We'll see more of these attacks inside Russia as fear rises in Kyiv that Ukraine is running out of ways to put Russian forces on the back foot on the battlefield.

The attacks are more a sign of Ukraine's fears than of its strength. After hundreds of thousands of casualties and the displacement of millions of people, President Volodymyr Zelensky and his generals have new reasons to doubt the staying power of the Western support on which a Ukrainian victory, in any form, will depend.

Aware that voters in America, its key military ally, and Europe, both a military and financial backer, are increasingly conflicted about whether Ukraine can ever evict Russian invaders from their trenches and recapture the 18% of territory they occupy, Kyiv is rightly worried.

Even if Congress approves more military aid for 2024, this will probably be the last package from Washington until after the November election. If Donald Trump wins, Ukrainians know he will drastically cut aid. The outlook in Europe is only slightly better. German budgetary problems, growing Hungarian opposition, and a lack of E.U. leadership will make it hard to fill the gap in military help from Washington over the medium term.

***Read More: Inside Ukraine's Plan to Arm Itself***

In the meantime, as Vladimir Putin shifts Russia's economy onto a war footing, Ukraine knows it must mobilize and train hundreds of thousands of new recruits. Kyiv is considering mobilizing 500,000 additional troops. Even if that proves possible, it isn't sustainable in a war against an invader with a much bigger population and economy. That's why Kyiv is fast becoming more desperate. It's doing its best to scale up its domestic defense production, especially of drones for the battlefield and for hitting targets inside Russia.

That's where the danger grows for those not directly involved in the war. Zelensky is already taking bigger risks to turn the war around and maintain his political standing at home, including more aggressive attacks against targets inside Russia and occupied areas of Ukraine. It means a higher likelihood of targeted killings of Russian officials connected to the war, and frequent strikes with drones and missiles in Crimea and on Russian military and economic infrastructure, possibly including oil and grain facilities on the Black Sea that could again disrupt global markets. New attacks are also likely on the Kerch Strait bridge, which links

Crimea to the Russian mainland. That, in turn, would provoke more intensive Russian attacks against Ukrainian cities. Any of these attacks—and there are many possible targets—risks a retaliation from Putin that brings NATO more directly into the conflict. Neither Russia nor NATO wants that expansion, but wars take on a life of their own, particularly with one of the key players—in this case, Zelensky—becoming a wild card to watch.

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# Multivitamins Are Linked to Slower Brain Aging

Alice Park is a senior health correspondent at TIME. She covers the COVID-19 pandemic, new drug developments in cancer and Alzheimer's disease, mental health, HIV, CRISPR, and advances in gene therapy, among other issues in health and science. She also covers the Olympics, and co-chaired TIME's inaugural TIME 100 Health Summit in 2019. Her work has won awards from the New York Press Club, and recognition from the Deadline Club. In addition, she is the author of *The Stem Cell Hope: How Stem Cell Medicine Can Change Our Lives*.

Aging is inevitable, but that doesn’t stop us from trying to slow it down. And the easier the intervention, the better.

In a study published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, researchers report that taking a multivitamin that you can buy at the pharmacy can slow cognitive decline associated with aging by as much as two years.

The trial is part of a series led by scientists at Mass General Brigham that compared people 60 years or older taking Centrum

Silver to those taking a placebo. It was funded by the National Institutes of Health and Mars Edge—a branch of the food company Mars, Inc.—and Haleon, the maker of Centrum, donated the vitamins. None of the sponsors or funders were involved in the design of the study or analysis of the results.

Two previous studies in the series had evaluated the participants over two to three years via phone or web interviews, and those results revealed that people taking a multivitamin daily scored higher on cognitive tests than those taking the placebo. In this latest study, which involved 573 people who were tested in person by the research team, the scientists saw the same benefit. Taken together, all three studies, which involved more than 5,000 volunteers, show that people taking a daily multivitamin for up to three years slowed cognitive brain aging by two years.

“These findings of consistent benefit of a multivitamin in three separate placebo-controlled studies are compelling and exciting,” says Dr. JoAnn Manson, professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School, chief of preventive medicine at Brigham and Women’s Hospital, and co-director of the study, which was conducted with scientists at Columbia and Wake Forest University. “They could even be considered stunning.”

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Manson says that each of the three studies showed slightly different magnitudes of benefit on different cognitive tests, which included memory skills such as recalling word lists both immediately and after a delay, naming animals and vegetables, and subtracting

numbers backwards. All three trials showed particularly strong benefits for memory.

The results are a first step toward better understanding how vitamins and nutrients—especially the 20 essential micronutrients included in most multivitamins—can keep brains healthy. But questions remain: for example, is the multivitamin supplementing already adequate levels of these vitamins and nutrients in older people, or is it addressing deficiencies? Manson says the research team has some health information on the participants' diets, which ranged from poor to good, and are planning to investigate that issue further. "We have some indication that people with lower diet quality showed greater benefit, but we need to delve into those questions in more detail," she says. "It's possible that in study populations with lower diet quality, or lower educational levels and lower socioeconomic status, there would be greater benefit, because it's likely that there are more nutritional deficiencies in those groups."

They will also be exploring whether specific vitamins or nutrients are more important for the brain as people age, such as vitamin B12, vitamin D, vitamin E, lutein, and zinc. Other studies have reported that people tend to absorb less vitamin B12 as they get older, for example, and synthesize less vitamin D through the skin. And while the study only followed people for up to three years, future trials could also look at whether longer term use of multivitamins could lead to even greater benefits for the brain.

As encouraging as the results are, Manson says they don't suggest that a vitamin can substitute for a healthy diet and lifestyle. "By no means does this say that people can be complacent about their diet and just pop a pill. But it is possible that a multivitamin could have a complementary role to a healthy diet and lifestyle because it includes a comprehensive array of essential vitamins and minerals, and if someone does have a deficiency in any of them, it can be of benefit."

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# The Lesson From BYD’s EV Takeover: Don’t Discount China

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.

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Here in the U.S., we hear a lot about how legacy automakers are racing to catch up to Tesla and capture a piece of the growing electric vehicle market. Tesla has a head start, but GM, Ford, and Stellantis have poured billions into their respective efforts to catch up.

In the global race, however, there is another, perhaps more significant, competitor: Chinese-made EVs. Last quarter, Chinese automaker BYD surpassed Tesla as the world’s biggest producer of EVs. And a handful of other Chinese EV makers are planning to rapidly expand in the European market with much cheaper

offerings than their European and American competitors. If you look closely, you yourself may have already encountered one. Last year in Mexico City, I was surprised to have a BYD vehicle show when I called an Uber. And BYD electric buses have been driving around the U.S. for years.

The significance of the rise in the Chinese auto industry as part and parcel of the energy transition is hard to understate. Building cars and trucks occupies an important role in American and European economies—and selling them abroad represents a significant export. The value of U.S. car exports totals about $55 billion. The figure is even higher in the European Union: around $174 billion in 2022 at today's exchange rate. As EVs become a more popular choice, Chinese automakers are bound to increase their market share and chip away at the value of western exports, especially in emerging markets where consumers will need cheaper options.

This isn't just a macroeconomic and geopolitical question. At a company by company level, automakers see the threat. "We see the Chinese as the main competitor, not GM or Toyota," said Ford CEO Jim Farley last year.

Chinese electric vehicles are on the rise in part because of strategic decisions made more than a decade ago—both within companies and at the national level—to develop the capacity to manufacture clean technology. In 2009, in the wake of the global financial crisis, China launched a number of subsidy programs to advance clean technology, including electric vehicles. The U.S. also launched investment programs to advance clean energy around that time, but China's were bigger and lasted longer. Estimates vary, but various analyses agree that the total value of the Chinese government's EV subsidies between 2009 and 2022 (the year the U.S. passed the Inflation Reduction Act) measured in the tens of billions of dollars, if not more.

That investment has put Chinese clean technology companies in a place to internationalize. Indeed, today Chinese companies have also taken a lead in the manufacturing of a range of clean energy technologies, from solar panels to lithium-ion batteries, leaving American companies behind.

There is a lesson here for companies in other sectors beyond energy and automotive: ignore the energy transition at your own risk. Demand for clean technologies is poised to shape a range of products and services, and first movers will be rewarded.

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# Earth 2.0°C: How to Make Passing the 1.5°C Climate Change Threshold An Opportunity

Solecki is a professor of geography at Hunter College, City University of New York. He was an author of the 1.5°C Special Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, released in 2018.

Addressing the climate crisis will be difficult and demand focused attention and action. It is not a problem that will go away, and in fact a lot of new evidence shows that the world is heating and changing faster, weather-wise, than we expected just a few years ago. Many highly vulnerable populations and ecosystems already are facing the devastating impacts of climate change. While the COP28 meeting in Dubai late last year provided some glimmers of hope that the world's countries can meaningfully respond to climate change, it is increasingly clear that the rise in global temperature will exceed the 1.5°C (2.7°F) threshold first defined as part of the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement. Currently the earth has experienced approximately 1.15°C of heating above the 19th century baseline and will likely pass the 1.5°C level globally in the mid-2030s. The window of opportunity to forestall this event is

about to close, as significant barriers including lack of financing and institutional capacity, and to say nothing of poverty, consumption, and lack of societal trust.

While the challenges to address the climate crisis are great, several valuable opportunities to advance climate solutions lie well within our grasp. It is important that we collectively work to achieve the goals of what is called “climate resilient development,” and thereby simultaneously adapt to growing climate risks and incentivize opportunities to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions. Together, these two aims could tackle climate change while promoting economic advancement that is both sustainable and equitable. Equity is central to the process of transition. Whether it is industries and employees retooling for a green economy, or communities fearing loss of their neighborhood to flooding or climate gentrification, the evidence is overwhelming that the more equitable and engaged the decision-making process, the more likely the climate action will be successful.

Two other key areas of climate solutions are central to our everyday lives: the quality of life in our cities and towns, and enrichment of the natural world which surrounds and is infused within them. We are living in a profoundly urban century. Currently 56% of the world’s 8.1 billion live in urbanized areas, and almost all the global population growth expected in the next several decades will be in metropolitan areas. At the same time, these places drive approximately 70% of the world’s greenhouse-gas emissions and are where most economic activity takes place.

Through responsible and equitable planning, the urban (re)construction taking place now can integrate the latest climate solutions while also making our cities and towns better places to live and provide all with a higher quality of life. Fundamental to this achievement is protecting and more effectively using the services that nature provides human society. Nature-based solutions to climate change can’t address all our climate adaptation and

mitigation challenges, but the data are strong that the more we can protect and enhance biodiversity and ecosystem function, the more benefits we can accrue in flood reduction, urban cooling, and air- and water-quality protection.

A key question is whether or not we can make such significant changes. Peering back into our own recent history, we find lots of stories of how we have done so. In a soon-to-be-published book, *Cities and Environmental Change: From Crisis to Transformation*, I document many examples of how seemingly overwhelming urban environmental crises were addressed through innovation. For example, by the mid-1950s air pollution had become a significant health and economic issue in the greater Los Angeles region. Within a decade transformative new air-pollution science, stakeholder coalitions, and governance institutions had been created and put into practice.

On a grand scale, the modernization of cities—while far from perfect—brought significant advances in drinking-water supply, sanitation, electrification, mass public transit, and recreation in many places. However, these developments were uneven, and today many cities, particularly in the Global South, are growing without the necessary infrastructure to adequately support the local population. Climate-resilient development is an opportunity to reduce or even eliminate these discrepancies.

The convergence of global climate change, rapid urbanization, and growing demands for economic and social equity create both an immediate imperative for action, and a rare opportunity to transform the present and create a better future. Successful solutions to past urban environmental crises can give us insights into how to best seize this opportunity: They show the importance of a flexible response where lived experiences, and the needs of multiple stakeholders are considered in policymaking.

Furthermore, we know that solutions should focus on securing the needed knowledge, financing, and decision-making capacity in advance, and being prepared to act when a window opens. Shocks like massive floods and disease outbreaks can become tipping points and bring attention to issues; but if emergent policies are to be effective and provide long-lasting solutions, they must also address underlying societal conditions, such as inequity and lack of trust in those in power due to a history of being cut out of the decision-making process.

Already, the world is full of small-scale climate-action success stories and other experiments that are making a difference. The historical evidence shows that to rapidly scale these up, we need to better monitor and evaluate these examples, bring in people and institutions from all levels of government, tap the incentive motives of the private sector, and address the concerns of those opposed to change. Even as the global community is failing the test of meeting the 1.5°C threshold, we have other resources to bring into the fight, and many of them are embedded in the history and culture of places and how we have addressed our past environmental crises.

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# How I Learned to Speak My Truth at a Silent Meditation Retreat

Chevlen is a journalist and screenwriter from Youngstown, Ohio, now living in Los Angeles. Her writing regularly appears in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and Slate, among other publications

Of course, there wasn't a plunger. There's never a plunger when you need one. But there's always an audience: in this case, three women sitting on the other side of the thin bathroom door waiting for their turn to use a toilet which was now horribly, hopelessly clogged. I sweat over the lid trying to devise a solution but could barely hear myself think over the chorus to Leonard Cohen's "Closing Time," which played a relentless loop in my head, as it would every day of this retreat, at a perfect-acoustics, full-volume blare. I was three days into a 10-day, silent meditation, and absolutely at the end of my rope.

"Sorry to break the noble silence," I finally told my fellow meditators. "But that toilet is clogged." It was the first thing I'd said in three days. The words felt like poetry on my lips.

When I told friends my plan to attend the program, they were justifiably incredulous. “You can’t shut-up for 10 minutes, let alone 10 days!” they protested. (They were—and remain—correct.) But my then boyfriend was an avid meditator, and had raved about the program since we first met. Vipassana, a meditation practice originating in India over 2,500 years ago, had utterly changed his life, he told me. It made him calm, self-connected. I had just quit my day job to pursue writing full-time, and all I could sell was an article about how to make latkes. I had time to kill, is what I mean.

I said, “Ok!” to the 10-day Vipassana meditation for the same reason I said “Ok!” to moving to Chicago with him. Because I thought there was something wrong with me for instead thinking, “Run!” Love, I speculated, was the noble pursuit of making two people fit together. My pieces didn’t quite squeeze into the jigsaw puzzle of our relationship, but I thought this might sand down their edges. My boyfriend was so good, I thought (still think), and I desperately wanted to be good too.

***Read More:*** *How Listening to Silence Changes Our Brains*

So off I went, first to Chicago, then the middle of seemingly nowhere, for the retreat. I signed away my wallet and cellphone; I listened to the rules: No speaking, no eye contact, no physical contact, no drugs or alcohol, no sex or masturbation, no technology, and (scariest to me) no writing. I felt like screaming, but I trusted my boyfriend more than my own instincts; if this was good for him, this will be good for me, I assured my racing heart.

Had I bothered researching Vipassana prior to attending one, I would have read plenty about the hours. We awoke at 4 a.m. each day to make it to our first meditation by 4:30 a.m. After two hours of that, we’d congregate for our 6:30 a.m. breakfast. Then a brief break. Then more meditation. Lunch. A break. More meditation. Tea. More meditation. Then a viewing of a taped lecture by an

esteemed teacher of the practice. More meditation. Then bedtime to prepare to wake up and do it all again.

I had little experience with 4 a.m. prior, but it's an eerie hour. The sky is ink-black and, in this far-flung Illinois town, littered with innumerable stars, seemingly close together but in reality, separated by vast gulfs of empty space. On our dark walks to the meditation hall, the morning chill sunk deep into my bones, and the silent stretch of land surrounding the site loomed menacing and black. "What the hell am I doing here," I wondered. The question extended beyond the worn grass and murky pond of the campus.

In our nightly lectures, the teacher encouraged us not to think while meditating, and when a thought inevitably did cross our minds, to pass it aside without judgment. I floundered at this initially. Unintentionally, I'd screen entire films in my head (mostly M. Night Shyamalan, because even my subconscious has no taste), and analyze years-old interactions.

Constantly, helplessly, my mind kept replaying "Closing Time," for which, unfortunately, I didn't know all the lyrics. The result was a horrible mental performance in which Cohen would croon "And the bupbupbupbup dun-dun and the ladadadada and the Johnny Walker wisdom runnin' high," Plus, the campus's picturesque geese were in the midst of mating season, so Cohen's half-wrong lyrics were punctuated by the honking of fornicating waterfowl.

What I mean is meditating was difficult for me. But so was the time spent not meditating. Have you ever heard a cafeteria full of people eating in silence? An entire room echoing with the sound of conversation-less human mastication—all wet chewing and slippery gulps, suppressed belches and scraping silverware.

To my relief, meditating became easier, slowly, as the first days of the course passed. Whereas initially I couldn't sit for five minutes without needing to shift my hips, I found myself still for longer and

longer stretches of time. My hummingbird brain, too, slowed its vibrations; my thoughts still fluttered, but I could go stretches of time before they pulled me away. And yet, I still fantasized about leaving. Yes, I can sit here and not think, but what is the point, my mind demanded. “Run,” it urged. “Run!”

The toilet had by then resumed normal function, but I still felt stuck. In my head, I could hear all the voices pressuring me to stay, a chorus featuring my boyfriend, the gurus, every tight-bodied yoga-influencer on Instagram: “You left too soon, you didn’t take this seriously, you failed.” But faintly, I could also hear my own, equally disappointed in me, but for staying. “Run,” it whispered, tired now from repetition. “Run.” After a few days, I did. Leaving was harder than I had anticipated (leaving is always harder than we anticipate) but meditations are voluntary, even when you feel like they’re the only option.

When I reached Chicago, my boyfriend was both shocked and disappointed. (Always great when you can achieve both.) I cried a lot. I wondered if I’d ruined my chances of inner peace by leaving the meditation center. I wondered if I’d ruined our relationship by failing to appreciate his most cherished practice.

I considered leaving the life we’d built. But I didn’t. Not at first. I spent a few more months unhappy; I was sure, more so now than ever, that there had to be something wrong with me. I couldn’t meditate right. I couldn’t love right. Was there anything *righ*t about me?

Eventually, my fast-expanding misery burst like a balloon in my mouth. Pop! “This isn’t working.” The words felt like poetry on my lips. My boyfriend helped pack up my stuff and drove me to the airport. This lovely man, with real sheets on his bed and the generosity to schlep me all the way to O’Hare International Airport —I was leaving him? My intuition shouted to be heard over reason and though I thought it would break me, I hugged him goodbye and

walked away. My legs nearly collapsed with relief on arrival. I was in the wrong place, with the wrong people, doing the wrong things, yes, but *I* wasn't wrong. That toilet was probably busted before I ever used it.

I'd love to say I've followed my instincts since then, but trust is a muscle, like any other; it only grows with pain and repetition. So I kept writing, even though it seemed doomed. I moved to New York, then I moved to LA. I got rejected; I got published; usually I got ignored. I fell in love and fell out of love and fell in love all over again. I made a lot of mistakes, is what I mean. But they were my mistakes, at least; made from listening to my own inner voice, a voice which sometimes stuttered or misspoke or vocal-fried, but always rung true as my own. I made a lot of mistakes. But slowly, I started trusting that I could fix them. Even better, I could learn from them.

I didn't finish the meditation course my ex-boyfriend recommended, but I sometimes still try to meditate. I'll sit for 20 minutes and try to focus on my breath, on nothing else but just being, until my alarm goes off. I'm still not sure I'm doing it right. But I trust, now, that I don't have to.

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# Denis Villeneuve Refuses to Let Hollywood Shrink Him Down to Size

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.

For Denis Villeneuve, adapting any book—let alone one that’s been adored by readers since 1965—is an act of treason. “When you adapt, you kill. You destroy in the process of transformation. Going from the words to the image, this adaptation is my adaptation, with my sensibility.”

The book in question is *Dune*, Frank Herbert's futuristic midcentury novel about—among many other things—a young nobleman named Paul Atreides, who learns to live among a society of desert dwellers known as the Fremen, and who may even be their messiah. The first part of Villeneuve's two-movie epic, *Dune*, was released in 2021. The second, *Dune: Part Two*, arriving on March 1, marks the end of a kind of Arthurian quest for Villeneuve, now 56, who has loved the novel since he first read it at age 14. And even though he has interpreted Herbert's work in his own fashion—which is where the treason comes in—preserving the book's spirit was paramount. "I was trying to be, as a filmmaker, as invisible as possible. I tried my best to keep the poetry of the book, the atmosphere, the colors, the smell, everything that I felt when I read the book. I tried."

Villeneuve, speaking via Zoom from the countryside north of Montreal, is currently working on three screenplays, including a *Dune* sequel, even as he recuperates from this project that has consumed six years of his life. It's a period of regeneration with no time for any real rest. Villeneuve is one of a small group of serious mainstream filmmakers—Christopher Nolan and Quentin Tarantino are two others—who, as roughly middle-aged veterans, believe wholeheartedly in the grand-scale experience. Other directors have succumbed to the false allure of franchise filmmaking, hoping to put a stamp of individuality on this or that *Star Wars* or *Marvel* film. But Villeneuve—whose superb 2010 breakthrough, *Incendies*, launched a streak of acclaimed pictures including *Sicario* (2015), *Arrival* (2016), and *Blade Runner 2049* (2017)—remains committed to old-school big-screen filmmaking principles, making thoughtful, visually inventive movies that don't hew to any prescribed canon. In an era when many filmmakers have had to resign themselves to working small, Villeneuve refuses to let the industry shrink him down to size.

The opening of *Dune: Part Two* is just a springboard leap from the ending of the first installment. After the armies launched by Baron Vladimir Harkonnen (Stellan Skarsgard) retake the desert planet of Arrakis—thus reclaiming control of the planet's supply of that valuable psychotropic commodity known as Spice—Paul Atreides (Timothée Chalamet), heir of the peace-seeking House Atreides, and his mother Lady Jessica (Rebecca Ferguson), who belongs to a powerful mystical sisterhood, flee into the desert. There, Paul meets a girl he has seen in premonitions, Zendaya's willful and wise Chani. From this point, the story unspools to include a psychopathic Harkonnen heir (Austin Butler), a possible future interplanetary princess (Florence Pugh), and an embryo who advises her mother from the womb. And the deadly desert beastie known as the sandworm—the stuff of nightmares, like a sea cucumber with teeth—again rears its ugly head.

[video id=xWEEvWE1 autostart="viewable"]

To anyone who hasn't read Herbert's novel—and maybe even to some who have—it all sounds too nuts to make sense in any cinematic form. God knows others, like David Lynch and Chilean-French filmmaker Alejandro Jodorowsky, have tried. People who don't warm to science fiction tend to laugh at the made-up names, the wild plot machinations, the hopes and goals of future humans who may or may not be anything like us.

But both *Dune* and *Dune: Part Two* are elegant in a way that defies laughter. *Part Two* is, like its predecessor, mostly a quiet symphony of beige and cream, though the movie's textures are so varied they almost constitute a color palette of their own. It's this attention to detail that makes the *Dune* movies feel more lived-in than far out. And perhaps most significantly, Villeneuve is alive to the faces of his actors. Chalamet had always been his first choice to play Paul Atreides. "He has those very aristocratic features. You feel a strong intelligence in the eyes. And he looks very young onscreen, and I needed that youth, that candor, that vulnerability—that young man who was struggling with his identity, trying to find a spot." He cast the rest of the actors around Chalamet, deciding early on that the movies would be shot in extreme closeups or landscapes. "It's always a lot of extremes. Landscapes and human faces. The human face is a landscape itself. A landscape changes according to the light. Every day it's different. And it's the same with the human face."

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The success of the first *Dune* gives *Part Two* a sturdy launchpad, though that success was never assured. *Dune* arrived in U.S. theaters on Oct. 22, 2021, when even hardcore movie lovers were still wary, mid-pandemic, of theaters. The film was available to stream, on HBO Max, the same day, the sort of executive decision

that makes no ambitious filmmaker happy, and Villeneuve himself expressed his disappointment in a column in *Variety*. Even so, *Dune* made roughly $400 million on a $165 million budget and earned largely positive reviews.

Still, how many *Dune* movies might be too many? Herbert wrote six *Dune* books, with increasingly gonzo plots. Villeneuve's two films, plus that sequel, *Dune Messiah*, which has not been officially greenlighted, might constitute a just-right mini-franchise. ("*Dune Messiah* should be the last *Dune* movie for me," he confirms.) Going beyond that, even if other directors take over, could be IP overkill. But right now, there are other types of movies Villeneuve wants to make, including an adaptation of Stacy Schiff's *Cleopatra*, currently being written by Krysty Wilson-Cairns *(1917)*, and a version of Arthur C. Clarke's futuristic classic *Rendezvous With Rama.* You get the sense that Villeneuve is making the most of *Dune* momentum, particularly at a time when even longtime moviegoers may still need a little coaxing to leave the convenience of their living rooms. "Cinema, since its beginning, has had multiple crises," he says. "There's always an adjustment, but the river still keeps flowing. The theatrical experience is here for good. It will prevail, it will transform." But he doesn't underestimate the challenges all creative people face now.

Though it isn't emphasized in Villeneuve's movies, in Herbert's *Dune*, computers and artificial intelligence have been banished. Humans try to develop the potential of the human brain, "which is actually the opposite of what we're trying to do right now," Villeneuve says. Yet he worries less about AI "than the fact that we behave like algorithms, as filmmakers. We're in a very conservative time; creativity is restricted. Everything's about Wall Street. What will save cinema is freedom and taking risks. And you feel the audience is excited when they see something they haven't seen before."

That something can take many forms. Villeneuve shoots as much as possible live. His preference is to shoot “real landscapes all the time, and to always follow the nature of the light, real light.” And he takes great care with special effects, working closely with his VFX supervisor—in this case, Paul Lambert—to embed them so deeply in the tissue of the film that they feel wholly believable. *Dune: Part Two* features more action sequences than Part One, and the sandworms have a bigger role. But the movie’s finest special effect might be the smallest—Villeneuve is a big-idea filmmaker with a miniaturist’s eye.

So what about the tiny desert mouse, with the very big ears, that reappears, with even greater significance, in *Dune: Part Two*? This diminutive desert creature who, having adapted to a crispy-dry landscape, can absorb water through his slender ear hairs? Is that a real mouse or a movie-magic mouse? “I don’t want to break the magic,” Villeneuve says, “but it’s a mouse that doesn’t exist,” drawn largely from descriptions found in Herbert’s book. It was a lot of work to make this creature, he says. But the effect is worth it. You believe in this mouse, and more important, you believe in the challenge of the world around him. Without consciously trying, Villeneuve has captured the allure of what we commonly call science fiction. “It’s like an act of hope, the ultimate way of dreaming.”

# Substance Edges Out Snark in Ryan Murphy's Messy, Fascinating Feud: Capote vs. the Swans

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.

What is it that makes relationships between queer men and glamorous women so intimate—and so volatile? Consider Jennifer Coolidge's tragic *White Lotus* character, Tanya, who wandered off with a crew of fortune hunters that she breathlessly described as "high-end gays." Or Andy Cohen playing ringmaster to a universe of pugnacious Real Housewives.

Half a century ago, the Andy Cohen of the Upper East Side was Truman Capote, and the women whose world he insinuated himself into were A-list socialites. For two decades, the author of *In Cold Blood* and *Breakfast at Tiffany's* heard their confessions and dried their tears. Then, in 1975, he published a story in *Esquire* that exposed their deepest humiliations. FX's *Feud: Capote vs. the Swans*, the long-awaited second season of a Ryan Murphy anthology that began with 2017's *Bette and Joan*, traces the friendships and eventual schism. It's a messy rendering that, at times, reverts to cliché. But beneath the distracting artifice is a

psychologically rich, wonderfully acted portrait of an artist torn between his work and the life that fueled it.

Tom Hollander (the lead villain in *Lotus*) is well cast as the diminutive Truman, in a story that spans from the mid-’50s through his premature death in 1984, hopping between eras with confusing frequency. At ladies-who-lunch mecca La Cote Basque, he charms the adventurous C.Z. Guest (Chloë Sevigny), banters with brassy Slim Keith (Diane Lane, excellent), and taunts wild-eyed Ann Woodward (Demi Moore), whom he insists killed her husband. A standout episode, framed as footage for a Maysles brothers documentary, revisits Truman’s ultra-exclusive 1966 Black and White Ball, which marked the height of his influence.

At the heart of the series is the author’s relationship with Babe Paley (an enchantingly brittle Naomi Watts), which writer and executive producer Jon Robin Baitz, adapting Laurence Leamer’s gossipy book *Capote’s Women*, interprets as a tragic romance. Platonic sparks fly when they meet on a private jet in 1955. Truman worships Babe’s beauty and poise; she feels safe, loved, yet vividly alive when they’re together. Years later, he coaches her to use her powerful husband Bill’s (the late Treat Williams) serial infidelity to her advantage. “Figure out what it is you want,” he drawls after one egregious incident. Then he gives her a Valium to swallow with her

Scotch and lets her snuggle up beside him. “The only person who could ever hurt me is you,” Babe tells Truman.

And he does. The infamous *Esquire* story earns him the wrath of the image-obsessed women he calls his swans. Led by Slim, they drop him overnight. Babe, whose marital woes Truman aired in lurid, barely veiled detail, follows the crowd but misses him terribly. After the breakup, each becomes the other’s one who got away.

Truman’s betrayal, and the show’s fascination with that choice, situates *Capote vs. the Swans* within a canon of Murphy series about real queer men who range from difficult to diabolical. In *Dahmer—Monster* and *The Assassination of Gianni Versace: American Crime Story*, the serial killers (and many of their victims) are men who sleep with men. *Halston*’s fashion designer antihero forsakes art and love for money and fame, terrorizing the people who care about him the most.

Capote could easily have come off as similarly monstrous. Like Halston, his origin story involves a pitiful mother; Jessica Lange is pure camp as Truman’s withholding mom, a social climber who failed to penetrate the very same Manhattan circles that would

welcome her son. The scenes where she appears, often in spectral form, are Murphyverse boilerplate.

But, to his credit, Baitz also attributes to his protagonist motives more complicated than revenge on the kind of women who rejected his striving mom. Along with being a social gadfly, Truman was an ambitious writer. He pitched *Answered Prayers*, the unfinished novel that the *Esquire* story excerpted, as a gimlet-eyed peek into the secret world of high society. Yet as he grew closer to his subjects, he struggled to write it, missing deadline after deadline. His descent into alcoholism, captured by Hollander and director Gus Van Sant with a starkness that recalls Van Sant's Kurt Cobain film *Last Days*, plays a crucial role. So do his romantic woes; Truman alienates a loving partner (Joe Mantello) by doting on an abusive lover (Russell Tovey).

He may have been the swans' confidant, but they were not his. As one James Baldwin (Chris Chalk, doing his best with an impossible role) notes, in an insightful, if heavy-handed, episode in which the iconic writer gives Truman a pep talk, gays did not at the time have the same supportive community to fall back on as other minorities. Whispered slurs confirm that the swans never fully accepted him; after *Esquire*, Babe calls him a "homosexual court jester singing for his supper."

Capote took the title of *Answered Prayers* from a line attributed to Saint Teresa of Avila: "There are more tears shed over answered prayers than over unanswered prayers." He was, presumably, referring to the dreams of wealth and privilege that the swans used their beauty and wiles to achieve. But *Feud* suggests that Babe and the rest had always been just as treacherous to their gay best friend as he was, that one time, to them. The outcome of Capote's own answered prayers? A ruined career. A life cut short. And a bottomless reservoir of tears.

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# Mr. & Mrs. Smith Reveals a Sweeter Side of Donald Glover

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.

Donald Glover is known as a provocateur, taking aim at pieties around race, celebrity, and the entertainment industry in dark comedies like the shape-shifting *Atlanta* and last year's stan satire *Swarm*. But he also has a romantic side. It has fueled *Atlanta* story lines about his character Earn's relationship with his daughter's mother (Zazie Beetz) and some of the best music he's released as Childish Gambino.

*Mr. & Mrs. Smith*, Glover and co-creator Francesca Sloane's reimagining of the 2005 action romp that birthed Brangelina, is his first series to foreground that sweeter sensibility. In fact, it's more reminiscent in tone of Rian Johnson and Natasha Lyonne's (mostly) lighthearted detective dramedy *Poker Face* than of its high-octane

inspiration about two married assassins who lie to each other about their professions until they're assigned to kill one another.

In this version, Glover's John and *Pen15* star Maya Erskine's Jane are desperate strangers united by a mysterious employer in a sham marriage. She's a super-smart risk taker who got rejected from the CIA due to "antisocial tendencies." He's an affable military vet with a dishonorable discharge. Together, they risk their lives in missions that are equal parts glamorous and awkward. One episode has them spying on the collapse of a mogul's (Sharon Horgan) marriage during a ski vacation in the Dolomites. In another, they indulge the perverse sexual appetites of a billionaire played by John Turturro in a quest to inject him with truth serum.

There's plenty of action on offer. But, as in *Poker Face*, the show's real emphasis is on the characters—and a list of delightful guest stars that includes Michaela Coel, Parker Posey, Alexander Skarsgård, and more. John and Jane fall in love fast, yet their relationship is tested by job-related stress, incompatible priorities, and their very different personalities. Through goofy pillow talk as well as angry confrontations, they hash out violently heightened versions of the problems any couple trying to build a life together might face.

As a metaphor for the us-against-the-world hubris of marriage, it mostly works. Glover and Erskine have a playful sort of chemistry. Yet despite all the combat and chase scenes, the pace sometimes drags; episodes that feel flabby at 45 minutes might've been more captivating at a half hour. At the same time, there's something endearing about the story's shagginess. *Mr. & Mrs. Smith* may not be a classic like *Atlanta*, but it can be a whole lot of fun.

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# The Enduring Appeal of Usher

Cady Lang is a staff writer at TIME. She covers culture, focusing on identity, celebrity, and fashion.

Last summer, a video of Usher serenading actor Keke Palmer onstage at his Las Vegas residency made the rounds online. In the clip, Usher slow-dances with the star like she's the only person in the room, while crooning his falsetto-laden 2010 ballad "There Goes My Baby." It was all enough to leave Palmer star-struck and giddy. That song, the dance, Usher's undivided attention were the stuff of a romantic fantasy the R&B star has been cultivating for three decades—seductive but respectful, flirtatious, and wholly charming. Palmer's unfettered joy was so tangible, so infectious, that I could feel myself blushing, falling under the irresistible spell of Usher, even through a screen.

Usher's magnetism has been well documented over the course of his career. His charisma is so arresting that it inspired a 2007 episode of *The Boondocks* in which the animated Usher's mere presence leads to a marital separation. In an iconic cameo as himself in the 2019 film *Hustlers*, he holds an entire strip club in

his thrall, his song “Love in the Club” playing as he lavishes attention on the dancers. His 2022 NPR Tiny Desk Concert netted over 20 million views, making it one of the series’ most popular installments. And that viral clip of Usher serenading Palmer was so electrifying, it instigated a petty, misogynistic social media response from her then partner that united the internet in righteous indignation.

**Read more:** *Your Complete Guide to the 2024 Super Bowl: Teams, Tickets, Taylor Swift, and More*

There’s never been a better time to reconsider the enduring thrills of Usher’s charm, as the 45-year-old singer, songwriter, dancer, actor, showman, and sex symbol enters what feels like a bona fide renaissance. Though it’s been nearly 30 years since he made his debut, his voice is as dulcet as it was in the ’90s, his dance moves as sinuous, his often shirtless torso as chiseled as ever—and his schedule, as busy. Fresh off his wildly popular Las Vegas residency, which sold so well it got extended twice, he’s released three new singles in the past year and is set to debut his ninth studio album, *Coming Home*, on Feb. 9, just days before he takes the biggest stage in the entertainment world, one that has been known to draw more than 100 million viewers and graced by the likes of Prince and U2, Madonna and Michael Jackson: headlining the Super Bowl halftime show.

Apple, the show’s sponsor, is promoting it with a heavy nod to Usher’s longevity, the ads splicing celebrity appearances with 20-year-old footage. But it’s also a pivotal moment for him as an artist and R&B’s foremost ambassador. No other headliner in recent years has represented the genre quite like Usher, making his performance a potential bid for a new generation of listeners. Paired with the release of an album that sees him creatively reunited with L.A. Reid, one of the architects of his now signature sound, the time is ripe for Usher to create some new classics.

Born in Texas and raised in Chattanooga, Tenn., before moving to Atlanta to foster his burgeoning music career, Usher Raymond IV was discovered on *Star Search* as a teen, leading to a record deal with Reid and Babyface's label, LaFace Records. In the years since debuting his self-titled album in 1994, at 15, he's proved himself time and again the reigning King of R&B.

Over the span of his career, Usher has clinched nine No. 1 singles and released eight studio albums. He's won eight Grammys, his 2004 hit track "Confessions Part II" crowned by *Rolling Stone* as the "best R&B song of the 21st century." The album from which it hailed, *Confessions*, achieved the highest certification from the Recording Industry Association of America, diamond, when it surpassed 10 million sales in 2008. This made Usher the first and last R&B artist since Stevie Wonder, whose 1976 album *Songs in the Key of Life* was certified in 2005, to receive this distinction. He's also the last Black artist in any genre to achieve this.

**Read more:** *See the Evolution of the Super Bowl Halftime Show*

The music, in other words, has consistently been excellent—even as he's dabbled in EDM and Broadway, sometimes to the dismay of his more purist fans. But while Usher's accomplishments have solidified his place among the greats, it's his reputation as the most charming man in R&B that has cemented his legacy.

Charm is a slippery, ineffable quality. That Usher has a wide and easy smile bookended by dimples, phenomenal moves, the gracious manners of a gentleman, the silky-smooth voice of an angel, and the ability to roller-skate backward while singing are all components of his larger-than-life aura. But the underlying essence of Usher's undeniable and timeless appeal lies in the deep sense of intimacy that permeates his music and performance—even in a football stadium. He routinely captures rapt attention in arena shows, which crackle with longing and desire or explode into shrieks and screams. Indeed, Usher's greatest gift, aside from his

more obvious talent as a singer and dancer, is his ability to make every woman in his presence feel like he's singing directly to them.

This is clear not just in the way he performs but in his songbook itself, full of hits that make art of the triumphs and trials of being human—and particularly the emotional, sometimes messy business of falling in and out of love (arguably Usher's, and R&B's, favorite subject). An Usher track feels like a secret shared between lovers, the confidential outpouring of a broken heart. Lyrically, he is by turn sweetly romantic and unabashedly provocative, sometimes even on the same track. On 1997's "Nice and Slow," he croons about taking it slow in the same breath that he declares "I want to do something freaky to you." His most compelling displays of vulnerability, however, may be found in his heartbreak ballads, a staple of his oeuvre that's wildly popular, going by the success of *Confessions.* "I'm twisted 'cause one side of me is tellin' me that I need to move on," he sings plaintively on his 2004 track "Burn" about a breakup that's been a long time coming. "On the other side, I wanna break down and cry."

**Read more:** *11 of the Most Controversial Moments at Super Bowl Halftime Shows*

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Usher's persona has long been that of the player with a heart of gold, the musical equivalent of the Will Smith rom-com *Hitch.* For an object of so many people's lust, he's surprisingly wholesome—a proud father of four who sings the ABC's on *Sesame Street* and speaks glowingly of his partner. It's a distinction that has set him apart from his contemporaries, who might sing about women but rarely sing to or for them. And it's possibly made him the genre's last great super-star. Recent years have proved tumultuous for some of Usher's R&B contemporaries, like R. Kelly and Chris Brown, whose controversies have overshadowed their craft. And emerging artists in the genre have failed to match his resonance or, as yet at least, longevity.

Which makes Usher's time on the Super Bowl LVIII halftime stage all the more significant. Here's an artist who's helped define his genre for 30 years, all while making it look effortlessly cool. For 13 minutes, he'll have the world's attention, a chance to proudly declare what many already know—that R&B is not dead. While there's sure to be flashy theatrics, buzzy guest stars and possibly new music (because if anyone knows how to put on a show, it's Usher, baby), the real measure of success will be his ability to offer on the largest possible scale what he's always given his fans: a moment to succumb to the spell of his serenade.

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# Kiley Reid on Her New ‘Dorm Novel’ Come and Get It

Annabel Gutterman is a content strategy editor at TIME. She also covers books.

In Kiley Reid’s new novel, a resident assistant at the University of Arkansas gets caught up in an unexpected mess involving a visiting professor and three students. While *Come and Get It* plays out on a college campus, it’s no campus novel. Instead, Reid considers the book a dorm novel.

“The thing about a campus novel is you are watching drama play out in a strange utopia,” Reid says. “*Come and Get It* is more claustrophobic because it’s focusing on the tiny 12×9 room you have to live in while you’re in this utopia.” Reid centers the story on one residential hall, where young people are navigating life in their dorm rooms. There, the visiting professor interviews students about weddings and money, setting off a turbulent narrative fueled by dorm pranks, questionable romantic decisions, and one resident’s gnawing insecurities. The result is a narrative concerned with class and power, themes the author has explored before. In 2019, Reid published her debut novel *Such a Fun Age*, which followed the relationship between a young babysitter and her well-off employer. The book was longlisted for the Booker Prize.

In an interview in the run-up to the release of *Come and Get It*, Reid, who is also an assistant professor at the University of Michigan, shares how the story came to be, her fascination with money, and the funniest books she’s ever read.

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**TIME: Where did the inspiration for *Come and Get It* come from?**

Reid: In the spring of 2019 I was teaching undergraduates who were really funny, bright, and, at times, a little bonkers, as you are when you’re 19 to 22. I was intrigued by the way money works on a campus. I interviewed students: How much money do you get? Who pays your rent? What do the words *classy* and *trashy* mean to you? For the book, I wanted to focus on a young woman who is technically doing everything right. Millie Cousins is an RA, she’s really responsible, she has a lot of ambition. But she learns that getting what you want is not always about hard work.

**What surprised you most from your research for *Come and Get It*?**

I interviewed a collegiate baton twirler and I learned that many baton twirlers get the exact same hip surgery. There's also a line in the book where someone says they get "practice paychecks" from their father. That was taken from a real interview.

**Like *Such a Fun Age*, your new book features a relationship between a young Black woman and an older, wealthier, white woman—in this case, Millie and a visiting professor. What draws you to exploring those power dynamics?**

So many of the relationships we have are dictated by someone's title, the size of their home, where they came from, how they speak. Even if you become great friends with your boss, there are things you wouldn't tell them. I'm obsessed with the behavior we put forth when we sense class distinction.

**Why do you like writing about money?**

We often find ourselves thinking that you pay rent, then you buy a house, and that's how you live your life. Writing about money allows me to step back and say, "Well, what if we didn't have to buy a house?" I really like including numbers and cents. Whenever I'm watching a movie, if a character says, "Ugh, my rent is so expensive," I'm screaming, "Tell me how much it is!" Writing money is a stylistic choice for me as well. I don't write sci-fi, but I watch a lot of sci-fi and I try to treat that the way I treat money. What is the comet that is coming? What is the pressure that's cooking under us? When you're writing about hyperrealistic characters in the 21st century, you have to be concerned with money.

**How has writing these books changed your own relationship with money?**

In my 20s I was in a financially precarious place, and I saved everything. I have that in common with Millie. I definitely see the

world through a more materialistic lens now that I have a daughter and health care means something different. And I've probably changed the way I look at language around money—I pick it up in other people's rhetoric more than I did before. If someone says, "She comes from a good family" or "That's a bad school," I now see the dollar signs in those sentiments.

**Why do you think people are so drawn to the voyeuristic element of learning what other people spend?**

When I talk to my students about a really great novel or a really great plot, I believe that novels that get under your skin tend to ask you two questions. The first one is: what would I do? The second one is: who am I to these characters? Money does that as well. We've been conditioned to position our morality next to the money that we make. Finding out what other people are making sheds light on the vast range of inequality that we all have, and unfortunately, we liken that to how deserving we are of the money that we have.

**You were an RA for a year. How much of your experiences did you draw on when writing Millie?**

Millie's character and her circumstances in the book is complete fiction. I do remember the feeling of being on call. I wanted to import that into her and into this novel. You have this incredibly dated cell phone that you have to keep on you at all times whenever you're on duty. That means you might have your boyfriend or girlfriend over, but you still have to answer this phone, no matter what. I'm really fascinated by jobs where you're on the clock mentally all the time. With my own RA experience, I was at Marymount Manhattan College in New York City. It was a tiny liberal arts school in a very big city. Millie is at a huge school in a smaller town. I do think that those differences are significant. I did sleep in my RA polo often. Just in case.

**You build a world within the walls of the dorm where Millie lives. It reminds me of the fascination with sorority recruitment in viral TikTok trends like Bama Rush. What do you make of those videos?**

It's a fascinating movement, and yet again a place where money is one of the main factors in making it so interesting. As the girls list the items they're wearing, you can go online and find out how much their outfit costs, and that is a bananas feature of living the way we do right now. I watched a lot of dorm tours in preparation for this novel. The attention, detail, and finances that go into shaping the atmosphere of one tiny room for nine months—I don't know if we ever put that much thought into our spaces again.

**Both of your novels tackle big and sometimes heavy themes, but they're also really funny. What are some of the funniest books you've read?**

*Special Topics in Calamity Physics* by Marisha Pessl. *Convenience Store Woman* by Sayaka Murata. You know what I read last year and was laughing? *Animal Farm*. Maybe it was the Audible book I was listening to, but I found it very funny.

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